

# GIFTED EDUCATION PRESS

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**NEWSLETTER VOLUME FOUR, NUMBER FOUR**  
OCTOBER-DECEMBER 1990      SUBSCRIPTION: \$12.00 PER YEAR

At the beginning of the 1990-91 school year, the education of gifted students appears to be in a precarious condition across the nation. On the one hand, new federal grants to school districts and state departments of education, and the federal sponsorship of a national research center on the gifted should stimulate the positive development and improvement of this field. However, serious threats to the progress of differential education have resulted from such movements as cooperative learning and the heterogeneous classroom. In addition, the legal basis for gifted programs is being threatened in such states as California, Pennsylvania and North Carolina through new bureaucratic requirements, legislative changes and judicial rulings. We have included the article by Dr. Paul Plowman to alert educators of the gifted to certain attitudes of chief state school officers which may affect the future development of their differential programs. Although Plowman's article is based upon an informal sample of state coordinators of gifted education, it clearly indicates that we must do a better job of promoting interest in this field among state superintendents and state boards of education. "Excellence" has been a key-word in the vocabulary of educational improvement during the last ten years. What better way is there to develop excellence in education than to expand and improve programs for our nation's greatest intellectual and artistic resources, its gifted children?

Paul Plowman has been actively involved in gifted education since the early 1960's when he began working in the California State Department of Education to develop programs for the gifted. During his tenure as a State Consultant (1962-87), the California program grew from 38,000 to 220,000 pupils. He also founded (1963) and was the first president of the Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted and is an active member of this organization today. In addition to these accomplishments, some of his most important work has been concerned with designing effective curricula for the gifted.

The second article in this issue is by Dr. Stephanie Pace Marshall, Director of the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy, who has described the mission and program of this outstanding center for educating gifted students. It should be emphasized that this program stresses teaching Science and Mathematics in conjunction with the Humanities. Dr. Marshall is the founding president of the National Consortium for Specialized Secondary Schools of Mathematics, Science and Technology. In June 1988, a resolution was passed in her honor by the Illinois House of Representatives commending her work in this state.

Michael Walters writes about a great American genius, Thomas Wolfe, novelist extraordinaire of Asheville, North Carolina. He shows how the themes and motifs of this writer can help gifted students to better understand their own motives, aspirations and life-goals.

MAURICE D. FISHER, PUBLISHER

PUBLISHER OF BOOKS ON DIFFERENTIAL EDUCATION FOR THE GIFTED

CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICER OPPORTUNITIES, SEIZED OR MISSED?  
BY PAUL PLOWMAN, Ed.D. COOL, CALIFORNIA

"State Departments of Education have a clear mandate to...provide effective learning experiences for the gifted...." Policy Statement and Guidelines of the Council of Chief State School Officers, 1962

To what extent do states provide uniquely appropriate programs for gifted and talented children? Using California as an example, we might ask: "To what extent does the California Chief State School Officer support gifted and talented education (GATE)? True, a program is in place involving 240,000 children and almost 800 school districts. But how is the State Department of Education (SDE) currently supporting GATE programs and GATE leadership? California is a good example of the problems which can occur in a large statewide program. This example is used to help other states prevent such problems from occurring in their gifted programs. For many years California helped other state departments of education, and state legislatures launch special educational efforts for the gifted and talented. It did this by sharing research evidence, examples of exemplary programs, and monitoring and evaluation procedures. Today, to the frustration of many professional educators and parents, the California State Department of Education is vigorously attempting to "heterogenize" elementary education, eliminate ability grouping, and force cooperative learning and school-site-based decision making upon over 1000 school districts. Three of the four positions in the GATE unit are lateral transfers from other units in the Department, people without recognized school-district-level or classroom expertise in gifted and talented education. One of the four persons, the manager, also manages other programs and is responsible for implementing school-based decision making, the School Based Coordination Program (SBCP). In doing the latter, this individual may contribute to the demise of GATE by subverting GATE leadership and by using categorical GATE funds for children not identified as gifted and talented. Superintendent Bill Honig's 22-page Program Advisory on SBCP, dated March 23, 1988, makes interesting reading. It claims that staff members in categorical programs tend to be more funding focused than student focused -- and that, in contrast to categorical programs, the SBCP is based on unique objectives and needs. It presents the School Based Coordination Program as an educational panacea for meeting the needs of each student. On the contrary, the Program may well leave the gifted and talented even more underserved. It places gifted children "at risk."

We look at the California GATE Program today and realize that the State Department of Education wittingly or unwittingly is placing

impediments in the way of the GATE program. These could further the deterioration and lead to the demise of this gifted program.

On a more pleasant level, it must be recognized that many chief state school officers and state departments of education see GATE as a keystone to their whole plan to develop excellence in education. After 3 years of careful study, the Council of Chief State School Officers published (1962), "Guidelines and Opportunities for Leadership in the Education of GIFTED CHILDREN AND YOUTH." This policy statement defined the responsibilities and services of state departments of education concerning the identification and instruction of gifted students.

Founded in 1963, another council, the Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted (CSDPG), is an important vehicle for sharing information and providing data to state and federal agencies. In 1985 its president, Patricia O'Connell (now Patricia O'Connell Ross) prepared "The State of the States' Gifted and Talented Education," a national survey of the Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted. This document summarized state-level information, program information, and special initiatives. Findings showed 21 states mandating gifted education programs, one state mandating but not funding, 20 states with funding but not mandating, and three states with enabling legislation but without funding.

In July, 1987 "A Survey of the States' Efforts in Gifted Education" was published as a report to the Wisconsin Department of Instruction. Like the CSDPG Survey, it included information on identification, programs, funding, teacher certification and training, strengths, and areas needing improvement. A 1990 survey for the CSDPG by Nancy Lukenbill may show significant changes in programming and support since the 1985 survey.

Recognizing that "our very survival as a free people depends on the optimum development of talent at all levels" (from the guidelines of the Council of Chief State School Officers), I attempted to elicit the best responses to certain sensitive questions during the summer of 1990 in a brief, informal telephone survey of fellow members of the CSDPG from eleven states -- geographically distributed, and encompassing large and small states, and heavily populated as well as sparsely populated states. Their responses are presented below:

1. Is Gifted and Talented Education a major priority of your chief state school officer?

YES	4	NO	7
	36%		64%

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2. During the past year, has your chief state school officer stressed the importance of GATE in a major speech, article, or press release?

YES	6	NO	5
	54%		45%

3. Have the following helped or hindered GATE program development?

	HELPED	HINDERED	UNSURE
HETEROGENIZING EDUCATION?	2	7	2
COOPERATIVE LEARNING?	1	7	3
SCHOOL-SITE-BASED DECISION MAKING?	1	2	6

4. Have the following been increased, been reduced, or stayed the same during the past twelve months at the GATE State Department of Education level:

	INCREASED	REDUCED	STAYED THE SAME
OPERATING BUDGET	3	-	6
TRAVEL FUNDS	4	2	5
SUPPORT STAFF	2	3	6

5. Has statewide GATE program funding been increased, been reduced, or stayed the same during the past twelve months?

INCREASED	REDUCED	STAYED THE SAME
7	-	4

6. Has interest in and support of GATE been eclipsed by SDE attention to the needs of other categories of children? If so, what categories?

YES*	4	NO	7
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\*For High-risk Children

By assuring anonymity, I believe that I received forthright answers to what might be perceived as sensitive (job-jeopardizing) questions. After answering the survey questions, one respondent said, "I'm glad you're keeping the answers anonymous!"

Admittedly the "n" is small. However, these responses give us an idea of the level of support for gifted programs by chief state school officers. Therefore, we might ask the following questions: Mister,

Madam, or Dr. Superintendent, putting aside rhetoric used at meetings and conventions of gifted educators -- (1) What tangible evidence can you offer to show that you really do support gifted and talented education? (2) What tangible evidence can you offer to show that you do, in fact, provide GATE leadership staff in your department with the resources needed to provide exemplary learning experiences for all gifted children? (3) What tangible evidence shows that your state is implementing a comprehensive statewide plan to develop to the fullest the intellectual and creative capabilities of all your pupils?

Although many state superintendents support excellence in education and optimum development of all children, including the gifted, others seem less enchanted with the idea.

Some claim that they support GATE but do not show this support in significant ways. Although many state superintendents avow their intent to make special provisions for the gifted, others seem less enchanted with the idea. Some avow support but do not provide it.

One of the exciting aspects of calling 11 state directors of programs for the gifted was to note the apparent fervor in 1990 to seek out and experiment with new methods for educating gifted children and administering programs. True, in some instances, retrenchment appeared to be the result of severe financial problems -- taking its toll on staff, travel, leadership, and assistance to LEA's. But in the main, respondents were optimistic that conditions would improve, that programs would be funded, and that children would be served. One state reported an increase in support among school-district superintendents. Another reported creative ways for dealing with current attempts to heterogenize education and to involve gifted students in cooperative learning.

We see that GATE was not a major priority of the state superintendents in 7 states (64%). Yet we note that it was reported to be a major priority of four chief state school officers. Enlightened programming for the gifted in these four states might have an important impact by raising the priority status of gifted and talented education in other states. Six of the superintendents did, in fact, stress the importance of GATE in a major speech, article, or press release. Clearly, their priorities change from year to year.

The focus on heterogenizing education and on cooperative learning was definitely seen as hindering GATE program development in seven of the eleven states. However, respondents were unsure of the impact of school-site-based decision making.

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Operating budgets, travel budgets, and support staff stayed the same in six of the states. Two states reported "zero" or no GATE budget. Statewide program funding increased in seven states and stayed the same in four.

Interest and support for GATE remained the same in seven states. It was eclipsed by SDE attention to the needs of "high-risk" children in four which appears to be a major focus. If it were possible to extrapolate the results from this sample of 11 states to all fifty states, Washington, D.C., American Samoa, Guam, and the Trust Territory, then almost 36% (29 SEA's) would place high-risk students above those of gifted and talented children although many of them are at risk.

One respondent was unable to indicate whether state efforts to heterogenize education helped or hindered GATE program development, but did report a statewide effort to train regular classroom teachers in dealing effectively with the gifted.

A very interesting fact surfaced during these telephone conversations: By making a significant impact on planning and administering programs for high-risk students, dropouts, and gifted children with other types of special needs, the state directors of programs for the gifted strengthened their commitment and efforts even more, preserved their GATE-program funding base, and were recognized for significant achievement.

If we extrapolate the results from our sample of eleven states to all of the states, we would find that 64% of the chief state school officers do not consider GATE a major priority. Each chief state school officer should read the 1962 policy statement, "Guidelines and Opportunities for Leadership in the Education of GIFTED CHILDREN AND YOUTH," and a report possibly now on the back shelf, A Nation at Risk (U.S. Department of Education, 1983).

Gifted children are still at risk. Mister, Madam, or Dr. Superintendent, "Sir" or "Madam": What have you done to develop the high-intellectual, creative, entrepreneurial, management, and leadership talent necessary to guarantee that this nation shall experience a new birth of freedom; demonstrate new strength and morality; have a resurgence of creative ideas; and raise the standard of living for all people in the United States and the world?>>

ILLINOIS INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE: ILLINOIS MATHEMATICS AND  
SCIENCE ACADEMY

BY STEPHANIE PACE MARSHALL, Ph.D., DIRECTOR  
ILLINOIS MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE ACADEMY

The Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy is a bold venture in education in Illinois. Having opened on September 7, 1986, with 210 of the state's brightest youngsters, the Illinois Academy is the nation's only three-year public residential school for secondary students gifted in mathematics and science. Presently, the student body numbers 492, with enrollment for the 1990-91 school year projected to be 560 students.

Students live in recently constructed dormitories on campus. The Academy is situated on a 93-acre campus in Aurora, in close proximity to Illinois' I-88 high tech corridor. Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory, Argonne National Laboratory, Amoco Research Laboratory, NALCO, and AT&T Bell Laboratories are among the research facilities located along this corridor.

Mission

The mission of the Academy as stated in its philosophy statement is "to inspire and challenge young boys and girls gifted in mathematics and scientific ability in a manner which will maximize the use of these talents for the benefit of society." Within the context of this mission, two important goals were established by the Board of Trustees: (1) provide an educational, social and emotional climate in which students with exceptional aptitude in mathematics and science can develop their intellectual gifts, and become committed to the search for humane solutions to our world problems; and (2) serve as a laboratory for the development, testing, and dissemination of innovative techniques in mathematics, science, and the humanities, which can become a resource for secondary school teachers in Illinois and the nation.

The Illinois Academy was the inspiration of Dr. Leon Lederman, Director Emeritus of Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory, and was officially established in 1985, by the Illinois' Comprehensive Educational Reform Bill, Senate Bill 730.

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

The average Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) score in mathematics for the students of the class of 1991 is 637, and the average SAT score in

the verbal area is 539. (The national average scores of college-bound seniors on these tests are 460 and 425 respectively.) Students receive their education at the Academy without charge for tuition, room and board; a fee is assessed for textbooks, lab fees, and co-curricular activities. Of the 500 students presently attending the Academy, 57 percent are male, and 43 percent are female; 55 percent of the students are from Chicago, and its north and south suburban areas, and 45 percent are from the remainder of Illinois.

The population of the present Academy student body is 69 percent Caucasian, 8 percent Black, 20 percent Asian, 3 percent Hispanic, and less than 1 percent other ethnic or non-reporting groups.

#### ACADEMIC PROGRAM

The Illinois Academy was designed to provide both an accelerated and enriched course of studies for students of exceptional talent. The essence of the Academy's programs is academic rigor and experimentation, infused with risk-taking, problem-solving, creative thinking, and an opportunity to analyze, synthesize and evaluate data.

The Academy's program of studies not only provides an enriched and accelerated program in science and mathematics, but also provides enrichment in the humanities, foreign language, and fine and performing arts.

Advanced level courses are taught in all of the academic disciplines with emphasis on mathematics and science. In addition, students are instructed in oral and written communication skills. An equally rigorous humanities program places a heavy emphasis on the inquiry and analysis of social issues.

#### LEARNER OUTCOMES

We want to develop learners who will think creatively and innovatively, who will not be afraid to use imagination and intuition in the generation and solution of problems, who experience joy and excitement in learning, who appreciate aesthetics, and who have healthy and positive self-concepts.

IMSA's commitment, however, goes beyond personal development. We want to make sure our students leave our institution with a sense of social awareness and responsibility, an ability to make decisions within a moral and ethical context, and an awareness they have a role and a responsibility to work toward the improvement of the public good through



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their ability to solve the technological and social problems facing our world.

### CURRICULUM

The Academy offers a three-year program which is highly prescribed during the first year. Second and third year students are given progressively greater freedom to select electives and design their own program.

First-year students study six academic disciplines in addition to physical education. Courses are provided in mathematics, chemistry, physics, Introduction to Literature and the Humanities, American studies, and foreign language. Foreign language options include French, German, Spanish, Latin, Russian, and Japanese. Plans are being developed to offer Mandarin Chinese in 1991. The Foreign Language curriculum employs the concept of total immersion to facilitate learning, with additional study of the cultural aspects of the people who speak the language.

Second-year students follow a more rigorous course of study with advanced courses in mathematics, university biology, scientific research methods, computer applications, modern physics, literature and the arts, world studies, and foreign language. In addition, second-year students are permitted to choose from multiple electives in each discipline.

### A UNIQUE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy is a unique learning environment for gifted students. The Academy's intellectual climate is characterized by thoughtful and ethical problem-solving and a celebration of what is possible in the cultivation and development of human potential. Our academic and residential programs have four primary goals: (1) Develop intellectual potential, academic achievement, creativity, and responsibility in all students; (2) approach mathematics and science as the products of human creativity and curiosity; (3) foster interdisciplinary approaches to thinking and learning by integrating the study of mathematics, natural and social sciences with the arts and humanities; and (4) cultivate a residential environment that is stimulating, nurturing and bias-free.

Although the academic program of the Academy is designed to be accelerated, students are encouraged to "play, tinker" and experiment with mathematics and science, and students and staff are challenged to create. Traditional departments were not formed; instead, academic



REFLECTIONS UPON VISITING THOMAS WOLFE'S HOME  
BY MICHAEL E. WALTERS, Ph.D., NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Recently I had an opportunity to learn more than I previously knew about the famous writer, Thomas Wolfe (1900-38), as the result of visiting his home in Asheville, North Carolina.

As I went from room-to-room in this house, the texture of the human being behind the writer started to develop as if it was a photo print emerging in a darkroom. The books of Thomas Wolfe possess a unique style which can be described as "fictional memoirs of the self."

Many of the motifs of his selfdom are located in the psyche of all humanity. However, these motifs are especially appreciated by the keen sensibility of the gifted individual. The gifted person has a sensibility which refuses to repress the psychological and cognitive implications of these motifs. In fact, the gifted person has to deal with these themes in a manner similar to Thomas Wolfe.

The first motif of Wolfe is homelessness. This is the sense that one is an inward seeking pilgrim attempting to locate a place one can feel at home with. Two of Wolfe's novels have the word "home" prominently included within their titles, e.g., Look Homeward, Angel and You Can't Go Home Again. To Wolfe, we are all born to roam the world seeking the lost homeland of one's youth. The gifted person's developed mentality causes him to feel simultaneously a yearning for nostalgia and a cosmopolitan life style. The tension between these two needs causes a sensation akin to that of homelessness.

The second motif is that of being lost or being in exile (which is also connected with the feeling of homelessness). This is the awareness that something appears to be missing in one's life. Somehow despite all of one's accomplishments, there is something important that still needs to be dealt with. The gifted person's sense of exile derives from an insatiable urge to perform better. There is an emotion within his or her sensibility that creates a mood of being a stranger to one's self. It is this emotion that creates the need of the gifted to constantly find new paradigms in their lives and life work.

The third motif is that of memory. The gifted person is acutely aware of the role memory performs in human conduct and thought. Human behavior is related to language, and the most vital element in human linguistic performance is memory. It is memory that creates the linkage of meaning between thought and word. Thomas Wolfe was constantly

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using his memory to forge personal meanings which could be applied to all of humanity. His books express the context that even though we all come from "multi-cultural" environments, that within this cultural diversity there exists a universal memory based upon shared human symbols and language.

The fourth motif is the search for one's father. By this, he was describing the need for a son to locate his roots. In the writer Ovid's epic poem The Metamorphoses, there is an encounter that explains this. The son of Phoebus Apollo, Phaeton, seeks to go on a self-destructive journey across the sky in his father's chariot. Phaeton is compelled to perform this tragic task to prove to himself that he truly is his father's son. Phoebus Apollo says to Phaeton that all he needs to do is look at his father's face, that his grief is proof enough as to what it means "to be a father to a son." Fatherhood is an emotional state, not a physical action. The gifted individual is one who does not typically accept a status such as fatherhood solely on its physical characteristics, but instead discovers a deeper meaning to this and other human relationships.

This discussion of Thomas Wolfe's motifs should make us consider how gifted students can read and interact with the literary mind of this profound writer. The concerns of Wolfe are intimately reflected in the sensibility of these students.

"...a stone, a leaf, an unfound door; of a stone, a leaf, a door.  
And of all the forgotten faces.

"Naked and alone we come into exile. In her dark womb we did not know our mother's face; from the prison of her flesh have we come into the unspeakable and incommunicable prison of this earth.

"Which of us has known his brother? Which of us has ever looked into his father's heart? Which of us has not remained forever prison-pent? Which of us is not forever a stranger and alone?

"O waste of loss, in the hot mazes, lost, among bright stars on this most weary unbright cinder, lost! Remembering speechlessly we seek the great forgotten language, the lost lane-end into heaven, a stone, a leaf, an unfound door. Where? When?

"O lost, and by the wind grieved, ghost, come back again."

Thomas Wolfe, Look Homeward, Angel >>

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