

# GIFTED EDUCATION PRESS NEWSLETTER

10201 YUMA COURT  
P.O. BOX 1586  
MANASSAS, VA 22110  
703-369-5017



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## HOLIDAY GREETINGS!

We hope your programs for the gifted have made significant advances since we sent you our last issue in September 1990. The lead article by Dr. Joyce Van Tassel-Baska is her response to an attack on gifted education which appeared in *The Washington Post* in September 1990. The author, Patrick Welsh, is a high school teacher. (He also wrote *Tales Out Of School: A Teacher's Candid Account from the Front Lines of the American High School Today*, Viking, 1986.) He argued that gifted education is "tracking" at-its-worst, resulting in discrimination against minority group children. He also believes these programs are mainly set up to placate "aggressive" parents of gifted children. Unfortunately, this newspaper did not publish Dr. Baska's article which is a well-reasoned statement of the need and rationale for offering gifted education programs in America's public schools.

We urge you to read Patrick Welsh's article to understand the basis for her response. (The full citation is on page 2. The article can be located in your local public library's microform collection of newspapers, or see a reprint in *Network News & Views: The Educational Excellence Network*, November 1990, pp. 53-55.)

In our opinion, the Welsh article addresses more political than educational issues. For example, the issue of tracking is a *political smoke screen* for denouncing gifted education. This article mainly demonstrates how a series of negative anecdotes can be cleverly tied together to substitute for and distort the facts. "Old hands" in the gifted field have responded to similar collections of negative anecdotes for decades.

Dr. Baska's response is an effective antidote. She presents the facts concerning the importance and necessity for offering gifted education programs in the public schools of the United States. Currently, she is The Smith Professor of Education at the College of William and Mary. She is also a member of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Gifted Children and has served as the state director of G/T programs for Illinois.

The second article describes one of the most outstanding residential schools for gifted students in the nation -- the Texas Academy of Mathematics and Science. The Author, Dr. William T. Brady, is Director of this Academy and Regents Professor of Chemistry at the University of North Texas. His extensive research in chemistry has influenced the development of a rigorous academic program for gifted high school students at this university.

M. Walters presents a summary of the importance of Carl Sandburg's work to gifted children. His visit to this poet's home (Connemara Farm) stimulated Walters' thinking about Sandburg and the gifted. We have also included interesting letters from Celeste Rhodes, Susan Assouline and Yossel Naiman.

Maurice D. Fisher, Publisher

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**RESPONSE TO WASHINGTON POST ARTICLE CRITICIZING GIFTED EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

By Joyce VanTassel-Baska College of William and Mary

I read with interest yet dismay the article by Patrick Welsh in The Washington Post's Sunday September 16, 1990 edition of Outlook entitled, *Fast Track Trap: How 'Ability Grouping' Hurts Our Schools, Kids, and Families*. As a public school educator and professor for the past 25 years, I found the article full of specious reasoning. While ability grouping has been abused in many school settings, the belief that doing away with it can affect positively either the achievement level or self-concept of any student is highly questionable. To suggest that there is evidence to support the elimination of grouping gifted students is to ignore the existing body of research studies which suggest that:

(1) The achievement of gifted students at both elementary and secondary levels is enhanced by a variety of forms of ability grouping including instructional grouping in core academic areas, cross-grade grouping, and special interest grouping. Moreover, the achievement of other groups of learners appears to be unaffected by grouping the gifted.

(2) Grouping by ability produces no significant effect on the self-esteem or general school attitude for any group of students, either at elementary or secondary levels. Yet grouping by ability produces a positive attitude toward subject matter for all groups of learners.

(3) Ability grouping without special instructional provisions has no effect on any group of learners. Thus, the benefits of ability grouping are activated only through

a differentiated instructional plan based on student level of readiness.

(4) Cooperative learning models do not enhance the achievement of the gifted unless some form of ability grouping is employed. Mixing low ability and high ability students together typically results in no growth for the high ability group.

(5) Low ability students do not model gifted students. Thus, the argument that the "mixing" of ability groups provides important learning models for less able children cannot be supported.

(6) Educators cannot differentiate instructional plans for gifted learners effectively without ability grouping in some form. Thus, to eliminate ability grouping for all is to eliminate special programs for the gifted and talented.

These findings have not been ignored by educational and political groups who have a strong stake in educational reform. The 1990 National Governor's Report of the Task Force on Education, while challenging educators to eliminate widespread ability grouping and tracking, specifically states that "eliminating these practices does not require ending special opportunities for students such as the gifted and talented or special education students or Advanced Placement classes." Thus, the linkage made in the Welsh article between the educational movement to reduce the practice of ability grouping in general, and specific programming for gifted and talented learners is inappropriate.

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Educators in responsible positions should not naively believe that anyone would benefit from dismantling gifted and talented programs in the service of educational reform. If schools were willing to adopt flexible models of grouping that allowed for student needs to dictate practice rather than administrative fiat or the fashions of the time, the needs of all children might be better met. If schools were willing to alter instruction based on need as readily as they are willing to move children around administratively, the needs of all children might be better met. The problem is not ability grouping but rather a lack of flexibility and imagination in the appreciation of educational principles in practice.

Improving the quality of education for all requires that we be sensitive to the needs of all and plan educational experiences accordingly. Equality of opportunity and equality of treatment in education, however, are not the same thing; nor should they be. In any profession, the needs of the clients dictate the nature of the prescription. While high quality services should be available to all, the nature and organization of those services should vary based on diagnosed need. Education can ill afford to level its services lest the bitter pill of mediocrity be absorbed into the bloodstream of all students.

The unflattering portrait of parents of the gifted in the Welsh article is also distorted. Most studies of current and past eminent individuals contain documentation of the role of parents as advocates and monitors of a child's educational progress as one of the most significant variables in facilitating talent development. Two values also shaped the

homes of such individuals -- an emphasis on education and on the work ethic. The level of concern shown by parents of the gifted for optimal educational experiences is sometimes perceived as over reaction, snobbishness, or some other pejorative rather than the positive trait that it represents. Parents of all children in our schools have a right to expect an appropriate education. In my experience, parents of the gifted have generally intruded very little on the landscape of public education. Yet when they have raised questions, they have been ridiculed or ignored.

Two other issues in the Welsh article were also off the mark. One was the inference that gifted and talented programming takes away from or negatively affects minority achievement, as if these two issues were at opposite poles. Gifted students come from all socio-economic, racial and ethnic groups. DuBois and other African-American writers have eloquently spoken to the need for developing what they called "the talented tenth," the group of students who were the most promising within the culture to carry out leadership roles. Minority achievement programs would do well to heed DuBois' advice and focus some of their resources on enhancing the development of high-achieving minority students -- just as gifted education has recently done. The current federal allocation of money for the gifted has targeted the identification and programming of under represented groups such as minority students, low-income students, and the handicapped as a priority need. In fact, developing the potential of gifted students from diverse cultural groups should be a major priority for education in general since these students will become this country's leaders of the

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next generation. The interests of minority students are and can be well served in the context and fabric of gifted education, not separate from it.

The last issue which warrants comment was Welsh's attack on gifted programs based on the stringency of identification procedures. The standards in Virginia and in most other states require that multiple measures be employed to identify gifted learners. Gifted educators in general have deplored the use of a single IQ cut off score as a basis for labeling a child as gifted or not, so Welsh gets no argument on that point. However, he grossly misrepresents the overall identification model and the programming provisions available to gifted students in Fairfax County. As in all responsibly administered gifted programs, multiple levels of service delivery and options are available based on a student's tested level of ability and need for that particular option -- the more gifted the student, the

more intensive the service. Thus, gifted students are served in regular classrooms, school-based cluster models, and a center program. Such an approach to programming illustrates an underlying sensitivity to important differences within the gifted population, one worthy of emulation by other school districts, not the ridicule implicit in the tone of the article.

Educating our most able learners in appropriate ways is a challenge that this society must take seriously. We can ill afford to foster underachievement, disaffection and alienation among these students. Even now, international comparisons on achievement, drop-out rates, and delinquency data suggest a disproportionately high percentage of our most capable learners are not maximizing their abilities. The leadership vacuum we now experience as a society is minimal compared to what we shall face in the future if educational commentators continue to speak in uninformed ways about issues of great consequence. >>

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*Facts are facts and will not disappear on account of your likes. Nehru*

*Most writers regard truth as their most valuable possession, and therefore are most economical in its use. Mark Twain*

*The greatest homage we can pay to truth is to use it. James R. Lowell*

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THE TEXAS ACADEMY OF MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE: AN ALTERNATIVE FOR  
GIFTED AND TALENTED HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

By William T. Brady, Director  
Texas Academy of Mathematics and Science

Introduction

The 1987 session of the Texas Legislature established the Texas Academy of Mathematics and Science at the University of North Texas to address the declining numbers of students entering the disciplines of science, engineering and mathematics. The academy is a two-year, residential, early admission university program for gifted and talented Texas high school students with a particular interest in science and mathematics. Students are selected during their sophomore year in high school for admission to the academy at the beginning of their junior year. The academy is a tuition free program which provides highly talented students the opportunity to complete their last two years of high and the first two years of college concurrently in residence on the University of North Texas campus.

The charter class of the academy (1988-90) graduated in May, 1990 and the 66 students were highly recruited by Texas universities as well as universities from throughout the country. A second class (1989-91) of 90 students was admitted in August 1989 and 190 new students (1990-92) were admitted this year. Up to 200 new students will be admitted in the fall of 1991 which will represent the academy at full capacity with nearly 400 students.

The average Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) for students in the 1991 class is 1205 with an average of 660 in the mathematics area. These scores are from tests taken in the sopho-

more year of high school prior to enrollment in the academy.

Goals

The program's goals are as follows: (1) encourage more students to major in the engineering, mathematics and science disciplines at the undergraduate and graduate levels; (2) provide intellectual stimulation and companionship of true peers; (3) encourage students to develop the self-discipline, reasoning ability, curiosity and creativity that lead to independence of thought and action; and (4) aid students in developing strength and integrity that will enable them to benefit society in their careers.

Curriculum

The academy's curriculum is taught by regular full-time university faculty and involves courses in mathematics, the physical and natural sciences, augmented by strong and varied humanities through the university's Classic Learning Core. First year students are required to take biology, chemistry, mathematics and English. Second year students are required to take physics, English, political science and history. The required academy courses are standard university courses containing other university students along with academy students. Electives are possible in the first and second year depending on grade performance. Typical electives chosen by academy students are organic chemistry, calculus III, differential equations, linear algebra, foreign lan-

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guage, microbiology, psychology, and philosophy. The 163 students in 1989-90 had an overall GPA average of 3.1 of a possible 4.

### Student Life

The academy students are provided with a total living and learning environment rich in resources which are both encouraging and supportive. Academy students live in a specific residential hall with supervisory live-in staff. A full range of extracurricular activities are available, including recreational sports, educational programs, cultural events and social programs. Academy participants have access to all University of North Texas student services. There are numerous academy organizations, thus providing many opportunities for students to develop leadership skills.

### Admission

Students apply to the academy during the sophomore year in high school. The selection criteria include SAT scores (minimum of 1000, 550 on the mathematics section), recommendations from teachers, academic performance, and an essay written by the student about why he/she wants to attend the academy. Particular emphasis is placed on candid teacher recommendations in assessing students' academic potential and the maturity level needed for success in a university environment at a young age. Finalists are brought to campus for a personal interview by the selection committee as the final step in the selection process.

### Cost

All academy students receive scholarships to cover the cost of tuition, fees, and books. But they must

pay for their room and board which currently is about \$3300 for the academic year. Scholarships and financial aid are available, and over half of the students currently enrolled are receiving financial assistance for these expenses.

### Graduation

Upon completion of the academy program, students receive a diploma from the academy as well as 60 plus semester hours of college credit. Academy graduates will be college juniors when their peers are completing high school. Graduates of the academy may complete the balance of the baccalaureate degree at the University of North Texas or transfer to any other institution. Approximately 80% of the charter class opted to continue their college studies at a Texas institution while the remainder are at institutions throughout the country.

### Student Research

Summer research scholarships are available on a competitive basis for academy students in the summer following the first year. Students will work with selected research faculty in the various mathematics and science departments on individual research projects. Students are encouraged to submit the research results to the Westinghouse Talent Search in their senior year. Many of them continue with the research during their senior year.

### Epilogue

The Texas Academy of Mathematics and Science is the only two-year, residential, early admission university program for gifted and talented high school students in the country. This innovative program is serving as a



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model for other states because of the challenges and opportunities provided for these students and the cost effectiveness of being located on a university campus. Certainly, the academy is evolving, but all indications are that this type of program for gifted and talented teenagers is and will continue to

be highly successful. Dr. Julian Stanley, Director of the *Study for Mathematically Precocious Youth* at Johns Hopkins University and a member of the Academy's Advisory Board, has recently stated that the TAMS model "appears to be academically sounder, less politically vulnerable and more cost-effective" than state-financed residential high schools.>>

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### CARL SANDBURG: POET OF HUMANITY AND AMERICA

By Michael E. Walters, New York City Public Schools

In February we celebrate the birthday of Abraham Lincoln who represents many strengths of the American character. It is also important for gifted students to celebrate the life of another great humanist and citizen of Illinois who wrote a definitive biography of Lincoln. He exemplifies the best characteristics of the American people -- optimism, willingness to "take on" complex problems and to seek solutions to them, defender of human rights, and believer in the power of human language to express the breath and depth of our land and people. When I visited Carl Sandburg's home near Hendersonville, North Carolina (he moved there from Illinois in 1945) last summer, I was very impressed with the manner in which he expressed these different facets of American character through the contents of his house and the surrounding landscape. What lessons about life, poetry and the intellect can gifted students learn from studying biographies about Sandburg (1878-1967) and his poetry? The writer and his closest friend, Harry Golden, said that, "I feel he is still the one American writer who has distinguished himself in five fields -- poetry, history, biography, fiction

and music...." (1961) A few of the important features of Sandburg's life which gifted students can study are:

Emphasis on Both Thought and Action. During the early part of his life (1910-20), he was involved in organizing unions and defending the rights of workers who were from different ethnic groups. He traveled throughout the midwest organizing labor unions, and was also beginning to write poetry during this period, such as the *Chicago Poems* (1916) and *Cornhuskers* (1918). In this sense, he was the poet laureate of the American labor movement.

Strong Supporter of Both Ethnic Diversity and Unity among Americans. In his poem, *The People, Yes* (1936), he celebrates the wide array of ethnic groups which make up American culture. And in his series, *Chicago Poems*, he describes the many different ethnic groups that composed the citizenry of this great city during the early part of the century. Sandburg's reason for writing poetry about various ethnic groups was to show that unity and diversity are inseparable. Both are required for the continued success of our nation.

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Friendships were the Key to his Life and Work. Sandburg's ideas were stimulated by his close friendship with his brother-in-law, Edward Steichen (a genius of American photography), and by his wife and daughters who encouraged and assisted him during his writing of such works as his massive biography of Abraham Lincoln. He was also a great friend of Harry Golden, a newspaperman from Charlotte, North Carolina and mentor to Sandburg during the 1950's and 1960's.

Outstanding Biographer and Historian. His biography of Abraham Lincoln (1954) not only analyzed the important events and historical background of Lincoln's life, but it also demonstrated how the English language can be used with beauty and clarity to describe the life of our nation's greatest humanist-politician. Sandburg's genius was that he used his poetic talents to write beautiful prose which captured the nuances of Lincoln's time and place. Interestingly, his expressive style was similar to Lincoln's. Sandburg had great empathy with Lincoln because both grew up in Illinois, and both were superb expositors of the American-English language.

Defender of the Human Rights of All Racial and Ethnic Groups. During the Chicago race riots of 1919, Sandburg was employed as a reporter for the *Chicago Daily News*. He wrote a series of detailed articles on these riots which attempted to explain the multiple causes including job scarcity and racial prejudice. He was also one of the first important

national figures to support the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's.

Champion of the Power of Reason and the Intellect. His home in North Carolina contains about 12,000 books and magazines which he accumulated over several decades. Many of them were about the important issues of Sandburg's time. These publications symbolize his belief in solving human problems by first studying history and analyzing different viewpoints. Although he was strongly opposed to war, he was a veteran of the Spanish-American War and supported our nation's entry into both world wars. While many of our political and intellectual leaders opposed (during the late 1930's) a war against Nazi Germany, Sandburg ardently supported President Franklin Roosevelt's campaign to rally Americans against the Nazi regime.

Believed in the Power of the Human Voice and Music to Improve the Human Condition. Sandburg was an advocate of and contributor to the American folk song tradition. He had beautiful poetic and musical voices which he used to express his optimism and confidence in American culture. He said that he needed to sing and play his guitar everyday in order to keep a balanced outlook on life. His poems were influenced by the poetry of Chinese, Persian and Japanese cultures, and by the Bible, gospel music, the Blues, and folk ballads.

These are just a few of the things that gifted students can study about Carl Sandburg. His appeal to them is wide-ranging and stimulating.>>

"The fog comes/on little cat feet./ It sits looking/over harbor and city/on silent haunches/and then moves on." FOG By CARL SANDBURG

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LETTERS FROM OUR READERS

Response to article by Sara Ketchum on the Mary Baldwin College Program for Exceptionally Gifted Girls (January-March 1990 issue, v.4(1))

Ms. Ketchum does a fine job of describing the Program for the Exceptionally Gifted at Mary Baldwin College. It is reassuring to see that the four components of PEG, including academic acceleration, single sex environment, peer group support, and supervision and structure emerged as positive features. An article the length of Ms. Ketchum's could not address some of the issues that presumably would be discussed in a formal evaluation of the program. With full understanding that these issues were most likely unmentioned because of space limitations, several points are presented for consideration.

In August 1985, 11 charter students from across the country entered the PEG at Mary Baldwin. In May 1989, five were graduated. What happened to the other six? Are they still enrolled, or have they transferred to another school? If one or more of these six students had an unsatisfactory experience, it is important to know what factors contributed so that others considering radical academic acceleration may evaluate those factors.

Ms. Ketchum states that admission to PEG is selective. However, we do not have a sense of how selective it is. For example, what SAT scores are required for admission to PEG? What type of junior high school experience contributes to a successful experience at Mary Baldwin?

Since its inception, the Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth (SMPY) at Johns Hopkins University

has promoted -- when appropriate -- the radical acceleration of exceptional students. However, before urging any student to enter college two or more years earlier than his or her peers, we ask students to evaluate carefully whether they are ready and well prepared academically and socially.

One indication of academic readiness is how a student's SAT-V and SAT-M scores compare to those of the typical entering freshman. It would be informative to know how the SAT scores of PEG early entrants compared to those of the typical entering freshman at Mary Baldwin.

Academic preparation is another factor that we ask students to carefully evaluate. For example, has the student taken Advanced Placement exams? An AP score of 4 or 5 (preferably 5) is an indication that a student is ready for the challenges of college. When students enter a college or university immediately after eighth grade (as they may do in PEG) they may not have had the opportunity to take AP or honors courses. In our work with students who have entered college two or more years early we have found that Advanced Placement credits are a good predictor of college cumulative grade point average as well as college honors.

The students in PEG enjoy the special benefits of learning with an identified peer group of the same gender, and they receive supervision and structure because of their living arrangements at Mary Baldwin

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College. These factors would appear to contribute significantly to their success. More about the unique aspects of PEG, as compared to other programs, would be beneficial to individuals considering such radical acceleration for students.

It is important to publicize opportunities for combined high school and college experiences such as

those offered by PEG at Mary Baldwin, the Clarkson School at Clarkson University, and recently by the Texas Academy of Mathematics and Science at the University of North Texas. We look forward to evaluative articles about these programs.

Susan G. Assouline  
*Postdoctoral Fellow*  
*Study of Mathematically Pre-*  
*cocious Youth*  
*Johns Hopkins University*>>

Reply from Celeste Rhodes, Director, Program for Exceptionally Gifted Girls, Mary Baldwin College

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to Susan Assouline's letter of interest in the Program for the Exceptionally Gifted at Mary Baldwin College. PEG is a unique program of radical acceleration for gifted high school girls, designed from current recommendations in research to meet the needs of gifted females. Dr. Assouline asks several important questions in her letter which are as follows:

(1) What happened to the six charter PEG students who did not graduate from Mary Baldwin in May 1989? One charter student graduated from MBC in 1990 following the original design of PEG as a five year program and worked as a PEG resident tutor on staff this past year. She was accepted to graduate programs in economics at Cornell University and UCLA and will be attending UCLA this fall. Two other charter students left PEG after their third year. One transferred to Virginia Commonwealth University (closer to home) and graduated this May, and the other transferred to Rensselaer Polytechnic University in search of a major in Chemical Engineering. These college options were possible as a

result of the PEG experience. A total of three charter students transferred back to high school during or at the end of the first year of PEG. Reasons as to why students transfer back to high school include: personal adjustment issues, interest in the high school social co-ed experience, academic issues, financial issues, and family issues.

Attrition rates at PEG have recently been reduced considerably because of several changes in the program and selection procedures including: an older entrance age, accepting students who demonstrate a consistent pattern of achievement, and weighting factors of personal adjustment and maturity more significantly than in previous years. After a full evaluation performed by educators from the University of Virginia, a decision was made to accept students after their first year in high school. Accepting students after a minimum high school experience recognizes the need for them to make an informed choice when they opt to attend college early through PEG. However, PEG prides itself on implementing guidelines with sensitivity for the uniqueness of each

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student, and therefore is open to accepting a few younger truly exceptional students when ability, motivation and maturity are clearly manifested.

2. What SAT scores are required for admission to PEG? What type of previous school experience contributes to a successful experience at Mary Baldwin? PEG employs a full case study method in the selection process. Students submit a full school transcript; SAT scores; three recommendations (two from teachers, one from an administrator or counselor); parent essays; four student essays; and receive extensive interviews. (Their families are also interviewed.) Applications are then given full consideration by the selection committee made up of PEG and Mary Baldwin representatives from the faculty and administration. Although PEG does not use cutoff scores in the selection process, SAT scores have been found to be helpful predictors of an applicant's ability to do college level work. PEG students this year averaged 1050 combined SAT scores, having taken the test in the 7th-9th grades. PEG students generally compare with Mary Baldwin honor students' SAT scores and have comparable or higher scores than traditional students.

Students who do well in PEG are

highly motivated and gifted with unusual personal drive and sense of purpose. They typically talk about their need to help others and get on with their lives. Many feel that this enthusiasm for learning and making things happen is not respected or nurtured in the typical high school environment. Many of our students have been identified through the various talent search programs and participated successfully in summer programs sponsored by Johns Hopkins and Duke universities. They frequently score in the 99th percentile on standardized school achievement measures and have excellent grades in honors and gifted classes. Some go beyond school achievement and actively contribute to their community through service or arts organizations.

As happened last year, all of this year's graduating PEG students received a variety of college honors, including Phi Beta Kappa honors. Clearly, these PEG students have put in the hard work necessary to be successful here. PEG and other early college experiences offer an important option to our gifted, highly motivated youth.

Thank you for your excellent work in providing a newsletter which promotes an interchange of ideas and views about gifted education.>>

### Response To Paul Brandwein's Views on Identifying the Gifted Through Performance (July-September 1990 issue, v.4(3))

I agree with Brandwein's disinclination for overemphasizing a "hands on" approach in gifted education. By nature, intelligent children are able to conceptualize without the verification by sensual confirmation. The ability of the intelligent child to conceptualize without such confirmation, often makes a "hands

on" approach an elaborate waste of his time.

I also agree with his idea that performance is the only real confirmation of giftedness. It is never clear that a baseball player is a .300 hitter until he gets to bat. My problem with the generalization,

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however, is that in considering such issues, it has to be understood that excellence of performance alone is an insufficient criterion. The question of whether the performance is seminal or replicative is very important. Excellence in replication is not a sign of giftedness. Even apes "ape."

I agree with Brandwein on the vacuousness of so-called creativity tests. The most essential element in seminal creativity is the ability to reason. The "creativity test" developers operated from the assumption that the greater the number of possibilities considered, the greater the possibility for finding solutions to problems. Pasteur said, "chance favors the trained mind." The creativity test approach is excellent for parlor games. It is my contention that the best way to instruct gifted children is to do so within the structure of disciplines; and to make sure that the child is exposed to as many significant disciplines as possible. The disciplinary approach is more time efficient and structurally principled. The so-called inductive approach wastes a lot of time and it goes from the specific to the general. In a disciplinary approach the general principle is established and if done correctly, it covers all categorical cases. Logic and science are largely a matter of eliminating tried unsuccessful alternatives. Unless one knows what is wrong, he will never know what is right.

I vehemently disagree with his concept of "self-selection." I have lived too long in a world of "self-selected" individuals who are gifted by their own proclamation. It is the least objective method on a par with peer, parent, and teacher judgment. There is no abuse of reason more off

course than by those captive to their own ambitions. In each of those cases, the wish is father to the thought. Ninety percent of the time, their criteria are irrational, and so are the programs that ensue. That one succeeds more in that which he invests his time and effort is self-evident and not worthy of further investigation.

It occurs to me that the procedure of self-selection is "safe." It neither offends nor inconveniences anyone. Like most other so-called gifted programs, it panders to pretentious parents, children find it recreational, and it is minimally mentally challenging. It does not offend the way the schools are structured. It requires limited additional resources, and it is politically palatable to the parents of children with an empty attic. All they have to do is get their child to show up and he is not excluded. There is no danger of him suffering from an inferiority complex. Such programs belong in parks, not in schools.

If an educational strategy is applicable to all children on the basis of self-proclamation, it should be applied to all children. The quintessence of a legitimate gifted program is its exclusionary pace, scope, and depth. The rest is political pandering. To use the name "gifted," without adherence to categorical criteria just doesn't make sense.

Yossel Naiman  
Coordinator of Programs  
for the Gifted (1967-86)  
Chicago Public Schools>>