



Students at the Wye Center for Creative Writing summer school for gifted and talented. Photos: N/S-LTI-G/T.

What Can You Do for the Gifted on Monday Morning?

Barbara Johnson

Varied resources and much imagination are helping to revolutionize programs for the gifted. Noted here are selected examples of successful and ongoing programs for the gifted chosen throughout the U.S.

"Now I am ready to write seriously—I feel I have a solid foundation. The casualness was perfect—much better than the stiff, rigid classroom situation in schools."

"I'll never forget the experience as long as I live."

"I love this camp and being around other people who write and feel about it like I do."¹

Talking about Wye Center for Creative Writing, Queenstown, Maryland, the students who are quoted above are representative of the nearly 900 gifted and talented students who spent two weeks there this past summer. Each of the ninth-, tenth-, and eleventh-graders, who together represented every public school system in Maryland, attended one of eight summer sessions. During the camp session, the students focused on writing and a choice of visual arts, drama, dance, chorus, or environmental education. With their application for the Wye Center for Creative Writing, they submitted two writing samples and a written recommendation from a teacher. (State Consultant for Gifted and Talented with the Maryland Department of Education is James L. Fisher.)

The original concept of a center for the arts began ten years ago as a Title III project. The camp, now completely state-controlled, seeks to cover basics, skills, various types of writing, and opportunities to specialize in one style. The Center literature details the unique, advanced level of learning experienced by the campers. This helps them develop higher-level thinking skills, explore

careers, and discover inter-relationships among various disciplines as well as among their peers, counselors, and teachers. The ratio of students to professionals on the camp faculty is 12 to 1, with an emphasis on individualized, one-to-one instruction.

The camp program includes field trips, demonstrations, and various enrichment activities. In the evenings, students attend nearby theatrical performances, watch student presentations, or canoe on the waterways.

Another Maryland program for gifted and talented students is in Prince George's County.² This program features several options for high school students: advanced placement, opportunities for early college admission, arrangement to explore areas in depth not normally offered in school, and independent study with a mentor. Independent study for Michael Briggs, a tenth-grader at High Point High, means that he has finished half of the twelfth-grade math book and is spending his Fridays at the Goddard Space Flight Center. Michael is helping with a proposal for studying cosmic rays on the reusable Space Shuttle. Forty students at his school study independently, with similar programs existing at other high schools in the county.

Junior high activities have included a discus-

¹ "No Writers Cramp at Camp." *N/S-LTI-G/T Bulletin* 4(1): 3; January 1977.

² "Fifty Schools Involved in Ten Program Prototypes." *N/S-LTI-G/T Bulletin* 4(4): 4; April 1977.

Fifth-grade gifted and talented students film a "railroad track" melodrama in Meridian, Mississippi.





A gifted "Snoopy and Red Baron" perform in outdoor amphitheatre near Oxford, Mississippi. The puppet heads were constructed by art students, the music improvised on Orff instruments, and the dialogue was written by drama students.

sion on jury selection, led by a senior high gifted student, and a dialogue session with a *Washington Post* reporter. The junior high gifted and talented are also participating in *Discovery Theatre*, a new drama course started last January. Thirty youngsters are studying dramatic movement, improvisation, creative dramatics, observation skills, and theatre games under the direction of University of Maryland drama education students and their instructor, John C. Carr.

Elementary students participate in cluster grouping within the regular classroom, interclass grouping for specific subject areas, and pull-out programs with identified students from several classrooms meeting together on a regular basis.

The programs for gifted students in Prince George's County Public Schools were initiated by a Board of Education's resolution in 1972. A resource team, which includes three teachers from elementary school and one each from junior and senior high, started the pilot programs in the fall of 1973. In the following two years, over 400 students participated.

In 1975, the district was selected to be one of the demonstration sites for Project GREAT (Gifted Resources Education Action Team). GREAT is a contractual service of the National/State Leadership Training Institute on Gifted and Talented (N/S-LTI-G/T). This federally-funded agency was established in 1972 to train supervisory personnel to plan appropriate programs for gifted and talented students with administration by Ventura County (California) Superintendent

of School's Office. Since then, N/S-LTI-G/T has trained over 1,000 school administrators, teachers, and parents of gifted and talented to write program plans and to begin or strengthen educational programs for these bright children. Sixteen publications and a monthly *Bulletin* are part of the communication program of N/S-LTI-G/T.

Maryland is just one example of various gifted projects underway nationally. A survey taken six years ago by the Okefenokee (Georgia) area schools showed that none of the nine school systems had a gifted program.³ Since that time each system has developed a plan, and six programs have been started. A current project will support nine programs, increase parent involvement, improve curriculum design, and better identify the disadvantaged gifted children formerly overlooked. Critical needs noted in a 1970 study were "educational programs for academically and artistically talented students, and for the special needs of potential dropouts."

"Low educational levels within much of this area inhibit its ability to increase its wealth from within," the Cooperative Educational Services Agency project proposal stated. "Adequate educational opportunity for potential leaders would reverse this trend. Within this area, in which one-half of the rural families are termed poverty cases according to annual family income, there is a

³ Part IV Program Narrative, Okefenokee CESA, Route 3, P.O. Box 406, Waycross, Georgia 31501.

critical need for specialized personnel services, improved pupil evaluation procedures, greater flexibility in curriculum and improved strategies for meeting individual needs, if potentially-gifted students are to be helped."

Among other programs, CESA now operates the Living Classroom at the nearby Okefenokee Swamp Park. In the program, gifted children in grades four to six are taking classes in fine arts, language arts, social studies, science, mathematics, and physical education. Their parents are encouraged to attend meetings outlining program goals, to volunteer their services, and to organize a parent group. An advisory council includes parent representation.

State and college personnel help with in-service workshops where teachers develop teaching/learning modules to be shared with other area teachers. Okefenokee CESA is the first unit in Georgia to employ a fulltime consultant in gifted education, Jean Mays. She is also project director for a gifted program that is federally funded. The CESA Center has classroom and office space, a science laboratory, library media collections, and is adjacent to the Heritage Center housing a museum and art collection.

Interstate Effort

Georgia is also part of the 1974-76 Title V Interstate Cooperative Effort for Gifted/Talented, under the direction of James H. Turner, South Carolina State Coordinator for Programs for Gifted/Talented. The ten member states are Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North and South Carolina, South Dakota, and Wyoming. "The establishment of a communication base among the participating states," Turner said, "more than anything else, was the key to successes realized."

During the second year of the project, the states worked cooperatively on the following handbooks and audiovisual products, applicable to local and state regulations:

- *Alternative Programming for the Gifted*—a 51-page handbook produced under the direction of Joyce Runyon, Florida's Consultant for the Gifted

- *Gifted and Talented: An Identification Model*—a 59-page handbook produced under the



Two members of the Program for Academically Talented Students in Pensacola, Florida, learn Fortran, the computer language that demands accuracy and precision.

direction of Cornelia Tongue, North Carolina's Consultant for the Gifted

- *Guidelines for In-service Education*—A 40-page handbook produced under the direction of Margaret Bynum, Georgia's Consultant for the Gifted

- *Identification Simulation of Gifted-Talented*—a slide/tape presentation by John Rader of Indiana Department of Education (previously developed but refined under Title V)

- *Teaching Gifted Children*—a handbook with accompanying videotape, by Dorothy Sisk, U.S. Office of Gifted and Talented

- *In-service*—four half-hour videotapes dealing with the following teaching strategies for gifted: (a) problem formulation; (b) nonverbal communication; (c) verbal communication; and (d) universal field trip bubble (plastic dome for environmental studies)—by Leonard Lucito, Georgia State University and their Media Unit; Derek Whordley, Wesleyan College; and Joseph Walker, Georgia State University.

Project director Turner said that the ten states would serve as a catalyst for others. "It is hoped that this degree of communication and



Matthew (in white tee-shirt) takes part in a circle activity at The Rural Preschool Gifted/Talented Model Project, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

cooperation will be maintained over the years," he said, "as each state works for the same ultimate goal—adequate provisions for gifted and talented children and youth."

Who are the gifted and talented? A nationally recognized definition is "one who excels consistently or shows potential of excelling consistently in these areas—academic, creative, kinesthetic, and psychosocial."⁴ There are many screening and identification processes such as IQ tests, creativity measures, screening devices to avoid culture-slant, and recommendations from teachers, parents, peers, and the students themselves.

A special need is that of the handicapped gifted child. The Rural Preschool Gifted/Talented Model Project, which is located in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, is providing an enriched learning experience for 33 children, ages three to five, including five gifted handicapped children.⁵

"Working with the giftedness of a handi-

capped child places emphasis on the positive attributes of the child," said Gail Hanninen, Project Director at Sunburst Preschool, "while supportive efforts continue in the area of the handicapping condition." Matthew, for example, is a five-year-old gifted cerebral palsied boy who attends the Sunburst project for rural gifted/talented three mornings a week. Four afternoons are spent at the Child Development Center for handicapped children. Hanninen continued, "Matthew's level of functioning is the result of highly-motivated and committed parents utilizing and cooperating with available resources found in a rural community in northern Idaho."

⁴ Hildegard Verploegen. "Gifted Youngsters Most Neglected, Educators Say." Honolulu *Star-Bulletin*, June 28, 1976.

⁵ "Gifted Handicapped Children Take Part in Rural Idaho Project." *N/S-LTI-G/T Bulletin* 4(2): 6; February 1977.

Five-year-old Matthew learns to tell time in a program for gifted, handicapped preschoolers.



When Matthew was born, his parents were informed he was retarded. His early responsiveness led them to question this diagnosis, and they enrolled him in speech and language therapy at the age of two. Matthew also learned from outside activities provided by his parents. His mother said that road signs, for example, were an early stimulus for practicing sounds. At the Sunburst Preschool, he is learning to type as an aid in expanding his communication skills. "We also provide numerous opportunities for him to employ his expressive language skills by sharing his ideas with his classmates," Hanninen said. "Certainly Matthew's enthusiasm toward the desire to learn is infectious."

Matthew's program of study is individualized in the skills of communication, self-awareness, problem solving, pre-academic, social activities, and curiosity pursuits. According to Hanninen, his abilities to understand complex concepts and his sensitivity toward other people as well as his need of supportive services, are all considered in the program. The next concern of his parents will be to find an appropriate public school placement. "It is hoped that Matthew continues to be challenged cognitively," Hanninen also stated, "and that the needed auxiliary services will be provided so he may realize his potential."

There is no doubt that gifted and talented children need appropriate programs, James J. Gallagher says in his book *Teaching the Gifted Child*.⁶ He compares the unchallenged gifted child to "an athlete trained to high jump and then having someone place the bar at only two or three feet high." The child soon tires of the easy work, Gallagher explained, and often develops sloppy study habits, not easily dropped when the student is finally challenged.

Public awareness of the needs of gifted and talented children is small. "One of the best kept secrets in America," is what Robert Pearman, managing editor of the *Kansas City Times*, called the information available to the general public about gifted education. One step in the right direction is House Joint Resolution 458, introduced by Representatives Daniel Akaka from Hawaii and William Brodhead from Michigan. If approved, there will be a National Gifted and Talented Children Week proclaimed for October 9-15, 1977.

Research into identification methods will help many gifted and talented children. For example, Mary Meeker, of the Structure of the Intellect Institute, Redondo Beach, California, has been working with tests for finding gifted Navajo Indian children in Arizona and New Mexico.⁸ Many creative programs are being introduced into school curriculum such as the Integrated Arts project in Utica, New York. This project is designed to help gifted and talented students "apply both intellect and feeling to the problems of living and to develop the reasoning process." The following quote from their handbook illustrates this philosophy:

We see positives in negatives
We learn alternate ways to weigh
We measure by new matters
And find new hours in the day.⁹

Many of the examples presented here have appeared in the N/S-LTI-G/T monthly *Bulletin*, published by the Ventura County Superintendent of School's Office. The eight-page *Bulletin* is mailed to subscribers nation-wide and in several foreign countries. [E]

⁶ James J. Gallagher. *Teaching the Gifted Child*. Second Edition. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Inc., 1975.

⁷ Barbara Johnson, editor. *New Directions for Gifted Education*. Presentations from the Bicentennial Midyear Leadership Training Institute at Kansas City, January 1976. Ventura, California: Ventura County Superintendent of Schools.

⁸ "Testing Among Navajo Indian Children Shows Acculturation Factors." *N/S-LTI-G/T Bulletin* 4(6): 3; June 1977.

⁹ Gina Esposito. *Integrated Arts*. Project SEARCH, Utica School District, 310 Bleacher Street, Utica, New York 13501.



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