



A Different Drummer

The Publication of the Oregon Association for Talented and Gifted

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COMPLIMENTARY COPY TO SCHOOL DISTRICTS

The Oregon Association for Talented and Gifted is pleased to provide this complimentary reprint of *A Different Drummer* to Oregon school districts. OATAG is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing information and services related to gifted issues and promoting excellence in education. We hope you will enjoy this issue and find it useful in providing services to the gifted students in your school. For the latest information on gifted education in both the state and the nation, check out our web site at **www.oatag.org**. ***For more details on how your school can become a member of OATAG see page 8.***

An Chat with Dr. Laura Pehkonen

By Margaret DeLacy

The Oregon Department of Education recently announced the appointment of Dr. Laura Pehkonen as Oregon's TAG and Special Program Consultant. Dr. Pehkonen brings years of experience in talented and gifted education to the position. The following is a series of questions on issues of great importance to the future of talented and gifted education in the state:

Can you tell us about your educational and professional background?

I am a graduate of Jefferson High school in Portland, with B.S., Ed.M., and Ph.D. degrees from Oregon State University (UO Joint campus for Ph.D.). I had elementary teaching experience in Palo Alto; was a media specialist in Palo Alto; a TAG teacher in Albany while completing my doctorate in education with emphasis in gifted education with psychology and English doctoral minors. I designed and implemented TAG in Corvallis from 1981 to 1990; was Director and Co-Director of the Future Problem Solving Program in Oregon; served as Odyssey of the Mind Regional Coordinator and on the state board; and worked on the development of Oregon State University's Adventures in Learning and taught in that program. I taught summer graduate courses in gifted education at Western Oregon and OSU and University of Helsinki; did gifted consulting in British Columbia, Wales, and several states; and was the TAG Coordinator at Pasadena Unified School District for four years. I have taught gifted and talented grades 3 - 9 in regular and Saturday programs; taught courses for gifted endorsements required in Ohio and Kentucky — Xavier, University of Kentucky; and was the full time state consultant for gifted education for the Kentucky Department of Education for five years.

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Editor of A Different Drummer

Darlene Robinson

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Gifted Kids At Risk: Who's Listening?

By Pat Schuler, Ph.D.

Creative Insights

Driving home from last week's Hollingsworth Conference on the Highly Gifted, I heard a radio interview with Thomas Moore, author of *Care of the Soul*. He spoke of the loss of empathy in our lives. His words echoed those spoken only hours earlier by Dr. Thom Buescher, an expert on gifted adolescents. We were discussing the tragedy in Littleton, Colorado. I mentioned that I was about to write an article about gifted kids at risk. "What factors do you think were involved in this horrible incident?" I asked.

"The lack of intimacy and rejection," he replied.

Now, I sit here surrounded by newspaper and magazine clippings all offering opinions about the "whys" of Littleton and other locations where bright kids have murdered or committed suicide. Suggestions on how to avoid similar incidents: gun control, metal detectors, peer mediation, conflict resolution, changing media messages, controlling video games and access to the internet, parent involvement, religion, and more counselors in our schools...they are all here. Yet no one discusses an important component in understanding what is happening to some bright kids - their being "gifted" and at risk for emotional difficulties.

E-mails and discussion with colleagues around the country confirm what Thomas Moore and Thom Buescher so eloquently stated. Loss of empathy, lack of intimacy, and rejection are daily experiences for some gifted children and adolescents. As "Geek Profiling" sweeps the country, we must speak out to dispel the myths that surround what it means to be "gifted and talented." We must make a concerted effort to educate our society so that awareness, acceptance, and action will result. It is time to ask others to listen to us. It is time to say clearly: *bright kids are not better, yet they are different; and because they are, they face different issues.*

Consider these two prevailing and paradoxical myths about gifted children and adolescents:

Myth 1: They do not have problems; somehow they can handle difficulties on their own.

Myth 2: Some of their characteristics are perceived as pathological.

(DeLacy/continued from page 1)

How did you become interested in TAG education?

While working as a media specialist in a school on the Stanford campus where nearly three-fourths of the students were identified as gifted, I was asked to provide special services specifically to challenge these students. I was excited by what they could do and their eagerness to learn; what a delight to see their excitement when challenged.

What programs did Kentucky have for gifted students? How does Oregon compare?

Kentucky requires that gifted children be identified and receive appropriate services K-12 in all categories of giftedness — intellectual; specific academic aptitude in reading/language arts, social studies, science, and/or math; creativity; leadership; visual and performing arts including drama, dance, music, and visual arts. Teachers who have gifted children in their classrooms must have training in gifted education. Gifted specialists who provide services beyond the regular classroom teacher must have an endorsement in gifted education (12 semester hours, including a three hour practicum). Services to gifted students must be matched to their needs, including social/emotional; must ensure continuous progress in diagnosed areas through high school; must have multiple service delivery options in a district. For example, the intellectually gifted have a research based need to have regular “safe” interaction with other intellectually gifted children. This would necessitate that they have time by themselves with a gifted specialist in a setting such as a pull-out or special class. Underachieving gifted students may need to have special counseling. To ensure continuous progress, some students may need to attend classes in another building (elementary to middle, at a college, on the internet, with a mentor, etc.). One delivery option cannot meet all of the needs. Individual districts and site-based councils determine service models, but must meet state requirements for multiple services, services matched to needs, and the specific requirement that gifted students must be grouped for instruction by ability, interest and need. All services must further develop the identified area of giftedness. Gifted students must have an individual gifted services plan which is not the same as an IEP, but does specify what specific needs are being addressed and by whom. Schools must provide progress reports on the gifted student services plan to parents at least twice a year. Primary students are selected to participate in a primary talent pool and must have services to nurture areas of diagnosed high potential, but are not formally identified until grade four. There are governor’s schools for specially selected high school students during the summer and a new governor’s residential school being developed for the state’s very top math and science high school students, allowing them to compress high school requirements and complete two years of college requirements while of high school age but housed and instructed on a college campus. These options are funded by the state with a special allocation, not part of the regular gifted education programs state allocation.

Oregon’s requirement that identified gifted students must be instructed at the appropriate level and rate is comparable to Kentucky’s requirement for a continuous progress challenging curriculum, except that the requirement in Kentucky extends through high school — if a student is gifted in math, the school must continue to provide services to further develop that ability. This may mean special mentorships, taking college classes, providing distance learning, etc. In Oregon the high school must provide appropriate level and rate for the courses they offer. ***Oregon schools MAY identify and serve in areas other than intellectual and academic; Kentucky SHALL (must) (terms in regulations).*** Preservice training in gifted education, differentiating instruction (matching curriculum to students to ensure continuous progress and maximizing potential) is not required in either state. However, in Kentucky classroom teachers who have gifted children in their classroom are required to have training (professional development, on-going consultation with a gifted specialist, and/or graduate coursework and workshops), and universities are responding to the need to incorporate working with diverse learners (that includes those whose prior knowledge and abilities differ from the average), as experienced teacher expectations (and continued certification) require teacher skills in this area. Three universities in Kentucky have centers for gifted

education and all teach courses in gifted education; most offer courses each semester and during the summer; two or three offer a master's degree in gifted education. There are very few university courses on gifted education in Oregon, and those I have found seem to be short courses in summer. I have not found any courses in gifted education offered as an elective in regular sessions. (I haven't seen all catalogs, but I have not heard of any.)

How does funding for TAG in Oregon compare to what is being done in other states?

Kentucky has a mandate and some funding to supplement local district gifted and talented education budgets. The current annual budget is just over \$6.7 million; local districts receive 94% with the remainder for state initiatives such as model gifted/talented sites; special gifted/talented teacher training academies; regional gifted/talented resource libraries, etc. Because Kentucky requires identification and services for five areas, they have more identified gifted students — approximately 95,000. That works out to about \$66 per gifted student. Districts are requesting an increase in state funding, as this is really insufficient to meet needs. ***Oregon has 42,250 students identified with an annual budget of just over \$100,000—that's about \$2.82 per gifted child per year;*** no funds supplemental to the state school funds provided for every student are sent to local districts. The average state allocation among mandated states (35 out of 43 reporting in the 1998-99 *State of the States Gifted and Talented Education Report*) is \$239.30 per child (this does not include two states that have unusually high funding — Georgia with over \$1 million per identified child and Mississippi with \$917,000, nor states that did not provide figures; it represents 16 of the mandated states). Neighboring states with mandates provide funding at the following levels — Washington - \$125.04 per child — \$6.2 million annually; Idaho - \$60.59 per gifted child — \$500,000 annually; Montana - \$17.17 per gifted child — \$150,000 annually. It must be kept in mind, however, that comparisons are complicated by differences in educational intents which influence funding.

Are TAG programs being offered throughout the state?

TAG programs are required in every school district. Why do you think that gifted education is important? Do we really need TAG programs? It is reckless to risk wasting potential to solve complex problems that affect humanity. Research suggests that TAG students often do not do well academically or emotionally without special services which address their unique needs.

Isn't TAG education elitist?

If we truly believe that all children should have an equal opportunity to develop their potential — it is elitist to deny some children the opportunity to learn and develop. If learning experiences and services to gifted children are matched to meet their unique needs and not special privileges, that is not elitist. For example, if gifted children are given the opportunity to go on a field trip or participate in an activity which is appropriate for all children and does not meet a special need, that is elitist. Generic field trips such as one to a planetarium to hear a presentation typically given to other children of this age are appropriate for all children. It would be elitist to only allow TAG students to attend. However, if this were a group of gifted students who had been doing some advanced research on some astronomical phenomenon and were scheduled to use some special instruments and/or discuss their theories and findings with an astronomer at the planetarium, this experience would be matched to the needs of these students and would not be appropriate for a general fifth grade population — therefore not elitist. ***If services are matched to needs and not treated as rewards for being bright, they are not elitist.*** Denying an appropriate education to children because they are gifted is elitist — some have termed it as educational malpractice.

Aren't all children gifted?

All children are gifts, but all children are not gifted. The strengths of each child should be nurtured and developed. Strengths are on a continuum; those at the extremes require special approaches to ensure developing their potential in any area. Gifted children are not gifted in everything.

Why should TAG children have extra services? Won't they succeed anyway?

This is one of the most pernicious of myths — TAG students have some very unique needs and vulnerabilities which all too often prevent them from developing their gifts. Over 60% of intellectually gifted children become underachievers before age nine — especially if they have not had appropriate services delivered by teachers and counselors trained in meeting their needs.

Doesn't every teacher deserve to have gifted children in his/her classroom?

TAG students are learners, not reinforcers. Sprinkling gifted children most often results in putting them in a position of having no friends — no other child to feel connected to in the way they think and feel, no other child to challenge and stimulate their thinking and learning. The practice of assigning one or a few gifted children to each teacher at a grade level also limits the strategies and options for the teacher to use in order to provide effective learning activities for these students. Unfortunately, this practice often results in using the gifted child as a tutor, rather than providing meaningful educational and positive social-emotional development experiences.

Can't the TAG children learn by teaching other children?

TAG students often are not good teachers — they make intuitive leaps in their thinking and expect others to do likewise; consequently, they do not explain well and omit steps others need for understanding. Also, when gifted children are put into “teaching” roles, they are missing the opportunity to learn new things. Brain research supports the need to deal with new information in new ways to enhance brain development. It is also important to remember that gifted children often feel like they don't fit with other children; putting them in the role of an adult can further alienate them from their age peers. In some situations, however, gifted children can benefit from teaching others — for example, teaching another interested child to play chess. All children, including gifted children, have a right to direct instruction by a trained, qualified teacher.

Is ability grouping a good idea? Isn't tracking bad?

The terms ability grouping and tracking are often incorrectly used interchangeably. Flexible grouping for instruction by ability and need facilitates continuous progress. Tracking is fixed and does not allow for students to move in and out of an instructional setting based on their needs and interests. All children should have an equal opportunity to learn; equal opportunity does not mean every child should be on the same page or progress at the same rate. ***All children must have instruction that requires them to put effort into their learning, thus instruction must be at a level of complexity that challenges them.*** Students who do not have to work at learning often develop an attitude that everything should be easy. Such an attitude can result in students who back away from anything requiring effort, do not build confidence to approach difficult tasks, and do not develop study habits necessary for success in college.

Margaret DeLacy is the President of Portland School District's Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee and a member of the OATAG Board. Ms. DeLacy is President of the Northwest Independent Scholar's Association and the parent of three gifted children.

Emotional Needs of Gifted Boys

By Paula Prober, M.S.

I worry about my son. He's only seven years old but I already see him hiding his feelings. He used to be so emotional. He would cry easily, even when other children got hurt on the playground. Of course, then I worried that he was too emotional, that kids would tease him because he was so sensitive. I don't understand. He seems so bright. He was reading when he was four. His vocabulary is enormous. He's always full of questions about stuff I didn't know existed when I was his age. So how can he be so smart and so emotionally immature?

If this sounds like you describing your son, you're not alone. Many parents of precocious boys express similar concerns. Even in the seemingly progressive '90's, we still get nervous when our sons show us their fear, glee, shame, or despair. And we teach them with our subtle and not-so-subtle messages that feelings are female and "real boys" don't go there.

What parents don't know is that precocious children are usually more emotionally expressive than their peers. When a child is intellectually advanced, he often has matching levels of perception and sensitivities. This means that he can not only think in more complex ways and process information at a faster rate, but he is also more aware of and sensitive to his environment. This would be the child who, for example, can't sleep because of his anxiety over global warming, or who grieves when the trees in his neighborhood are cut down, or who is overwhelmed by the noise at the birthday party and offended by the "childishness" of the other four year olds. Often, these boys cry as a way to express and release their pain, fear, and compassion. Parents and others can misinterpret this as emotional immaturity.

"When a child is intellectually advanced, he often has matching levels of perception and sensitivities."

How do we support these boys in developing and appreciating their rich and varied emotions?

- **Be authentic.** Your child will be able to sense your discomfort or impatience. If you try and pretend you're accepting of all feelings but you really get irritated by "victims" and "wimps," he'll know it. Examine your own biases, fears of being too needy, early messages about emotion. Ask your son to help you understand his world and then listen closely. Tell him what you think he said and ask if it's correct. Your honesty and vulnerability will build trust and a safe place for him to be real. Even if he has to learn to control, contain, and conceal some of his feelings out in the world, he'll know he can show you his many dimensions.
- **Teach him ways to soothe himself.** This can include simple techniques he can use at school or during activities or more complex remedies that the whole family can practice. Possibilities include—deep breathing, visualization of a color that he finds calming and feeling it flowing through his body, imagining an animal by his side who is a loving protector, singing a song to himself; create a family ritual where members share stories of difficult experiences and how they got through them, write or draw in a journal, engage in a form of exercise that relieves tension, use his connection to nature to create a sense of peace and safety.

- **Supply him with specific words to describe the feelings** – disappointment, grief, embarrassment, for example; discuss why some people are uncomfortable with emotion; role play various ways to handle emotions in public.
- **Provide consistent and reliable limits.** Even though your son needs your empathy, he also needs you to say “no” when necessary. He may act as though he wants to be in charge and may argue his case like a pro but he needs the security of clear boundaries.
- **Tell him that he doesn’t have to know everything (neither do you, by the way) and that some things take time to learn.** Give examples from your own life. Tell him that his mind may think up things that his body isn’t able to do yet, and even though that’s terribly frustrating, it doesn’t mean he’s not intelligent.
- **Help him find friends who have similar intellectual needs and sensitivities.**
- **Read Pollack’s *Real Boys* and Garbarino’s *Lost Boys: Why Our Sons Turn Violent and How We Can Save Them*.** Remind other parents that all of our children need us to welcome their fears, passions, joys, and sorrows.

Paula Prober, M.S., is a licensed professional counselor in private practice in Eugene, OR, specializing in counseling and consulting with gifted adults, youth, and families. She can be reached at (541) 683-7167.

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SCHOOL DISTRICT MEMBERSHIPS

School districts are invited to purchase a District Membership. The cost is:

\$80 per year.

Four staff members will receive full membership privileges, including a subscription to *A Different Drummer* and free admission to the Fall OATAG Conference. Additional professional memberships may be arranged at the same time for \$20 per individual.

OATAG Fall Conference a Success!

By Darlene Robinson

Woodburn, Oregon was the site of the successful second annual fall mini-conference hosted by the Oregon Association for Talented and Gifted. Julie Gonzales, Keynote Speaker, provided members with some positive approaches for both parents and teachers that help build partnerships and support the educational needs of TAG students around the state. A nationally known speaker, gifted advocate and specialist in parent-educator relations, Ms. Gonzales brought her twenty years' experience as a gifted advocate to her audience of parents and educators.

Presenting "The Art of Advocacy: Breaking the Barriers in Gifted Education", Ms. Gonzales emphasized that parents are the primary advocates for their children in school. Making advocacy work so that a child's needs are met is only the beginning. In addition to the wealth of advocacy-related information she shared, she also emphasized that in order to make changes within a school setting, you must be willing to work with the entire system in any capacity you can, including interacting with teachers and administrators, plus addressing administrative rules. In making effective changes the object is to address issues that not only benefit our own children, but those in current need and those who come after you.

Oregon Department of Education Calls TAG Meeting

By Alice DeWittie

What is the state of gifted education around Oregon? On November 1, 1999 Oregon Department of Education's Bob Siewert facilitated a meeting in Eugene to discuss this issue. At this meeting there were approximately 30 representatives ranging from University TAG grant people, district personnel, specialists from ESD's, teachers and parents. To continue the discussion, two additional meetings will be held to produce a "white paper". The ultimate goal is to further gifted education in Oregon, possibly through a funding bill, as early as the next legislative session. We'll give you more updates after the next meeting, scheduled for Spring, 2000.

Johns Hopkins University's TALENT SEARCH 2000

**For Students In Second Through
Fourth Grades**

If your child is in second to fourth grades, there is still time to sign up to take the School and College Ability Test (SCAT). The deadline for signing up is March 15, 2000. All students scored in the 97th, 98th, or 99th percentiles (national norms) on their most recent or next-most recent standardized aptitude or achievement test are qualified to participate. Students need only one qualifying total or subtest score in one area. Students who qualify on the exam are eligible to participate in some activities through CTY (Center for Talented Youth).

Contact: Telephone: 1-800-548-1180

FAX: 410-516-0377

e-mail: iaay.programsinfo@jhu.edu

DID YOU KNOW?

A Civil Rights Action for Gifted Children

By Wenda Sheard

Because Leila Levi's son walked at five months, read high school level books in two languages at age five, and enrolled in college at age seven, she never had the traditional experience of raising a baby. But during the past year she's been nurturing a "baby" that may radically change our legal perceptions of gifted children.

Levi's new baby is an age discrimination complaint she filed on August 19, 1999, with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. In the complaint, she outlined discrimination her son has suffered at the hands of the California Department of Education, the Los Angeles Unified School District, and Santa Monica Community College.

After losing a special education battle with the school district over a proposed independent educational plan (IEP) for her son, Levi looked through laws in an attempt to discover where gifted children fit in the legal and educational picture. After much searching, Levi concluded that because our educational system is based on age, educational discrimination against gifted children must also be based on age. Levi, who is a teacher by training, peppered her civil rights complaint with educational information. In an effort to guide the Office for Civil Rights into the gifted arena, Levi cited works by Leta Stetter Hollingworth, June G. Maker, Linda Silverman, Alexinia Baldwin, and Ken Seeley.

The premise behind Levi's complaint is that her son and other similarly situated gifted children are denied appropriate educational services due to their chronological age. Of two children both functioning on a tenth grade level, the child who is chronologically age fifteen or sixteen receives appropriate services but the child who is chronologically younger than fifteen or sixteen does not.

Many of us have heard that states forbid children under a certain age to take the GED and thus qualify for college entrance without a high school diploma. California Education Code Section 51429 states that the Superintendent of Public Instruction can issue a high school equivalency certificate to a person who has not completed high school only if that person is at least eighteen years old. Many of us have heard comments from school district officials that although a fifth grade child is functioning years above grade level, the child's age requires that the child remain in fifth grade. School officials continue to insist on placement according to chronological age despite solid research backing the acceleration of gifted

children. Some colleges refuse to admit young gifted children based on their chronological age. In Levi's case, Santa Monica Community College forbid her son from taking more than six credit hours per term. The college announced the six credit hour limit after Levi's son had successfully completed two years at the college. Levi notes that although administration officials at the college have placed roadblocks in front of her son, professors at the college have been wonderful.

In addition to alleging age discrimination, the complaint alleges discrimination under PL 94-142 (IDEA) because some gifted children's disabilities are masked and/or ignored when those children work at or above grade level. Disabilities which prevent a child from learning at a level and pace appropriate for the child's mental age should be addressed regardless of whether a discrepancy exists between the child's mental and chronological ages.

On November 24, 1999, the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights issued a decision finding Levi's claims against Santa Monica Community College (Docket Number 09-99-2308) and the Los Angeles Unified School District (Docket Number 09-99-1422) to be complete. Because the federal Age Discrimination Act requires the Office for Civil Rights to forward any complete age discrimination claims to the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) for a sixty day period of mediation, the Office forwarded Levi's action to the FMCS. The FMCS has attempted to mediate the age discrimination claims in Levi's complaint. So far, Levi and attorneys from the Office of Civil Rights have met with representatives from Santa Monica College, but the Los Angeles Unified School District refused mediation. At this juncture, it appears that mediation is not possible, and a federal lawsuit will be filed by the Office for Civil Rights on behalf of Levi's son and similarly situated children.

What's the good news here? First, it appears that neither the college nor the school district will challenge the factual basis of the allegations in Levi's complaint. Both appear to concede that Levi accurately recited the facts in her complaint. Second, and more importantly from the point of view of all gifted children, the farther up Levi's case proceeds on the legal ladder, the bigger the win for all gifted children.

In the November 24, 1999 decision, the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights also dismissed Levi's age discrimination claims against the California Department of Education. The Office noted that 34 C.F.R. Section 110.2(b)(1), a regulation implementing the federal Age Discrimination Act, states that the age discrimination regulations do not apply to "criteria for participation in age-related terms" established by federal, state, or local law adopted by an "elected, general purpose legislative body."

Thus, because the California state legislature has established age eighteen as a minimum age for the award of a high school equivalency certificate, Levi's son, who turned nine years old in October, must wait nine more years for such a certificate even though he is a college student. Go figure.

In the dismissal of the California Department of Education from Levi's civil rights action lies two important lessons for gifted advocates. First, when lobbying state legislatures for improvements in gifted education, request a simple, common-sense, global provision prohibiting discrimination against gifted children on the basis of their chronological age. Ask legislators, who are often reluctant to vote for a potentially costly gifted mandate, instead to vote for a presumably cost-free provision prohibiting age discrimination against gifted children.

(continued on page 12)

Second, be alert to any proposed federal, state, or local laws that might establish criteria for participation in age-related terms. Although age-related criteria might be rational when applied to the vast majority of children, age-related criteria simply do not apply to many gifted children. If you see an age-related criterion coming down the legislative pike, rally your gifted forces. Give legislators testimony about the absurd results that age-related criteria have inflicted on gifted children. Lobby for exceptions for gifted children. After all, gifted children are by definition exceptional.

What does Levi's son think of the civil rights action and all his mother's struggles? He says, "It's kind of funny that this whole thing started because she got too tired of fighting and just wanted to sit down and be Mommy. She's always reminded me of Rosa Parks."

It's ironic that in the process of denying Levi's son an appropriate education, administrators at Santa Monica Community College and the Los Angeles Unified School District are providing him with a crash course in real-life age discrimination, civil rights actions, media relations, and legal procedures. And he's learning quickly.

Postscript: After the United States Supreme Court decided *Kimel v. Florida Board of Regents* on January 11, 2000, the United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights told Levi that the *Kimel* decision will have no effect on the age discrimination portions of her civil rights action. In *Kimel*, the court held that the 1967 Age Discrimination in Employment Act exceeded Congress' authority. The age discrimination portions of Levi's action involve the 1975 Age Discrimination Act, which prohibits age discrimination in programs and activities operated by recipients of federal financial assistance.

Links:

United States Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights:
<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OCR/aboutus.html>

Kimel v. Florida Board of Regents:
<http://supct.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/98-791.ZS.html>

A website describing one of Leila Levi's gifted advocacy efforts in Los Angeles:
<http://www.highlygifted.org/>

A website with more information about the civil rights action and Leila Levi:
<http://www.britesparks.com/resources/levi/index.htm>

Wenda Sheard is a mother of three gifted children, an Ohio-licensed attorney (inactive), and a doctoral student at the University of North Texas. wsheard@home.com She thanks Leila Levi for her assistance with this article.

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Conferences

38th Annual CAG Conference (California Association for the Gifted)

*"Century of Reflections-
Honoring the Past, Imagining the Future"*

March 3-5, 2000
Los Angeles, CA

For further information contact:
(310) 215-1898

AGATE Conference (Advocacy for Gifted and Talented Education)

April 6-8, 2000
Billings, MT

For further information contact:
(406) 652-3720

WAETAG 2000 Conference (Washington Association for the Education of Talented and Gifted)

*"Harvest the Gifts:
Getting to the Core of Differentiation"*
October 19 - 20, 2000

Wenatchee, WA
For further information contact:
terribawden@hotmail.com

47th Annual NAGC Convention

"Crossroads to the Future"
November 1 - 5, 2000
Atlanta, GA

For further information contact:
(202) 785-4268

14th World Conference of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children

Barcelona, Spain

July 31 - August 4, 2001

For further information contact:
Centro Huerta Del Rey: c_h_rey@correo.cop.es

Seminars

TAG Symposium on Diversity and Gifted **April 5, 2000**

Vancouver, British Columbia
For further information contact:
www.cectag.org

Council for Exceptional Children **April 5-8, 2000**

Vancouver, British Columbia
For further information contact:
www.cec.sped.org

Javits 2000 Summer Program **June 8 - 30, 2000**

Tulsa, OK
For further information contact:
Dr. Pat Hollingsworth
University School, 600 S. College
Tulsa, OK 74104

Winter Opportunities

Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI)

Portland, OR
Science Camps and Classes
(Ages 6 to Adult)

For further information contact:
(503) 797-4545

Science Adventures for Kids

Science Classess for Able Learners
(Grades KG - 6th)

For further information contact:
Jaimie Vaudrey
(503) 579-0269

Saturday Academy

“Classes for Students of High Potential”

For further information contact:
Portland Campus: (503) 690-1190
South Coast Campus: (541) 267-3635
Corvallis Campus: (541) 737-1822
Lane County Campus: (541) 346-1402
Southern Oregon Campus: (541) 552-6326

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR KIDS*

Adventures in Learning

Corvallis, OR
July 17 - 28, 2000
(Grades 5 - 7)

Application Deadline - March 15, 2000

For further information contact:
Judy Michael at (541) 737-1289
or e-mail: michaelj@orst.edu

Super Summer

Eugene, OR
(Grades K - 5)

Dates TBA in June - July, 2000
Application Deadline- April 15, 2000
For further information contact:
afisher@darkwing.uoregon.edu

Summer Enrichment Program

Eugene, OR
(Grades 6 -9)

Session 1: June 25 - July 8, 2000
Session II: July 9 - July 22, 2000
Application Deadline May 15, 2000
For further information contact:
sumenr@oregon.uoregon.edu

Summer Writers' Camp

Eugene, OR
(Grades 4 -8)

Dates TBA
Sessions: in July for Grades 3 - 5
in August for Grades 6 - 7
For further information contact:
ywalouisa@aol.com

Academy 2000

Ashland, OR
Session A

Gr. 5 - 6 - June 18 - 24, 2000
(Sessions B & C are Concurrent)
Gr. 5 - 6 & Gr. 7 - 8- June 25 - July 1, 2000
For further information contact:
(541) 552-6916

**Please make a note of application deadlines.*

NEWS FROM NAGC

(The National Association for Gifted Children)

ERIC to Develop a Central Source for Gifted Program Information

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education is developing a searchable, online database of programs for gifted and talented students. Educators of the gifted will be able to look for and contact programs that are currently in operation and take advantage of their expertise and experience. The database will include a variety of types of gifted programs, including science and technology high schools, acceleration programs, magnet, and charter schools. The database will include a variety of types of gifted programs, including science and technology high schools, acceleration programs, magnet, and charter schools. The database will be available to the public on the Web by January 1, 2000. For more information or to nominate a program for inclusion, contact:

*Sandra L. Berger
Information Specialist Gifted Education
ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education
(703) 264-9475 or ericec@cec.sped.org*

Over 100 Summer and Enrichment Programs on the Web

The NAGC web site now includes a geographical listing of summer and enrichment programs for gifted students. This resource is updated regularly and provides valuable information for teachers and parents. For information about listing a program or to obtain an application form, contact:

*Nadine Hartke in the
NAGC National Office at:*

(202) 785-4268

Art Division to Produce Calendar

The Arts Division of NAGC will produce a two-year wall calendar spotlighting artwork and poetry produced by gifted and talented students in grades K-12. Proceeds from the calendar will support the Nicholas Green Distinguished Student Awards. For complete details, including deadline and format for entries, contact:

NAGC National Office at:

(202) 785-4268

(Schuler/continued from page 3)

To dispel such misconceptions, we must better understand the gifted; their intellectual and personality characteristics, the manifestations of high ability, and the specific problems and issues they face.

Silverman (1992) presents lists of interrelated intellectual and personality characteristics of giftedness that may be found across all talent domains:

Intellectual Characteristics	Personality Characteristics
Exceptional reasoning ability	Insightfulness
Intellectual curiosity	Need to understand
Rapid learning rate	Need for mental stimulation
Facility with abstraction	Perfectionism
Complex thought processes	Need for precision/logic
Vivid imagination	Excellent sense of humor
Early moral concern	Sensitivity/empathy
Passion for learning	Intensity

Giftedness impacts a child’s psychological growth and well-being through the relationship among these characteristics, the type of giftedness manifested, the degree of giftedness (above average to profound), and how well the needs of the child are being met. A child or adolescent may demonstrate general high ability or it may be in a certain domain such as mathematics, verbal, spatial, interpersonal, music, or kinesthetic. In addition to these characteristics and areas of high abilities, it is important to know what attitudes, values, personality temperament, and life experiences a gifted student brings to school. The culture and values of the school and community will also impact whether a gifted child or adolescent feels invited to participate as a positive contributing member.

Research consistently shows that many gifted children and adolescents have the capacity for intensified thinking and feeling, as well as vivid imaginations. Whether they are gifted athletes, artists, musicians, intellectuals, or are highly creative, they may have higher levels of emotional development due to greater awareness and intensity of feeling. “Being different” in ability and personality characteristics may lead to higher expectations, jealousy, and resentment by adults and peers. Specific problems that may result can be external or internal (*see chart at the top of page 17*):

For some gifted adolescents, acceptance by their peer group is the major source of stress in their lives. Repeatedly they hear the message, “It’s okay to be smart, but it’s better if you are something else we can accept as well.”

So what happens when a gifted adolescent is “just smart” and is trying to survive in a perceived anti-intellectual environment? Options may include: conformity (working hard to be “average” or “normal”), withdrawal (isolation or alienation), depression (blaming themselves), aggressiveness (blaming others), or continued nonconformity. Higham and Buescher (1987, p. 29) call this the “cultivated weirdness act”

whereby a gifted adolescent makes individual statements which say, “Okay, I’m different — just let me show you HOW DIFFERENT I am.”

Problems for Gifted Related to "Being Different"

- Difficulty with social relationships
- Refusal to do routine, repetitive assignments
- Inappropriate criticism of others
- Lack of awareness of impact on others
- Lack of sufficient challenge in schoolwork
- Depression (often manifested in boredom)
- High levels of anxiety
- Difficulty accepting criticism
- Hiding talents to fit with peers
- Nonconformity and resistance to authority
- Excessive competitiveness
- Isolation from peers
- Low frustration tolerance
- Poor study habits
- Difficulty in selecting among a diversity of interests

(Silverman, 1987)

For some gifted adolescents, seeking special environments, positive or negative, where they can be accepted and excel helps them to deal with the lack of empathy, loss of intimacy, and rejection. This may intensify their own lack of tolerance for others, and they may choose overt anti-social and/or suicidal behaviors. Add to that easy access to guns, an everyday stream of acceptable violent messages in the media and video games, inappropriate educational opportunities, lack of parental awareness or supervision, role conflicts, community apathy or stagnation, and possible mental illness, and should we be surprised that horrible, tragic incidents occur? Repeatedly, we see factors for children and adolescents who are at risk for emotional difficulties stated in the press. Dirkes (1983) provided symptoms of undesirable levels of anxiety in gifted children, including (*see chart on page 18*):

I worry that educators, parents and counselors may not be able to detect the stress burdening gifted children and adolescents. Some gifted children and adolescents cover up their symptoms of sadness and depression in order to fit in. Still others fear admitting to distress, because they may be perceived as less than perfect and not in control of their lives. I hear too many straight A gifted students, who are a “pleasure to have in class,” speak of their anguish because of peer and adult rejection. The intensity of their pain and anger is hard to imagine.

What actions can we, the lawmakers, parents, educators, and counselors take to help gifted kids at risk?

Become more aware of the characteristics, needs, and issues of gifted children. They need help in “being different.” The lack of empathy and rejection by others, including adults and peers, is commonplace for many of these children. According to Thom Buescher, “Lack of empathy and intimacy lead to poor coping skills, and those provide the momentum for intolerance...the precursor to violent

acts.” Too many gifted children and adolescents suffer in silence, or seek negative ways to express their frustration and anger. Teasing and humiliation must be stopped. Empathy and intimacy are needed so that emotional sensitivity doesn’t become a liability.

Symptoms of Anxiety

- Decreased performance
- Expressed desire to be like teen-agers
- Reluctance to work in a team
- Expressions of low self-concept
- Excessive sadness or rebellion
- Reluctance to make choices or suggestions
- Extremes of activity or inactivity
- A change in noise or quietude
- Repetition of rules and directions to make sure that they can be followed
- Avoidance of new ventures unless certain of the outcome
- Other marked changes in personality. In addition, we find other danger signals for gifted children and adolescents that indicate they may be seriously depressed or suicidal.
- Self-imposed dislocation from family
- Self-imposed perfection as the ultimate standard, to the point that the only tasks enjoyed are the ones completed perfectly
- Deep concern with personal powerlessness
- Narcissism — total preoccupation with self and with fantasy
- Unusual fascination with violence
- Eating disorders
- Chemical abuse
- Rigidly compulsive behaviors

(Schmitz & Galbraith, 1985)

All of us must advocate for appropriate services to address the lack of challenge and the issues so many gifted children and adolescents face. Programming and services need to be implemented for

For information on what's new in gifted education, visit a website that will allow you to access information about the Oregon Association for Talented and Gifted and what's happening in the state and nationally. Find us at:

OATAG.ORG

To get updates on gifted education through links with education and government sites, access to our kids' site, contact OATAG board members, or volunteer in an exciting and challenging organization, drop in via the internet. Check us out and find out what's new in the world of gifted education!

specific extraordinary talents. In New York State, gifted children are the only special needs students who do not warrant appropriate educational services! Laws need to be changed - now.

Parents, develop an awareness of your gifted child's characteristics. Let them know that they are more than their achievement or academic ability. If you sense sadness, rejection, or anger, speak with your child. Find a counselor who has training and experience in working with gifted children and adolescents to help you.

Educators, reexamine your own attitudes and beliefs about gifted children and adolescents, especially those who are highly creative and may be comfortable in their nonconformity. Resist the urge to "Geek Profile." The messages I have read in the past two weeks from bright kids harassed because they look or think differently are frightening. Offer all staff members training on how to differentiate instruction for gifted students, including acceleration, enrichment, special programs, mentorships, as well as how to meet their social and emotional needs. All school personnel need to understand the differentiating characteristics of gifted individuals, related needs, and possible concomitant problems. Teachers need to open the lines of communication, and LISTEN, really listen to what bright kids are saying — about themselves, their values, their interests.

Counselors, get training on the intellectual, social and emotional issues of gifted children and adolescents. Become aware of how schools can be the most restrictive and stressful places for bright kids. Help gifted students develop appreciation for the similarities and differences between themselves and others, teach social skills if necessary, and show how to solve problems in creative and positive ways. Every school district should have at least one counselor who specializes in or has specific training about gifted students.

What happened in Littleton, Colorado is horrific. It is not known if mental illness was a factor in the lives of the adolescent boys who created such carnage. We do know, however, that they were bright young men who perceived rejection from the culture within their school, and chose violence as a coping strategy.

As parents, educators, and counselors we can foster intimacy, empathy, and acceptance for gifted children and adolescents. The choices are now ours to make.

Who is listening? Who will act?

(This article is reprinted from *Gems of Agate*, Summer 1999.)

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