



NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

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# Talent

The Center for Talent Development



## INTERVIEW

### Understanding Verbal Talent

An Interview with Penny Kolloff, Ph.D.

#### What is “verbal talent”?

Verbal talent seems to resist precise definition, although Joyce VanTassel-Baska has described verbal talent in terms of *precocity*, *intensity* and *complexity*. In my experience, verbal talent shows up in various forms that are recognizable by teachers and parents. I think of verbal talent as a facility with language in its broad forms—reading, writing, speaking and listening. Talent may appear in the form of advanced vocabulary as it did with Tracy, a 6th grader, who flounced up to my desk fuming, “Ms. Kolloff, someone *absconded* with my pencil!” Or it may be the advanced reading level of 2nd grader, Jonathan, who responded to his teacher’s request to bring favorite books from home by pulling from his backpack one of Ian Fleming’s James Bond novels. The mother of Aline visited my classroom one afternoon with a portfolio of stories that the 7-year-old had written at home, one of which was 22 pages long! Each of these young people demonstrated verbal talent.

#### What behaviors indicate a child is verbally talented?

Among general behaviors, verbally talented children read well. They read avidly and at advanced levels in comparison with others their age. They often read early—arriving at school already well ahead of their classmates and eager to continue their progress rather than be slowed by a curriculum that delivers small measured bites of reading. Verbally talented children also have advanced vocabularies that are evident in their writing, and these vocabularies may also manifest themselves in children’s oral language, sometimes resulting in teasing, but often alerting other bright students to commonalities. I was once approached by several of my gifted students who urged me to place “that new

guy, Bill” in our program because “he talks like we do.”

Verbally talented children often write well, a reflection of their reading experiences. They may write for pleasure, branching into areas of writing not typical of their age-mates such as poetry, drama, reviews, and journals. When teachers invite students to write a poem, the typical student may dash off a haiku, economizing with that 17-syllable formula so often taught in the elementary grades, while the verbally talented student may plunge into a sonnet or a work in free verse. Behaviors of verbally talented children reflect passion, depth and breadth. These learners choose to

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### A MYTH ABOUT COLLEGE PLANNING: It’s Not Too Early To Start!

By Avis Wright

A few weeks ago, a mother of a fifth grade student asked, “Is it too early for me to start worrying about college for my son?” With a smile, I offered the response, “It may be too late!”

Too often, parents wait until high school to think about the next step, college. For some, the mere thought of thinking past the immediate hurdle of high school admission is too much to bear. For others, the college search and admission process are complex and overwhelming. For whatever reason, many families err in not preparing for college while in the middle years.

Many fail to understand that their middle school students need challenging middle school courses, sound study habits, strong talent development, and solid extracurricular activities to provide a sturdy foundation for future educational endeavors. Some take for granted that their students will somehow “automatically” learn to challenge the academic process, truly respect it for its worth and strive for excellence. They do not see middle school as the time for developing these attributes in their children. How wrong they are!

The middle school experience is the best time to introduce the student to the many academic characteristics that college admission offices expect to see. During these years, parents, teachers, counselors and

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# Understanding Verbal Talent *continued from page 1*

read and write for pleasure, and the results are notably more advanced than those of others.

## What is the significance of early reading?

A body of research supports a connection between early reading and later success in verbal areas. Children who learn to read before entering school tend to be excellent readers and writers throughout school and beyond. Children who are immersed in early literacy experiences are often ready to read earlier than those whose exposure is more limited. This does not, however, preclude the emergence of verbal talent among children who learn to read in the early grades.

## Are there gender differences in verbal talent?

According to research, girls, as a group, surpass boys in the area of verbal ability: they tend to read somewhat earlier than boys, their writing ability is superior to boys', and their overall achievement in verbal areas, as measured by standardized tests, is higher than the achievement of boys. Some of these differences may result from differences in children's early exposure to literacy experiences and the subsequent motivation to engage in reading and writing, which is generally more characteristic of girls.

## What can parents do at home to develop their child's verbal abilities?

Fortunately, there are so many ways to do this. First, parents should read to babies from birth, and reading aloud should continue even when the children become capable of independent reading. Listening to stories and poems helps children develop vocabulary, a sense of the structure and rhythm of language, and a repository of literary experiences from which they can draw.

A second way to help children develop verbal abilities is for the family to create an environment and time for reading. Children who grow up in homes where the adults are readers are likely to develop the habit. Although I did not appreciate it at the time, I benefited from the fact that our family did not have a television until I was ten. Clearly time away from television and computers offers time to read and write. Adults should serve as models for enjoyment of books. My parents read to us regularly, and we often saw them reading for pleasure and heard them talking about their books.

Libraries are magical places to explore reading. As soon as children are old enough, they should have their own library cards. Ben Carson, a gifted neurosurgeon who was raised

in poverty in Detroit, had a mother whose third-grade education did not preclude her from ensuring that her boys had library cards. Ben and his brother visited their public library every week and were required to report to their mother on the books that they read (Carson, 1990).

Friends have shared other ways that they have created the reading habit in their children. One mother reports having a collection of books and books on tape in the car so that her son would always have access to them. Other parents make sure to give books as rewards and gifts at holidays and birthdays. Ideally a child has a place in the home relatively free of distractions

where she can read and write. Parents may also need to encourage children to broaden their reading selections. Young people who are in a reading rut with the *Baby-Sitters' Club* or *Goosebumps* series may be persuaded to read more challenging books in a related genre. Children who read and reread their favorite books rather than moving on to other literature may be nudged to expand their literary horizons. I was one of those, reading *Gone with the Wind* several times between the ages of 10 and 12. During summer vacations, my mother solved this problem by giving me a list of books she thought I should read, and I grew to love Daphne du Maurier and Charles Dickens as I became better acquainted with them.

## What outside-of-school activities should parents consider for a verbally gifted child?

Libraries, bookstores, colleges and universities offer many programs and services for verbally gifted children. Summer is the time to look for these opportunities. Locally, children may join reading or writing groups in their community. With a bit of organization, families of verbally talented children can also form book or writing groups for those with similar abilities and interests. Local colleges and universities often have summer or Saturday classes for young people, offering a variety of engaging classes on topics such as creative writing, journalism, science fiction or fantasy literature, foreign language, Shakespeare, and Writer's Workshop. Universities also attract gifted young people to residential summer programs where they can focus on one or two courses especially designed with their talents and interests in mind. Many universities also have distance learning courses for gifted students offering advanced topics for students who are



*Kolloff loved books from an early age.*



*Penny Kolloff*

motivated to work independently. These courses also provide a rich resource for families that are home

schooling. How else might a fourth grader study the works of Edgar Allan Poe or Mark Twain, or a seventh grader learn how to write dramatic scripts?

## What constitutes a good school program for high-ability verbal students?

The key to good school programs for verbally talented students at all levels is a range of experiences and choices to match students' abilities. Excellent programs for high ability students provide appropriate experiences to students who need them. One of my favorite writers on the subject of children with verbal talent, Michael Clay Thompson, says: "In order to develop verbal talent, we don't give kids things they can do; we give them things they cannot do, yet." In the elementary grades, programs and services are based on the recognition that children within the same classroom read and write at different levels, and therefore their needs are different. Such programs encourage the placement of advanced students with similarly talented learners in order to provide them with challenging learning experiences, which may include having students read advanced literature, allowing them to move to other classrooms for reading instruction, and giving them opportunities to demonstrate mastery of basic skills and concepts taught at that grade level in order to move to higher levels of instruction. At the elementary level, a program may be implemented as cluster grouping in which several verbally talented students are placed in a heterogeneous classroom with a teacher who provides differentiated instruction for them in their area of strength.

Middle school programs often group students with similar verbal abilities and provide different instruction in reading and language

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## A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America's Brightest Students.

Templeton National Report on Acceleration.

Eds: Colangelo, Nicholas; Assouline, Susan; Gross, Miraca U.M.

Belin-Blank Center for Gifted Education & Talent Development: 2004.



More than just grade skipping, "acceleration means matching the level, complexity, and pace of the curriculum with the readiness and motivation of the student." Endorsed by the National Association for Gifted Children, this two-part report on acceleration is an impressive achievement.

The report provides accurate, research-based information about acceleration to those who most need it—parents, teachers, school administrators, and public policy-makers. It draws on the expertise of many of today's top experts in gifted education, pointing out that accelerating gifted students is strongly supported by those who have studied the practice. American educators, on the other hand, commonly are reluctant to consider acceleration as an option.

Attempting to bridge the divide between these two positions, the authors outline some reasons why bright students in this country are "held back," or not allowed to move through the curriculum at a rate that is appropriate for them, including:

- Philosophy that children must be kept with their age group
- Belief that acceleration hurries children out of childhood
- Fear that acceleration hurts children socially
- Political concerns about equity

### Volume 1

In Volume 1, the authors summarize research findings in short chapters dealing with early entrance to school, grade-skipping in elementary school, academic talent searches, and high-school issues including advanced placement and leaving high school early for early college entrance. Interspersed are sidebars highlighting brief, relevant excerpts from other publications as well as short interviews with students who have experienced the sorts of accelerative

options recommended by the authors. Also included are resources for parents of bright students, as well as sections directed at teachers and policy makers. This volume is very accessible for most parents and will be helpful for some educators.

### Volume 2

The research summaries in the second volume may help readers better understand current research, buttress arguments for accommodations for individual children, or work on changing or creating school policies. While

the range of research reviewed and cited is comprehensive—with a nuanced and objective presentation of the issues—it remains very readable and applicable.

The chapters most useful to parents include one by Southern and Jones that provides a comprehensive listing of accelerative options as

well as a discussion of important components of forms of acceleration (e.g. pacing of instruction and the degree to which the program keeps students with chronological peers). The chapter may help parents find an option that fits their child. For example, faster pacing of instruction may be more appropriate for a particular

child rather than whole grade acceleration. Another key chapter for parents is by Robinson on the social and emotional effects of accelerative placements. Parents will find this chapter reassuring.

School administrators should read the chapters by Kulik and Rogers who present strong evidence from research studies that accelerative options raise and increase achievement of students. Parents who are negotiating accommodations for their gifted child will find these chapters to be helpful and may want to share them with school officials.

Moon and Reis provide rare coverage of acceleration and the twice-exceptional child. These authors review the handful of studies that examine special populations of students including gifted children with behavioral disorders or learning disabilities. With careful management and support, accelerative strategies appear to be a viable option for these students.

Finally, the volume contains an annotated bibliography and the position statement of the National Association for Gifted Children on acceleration. This volume is recommended for school officials and parents seriously considering accelerative options. ●

*For further information, to give your own opinion on the report, or to download the entire report for free, visit [www.nationdeceived.org](http://www.nationdeceived.org).*



# Post-MATS Testing Conferences Build Partnerships

By Deborah Douglas

Research suggests that the needs of our brightest students can be best addressed when families and schools work together. Thus, when the ACT, SAT and EXPLORE test results arrive in the spring, it can be very useful for families to request an individual conference with their local MATS (Midwest Academic Talent Search) coordinator. At this meeting, the student's coordinator can listen to concerns, offer suggestions, and provide resources. Conferences can help students reflect on the testing experience, help parents understand their student's scores, and help everyone begin the process of discussing appropriate educational options available both in and outside schools.



Deb Douglas

To prepare for the meeting, parents should work with their child to make a list of their questions and what they hope to get out of the meeting. Some questions might be: What do all the scores mean? What does the school plan to do with the scores? What can we as a family do to help our child succeed? What should our child do to maximize his or her potential? What's next?

Parents who are requesting a conference should consider suggesting a meeting agenda. A successful post-testing meeting usually has three main components: processing the testing experience; understanding the test results; and planning for the future.

## 1. Processing the testing experience

The best place to begin is with the student and his/her experience on test day. Questions to discuss should include: How does the student feel about the testing experience? Was it stressful? Exciting? Long? Did any sections seem particularly difficult? Easy?

## 2. Understanding the test results

The second part of the conference focuses on the test results. Most students and parents want to know what their scores mean in relationship to those of other students. Coordinators can work with families to highlight data from the CTD Statistical Summary (part of the MATS spring mailing) and put the numbers into perspective. Creating a simple chart can provide a meaningful context and means to compare scores to those of other

local, state, and national participants.

Statements such as, "In math, you scored better than 59% of the top students in the eight-state area" are often reassuring to students who are accustomed to scoring 100% on regular classroom work. After reviewing the statistics, it is important to ask the student if the MATS assessment agrees with what they already know about themselves as learners. If this is one "snapshot" of his or her abilities, what does the whole "photo album" say about him or her?

- Any brochure, policies, or information on gifted and talented programs published by the district
- Secondary school course of study bulletins
- Any resources for parents and students, such as books, articles, or websites
- Information on parent groups focused on gifted/talented issues
- Recommended reading lists
- Local summer opportunities.

Coordinators and parents should work together to help students recognize that they

## Sample Chart for Jane G.

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Jane's ACT English score  | 20    |
| Average 7th grade score in Jane's school (obtain from MATS school coordinator)  | 17.63 |
| Average score for 7th graders testing through MATS (from CTD Statistical Summary)   | 20.3  |
| Average score for seniors graduating from <i>local high school</i> (obtain from high school)  | 21.9  |
| Average <i>state-wide</i> score for high school seniors (obtain from state Board of Education)  | 21.4  |
| Average <i>national</i> score for high school seniors (obtain from testing agency, www.ACT.org or, for the SAT, www.collegeboard.com) | 20.5  |

## 3. Planning for the future

With this fuller picture in mind, the third part of the conference can focus on appropriate educational opportunities for the student. The Center for Talent Development recommends three levels of options for students, depending on their test scores (more information about these Service Category levels can be found in students' and coordinators' MATS materials):

- Service Category 1 students' needs can usually be addressed in differentiated classrooms.

- Service Category 2 students may require accelerated course sections, honors courses, special counseling groups, and co-curricular activities.

- Service Category 3 students should also have access to independent study, mentorships, individual counseling, and subject or grade acceleration.

While not all districts have options for gifted students in place, families and coordinators can determine what does exist in the community, and begin to lay out an individual plan for the child. These documented needs may help parents advocate for additional programming or locate resources elsewhere, such as through distance learning or summer programs.

Even if the school can offer no additional programming, it may be able to assist with providing resources. Some of the things families may consider requesting include:

themselves are the key players in assuring that school is interesting and challenging; children should play an active role in their education. *The Gifted Kids Survival Guide: A Teen Handbook* offers great suggestions for ways that children can take charge of their own education, including "10 Tips for Talking to Teachers."

Finally, coordinators and families should address any other concerns, requests, and suggestions. Not everything needs to be settled at this conference; rather, this is the beginning of an on-going conversation aimed at helping the child achieve his or her educational goals. All MATS participants, no matter what their scores, can use the MATS testing experience to understand their strengths and take charge of their own education. ●

Reference: *The Gifted Kids Survival Guide: A Teen Handbook*, rev. ed. Galbraith, Judy; Delisle, James R.; Espeland, Pamela. Free Spirit Publishing: 1996.

*Deborah Douglas has been active in gifted education for 18 years, first as a teacher and then as coordinator of the EXCEL Program in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. Her professional interests include differentiation of instruction and gifted students' self-advocacy. She was named 2001 G/T Coordinator of the Year by the Wisconsin Association for Talented and Gifted. For more information on her district's approach to MATS conferences, contact Douglas at douglasd@mpsd.k12.wi.us.*

# The Courage to Be Imperfect: Tom Greenspon on Perfectionism

Summary by Celino Ullegue

*"Perfectionism is not about doing one's best, or about pursuing excellence; it's about the emotional conviction that perfection is the only route to personal acceptance. It is the emotional conviction that by being perfect, one can finally be acceptable as a person."*

—Dr. Tom Greenspon

Parents at CTD's Opportunities for the Future conference on June 26th, 2004, enjoyed a keynote address by Dr. Tom Greenspon, a therapist specializing in issues related to giftedness. Greenspon, a self-proclaimed perfectionist himself, explained the origins of perfectionism and shared findings that can help families better help their gifted students with this issue. The following is a summary of his presentation.

## Common characteristics of perfectionists

Perfectionists share many characteristics. For example, perfectionists are often driven by routines, order and control. As a result, they are often running late because "one more thing had to be done." They sometimes procrastinate; they delay decision-making; and their emotional fragility often results in exhaustion and an inability to relax. Why do they exhibit these symptoms? Life to a perfectionist is like living in the world of the Olympics, where only the gold medal winner receives attention and admiration and there is seemingly little return for second best.



Tom Greenspon

## Key insights on perfectionism

Perfectionism is about wanting perfection, fearing you won't get it, and most of all, not feeling totally acceptable if you can't be perfect. Perfectionism isn't about being the best, or working harder, or pushing yourself—that is pursuing excellence. While many perfectionists do this, you don't have to be perfectionistic to want to be the best.

**1. Perfectionism is emotional.** Many people do not realize that perfectionism is an emotional chain reaction: mistakes cause fear, which drives an obsession to "get it right." This chain reaction may reoccur when someone tries to

tamper with a perfectionist's routine, as perfectionists fear things may end up in a mess, which in turn drives anger towards the person who threatens change.

**2. Perfectionism is social.** Social connection is fundamental to all human beings. If we don't feel connected (or acceptable), we either renounce the desire for connection, or we get busy doing things that we hope will make us connected. For some people, this involves a struggle to be perfect.

**3. Perfectionism doesn't make people more successful.** Striving for excellence and aiming for perfection are two different states of mind. Perfectionism does not determine success; talent, energy, and commitment do. Success occurs despite perfectionism, not because of it. Furthermore, perfectionism is not necessarily more prevalent among gifted people.

**4. The home environment influences perfectionism.** Children can learn perfectionism from their parents. Parents who take on too many projects or avoid delegating work to others may indirectly teach their children

to follow suit. Additionally, perfectionism can arise in response to an environment that makes acceptability seem conditional: "If you do this the right way, then I will love you." Finally, a chaotic home environment can contribute to perfectionist thoughts such as "I'm not good enough to make things better." Family situations can exacerbate feelings of failure, inability, and insecurity.

## What parents can do

Creating an environment of acceptance is a way to help children get beyond the feeling that they are only OK if they can be perfect. Talking with our kids about our expectations as parents, and especially about the fact that we love them for who they are, not for their ability to meet expectations, will help them to feel acceptable as people and thus to have the courage to risk new ventures which might fail.

*"Perfectionism is rampant today, and it is in this competitive drive to accomplish a moral and intellectual superiority that making a mistake becomes so dangerous. If we can't make peace with ourselves as we are, we will never be able to make peace with ourselves. This requires the courage to be imperfect."*

—Rudolf Dreikurs,  
psychiatrist  
and educator

Rudolf Dreikurs, noted American psychiatrist and educator, offers guidance for perfectionists to better understand themselves and the "Olympic stadium" they live in:

*"This mistaken idea of the importance of mistakes leads us to a mistaken concept of ourselves. We become overly impressed by everything that is wrong in us and around us. To be human does not mean to be right, does not mean to be perfect. To be human means to be useful, to make contributions—not for oneself, but for others—to take what there is and make the best out of it."*

—Rudolf Dreikurs ●

Reference: Turner, J., & Pew, W. L. *The Courage to be Imperfect: The Life and Work of Rudolf Dreikurs*. New York: Hawthorn Books, 1978.

*Tom Greenspon is a psychologist and marriage and family therapist in private practice in Minneapolis, where his primary focus for 25 years has been gifted children, adults, and families. He is a former co-president of the Minnesota Council for the Gifted and Talented and author of the book Freeing Our Families from Perfectionism.*

community leaders can use their life experience and situations to instruct, model and advise. As critical adults in a young person's life, we are charged to identify and reinforce key priorities in college planning. It rests with all of us to offer as much support and guidance as possible to our young student. We must feel obligated to travel along on this journey. Questions and concerns regarding college preparation and planning will be asked and we must be prepared to help students explore until we find the answer.

## College Planning Checklist for Middle School Students and their Parents

Because there are many tasks and so much information to gather and understand, college preparation can begin as early as grade 6. Besides the usual activities of collecting information about institution attributes, admission requirements and costs, prospective students and their parents need to focus attention on developing talents, enhancing academic skills and examining personal traits in order to prepare for the rigors of the college admission process. The "right" school, community, and extracurricular and character-building experiences will serve as the needed foundation for a solid undergraduate candidate. Make sure you have the right stuff for future academic study by using the following checklist.

### ○ Know your school administrators, teachers and guidance staff.

These very important people hold the keys to your educational future. They have the answers, suggestions, feedback and insight critical to a successful educational journey. These wonderful professionals are not only responsible for the knowledge you absorb, but will be of great assistance when moving on to the next stage. Their guidance recommendations and letters of support will prove invaluable when applying for admission to high school and college.

In particular, establish and maintain a positive working relationship with your child's guidance counselor. This valuable professional can provide information about curricula, accelerated courses, enrichment classes, summer opportunities for the gifted, and various educational options. Because this professional is familiar with your school and home communities, his or her perspective and expertise will prove invaluable when making plans for secondary and undergraduate study. In addition to selecting appropriate, chal-

lenging courses, the counselor can recommend programs and resources that will nurture the student's gifts and talents. A solid relationship with this person can bring many rewards.

### ○ Participate in the Midwest Academic Talent Search.

The SAT and ACT not only tell you about skills and abilities, but they say a lot about academic promise. These tests will identify strengths, weaknesses and offer some idea of how successful the student will be during the initial year of undergraduate study. Programs like the Midwest Academic Talent Search not only provide valuable information but invaluable testing experience. Taking these exams during middle school will allow the student to become comfortable with standardized tests. For some students, the more times these tests are taken, the better they perform. Preparing for the ACT or SAT by using study booklets as well as by reviewing results from past exams can help students to strengthen challenged subject areas and possibly also improve their scores.

### ○ Read, write, compute!

Reading, writing and spending time with math problems are wonderful ways to use spare time. Go beyond classroom and homework assignments by considering participation in enrichment classes, accelerated courses and independent study. The more you read, the broader your vocabulary will expand. As for writing, the phrase, *practice makes perfect*, fits. And, working math problems not only gives the brain new concepts to digest but practical, useful exercise. Broadening academic skills helps improve current performance and strengthen that ever-so-important educational foundation necessary for college.

### ○ Develop talents and interests.

Whether the interest is singing, dancing, art, computers, martial arts, writing, community outreach or anything in-between, take the time and effort to be the best you can be. Enhancing talents not only illustrates commitment and dedication, but shows growth and maturity in the talent area. Successful competitions, recognition from instructors, association with fellow peers, innovative projects and significant contributions to the field of interest catch the eye of admission officers. Don't be afraid to shine!

Looking for career guidance for your child?

Center for Talent Development's 2005 Opportunities for the Future conference will take place on June 25th, 2005, at Northwestern University's Evanston campus.

For information on speakers and events, see [www.ctd.northwestern.edu](http://www.ctd.northwestern.edu). Pre-registration is encouraged.

### ○ Enroll in enrichment and distance learning courses.

These courses show a willingness to learn and succeed outside the traditional educational setting. Participation illustrates to college admission officers that the student places a high priority on developing gifts and nurturing talents. Use these courses to explore unfamiliar topics, broaden knowledge in weakened subject-areas or learn new skills which will support personal growth. Information and experiences gained from these courses may lead to new interests in career paths or educational arenas. Enrichment classes and distance learning courses offer the opportunity for growth.

### ○ Pay close attention to extracurricular activities.

After-school sports and community activities are more than just fun! They can build character, enhance abilities and support the development of leadership. Friendships which can last for years are developed; and, self-confidence can sky-rocket. Extracurricular activities are important to the personal and educational facets of the college-bound student. If possible, try to select a few activities that are connected to college subjects of interest. The closer extracurricular activities are to possible college majors, the more rewarding the activities' experience will be.

### ○ Set goals.

Set performance goals for individual courses (I'm going to earn an A- in English; I will try for every extra credit point available in this class). Identifying little milestones will whittle that "major accomplishment" into manageable pieces—and make your goals not appear so overwhelming. There is nothing like that feeling of accomplishment that comes when you have reached a goal! It encourages you to make even more goals and try new things. Setting goals is a valuable cog in the educational process.

### ○ Choose accelerated courses.

Don't opt for easy courses! Whether you are choosing a high school or university, take a long hard look at the curriculum offerings. Make sure there is a variety of rigorous and accelerated courses. Classes that are not challenging will not inspire hard work or encourage abilities to be stretched. To truly expand gifts and talents, classes that require students to reach beyond their comfort level of thinking and action are the most useful. Secondary schools and undergraduate institutions view challenging classes as a positive attribute of a strong educational program—illustrating the willingness of a student to work hard and take academic risks. Electing the easy way out in order to boost a class rank or grade point average will not benefit the learning process and may well endanger the opportunity to attend a premier institution.

### ○ Build up time management and study skills.

Preparing for a math exam is different from studying for a history test. Learn the different ways to review notes and prepare for classroom lectures and activities. Do you know of at least three methods of taking notes? Do you know the best strategies for taking essay exams? True-False quizzes? Multiple choice

### College Planning Web Sites

- ACT
- The College Board
- National Association for College Admission Counselors
- Peterson's
- The Sallie Mae Foundation

www.act.org  
www.collegeboard.com  
www.nacac.com  
www.petersons.com  
www.salliemae.com

tests? Do you spend your time wisely? Are you able to complete assignments in a timely fashion? How is your academic health? Support in the areas of time management and study skills will increase your chance of educational success. Teachers, guidance counselors, books and computer software programs are great sources of support for assistance in developing these skills.

### ...and this is just the beginning!

College preparation and planning takes time and effort. There are numerous books, computer-assisted guidance materials and advising professionals available to offer guidance and support. Set aside time to explore these avenues of assistance. Don't know where to begin? Try your middle school's guidance counselor or local high school's college (or senior-year) counselor. Also, the box on this page shows helpful web sites for college admissions planning.

There will be more tasks for later: college exploration, the application process and

obtaining financial assistance. As you see, there is much to do. Preparing for college takes time, dedication and effort. Don't wait until high school to begin. Start NOW! ●



Avis Wright

*Avis Wright is formerly the liaison for the Career Guidance Center, Illinois State Board of Education, director of placement for Chicago City-Wide College, college counselor and interim principal at Hales Franciscan High School, director of college counseling at St. Ignatius College Prep, coordinator of University Without Walls Program at Chicago State University and program coordinator for Smart and NU-Vistas at CTD. She has written two books on college admissions and is currently the coordinator of Jack Kent Cooke Foundation scholarships at CTD.*

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arts delivered by teachers who are skilled in working with high ability students. Good programs often differ from the regular curriculum in the literature that students read and the breadth and depth of writing experiences. Advanced curriculum for verbally talented students ideally should include in-depth study of language components including etymology, grammar, and vocabulary. Middle schools that are in tune with the needs of gifted students also encourage participation in a Talent Search (such as CTD's Midwest Academic Talent Search) so that students can assess their abilities by taking an advanced test and comparing their performance with those of other capable age-mates. Talent Search also connects gifted students with summer and academic year opportunities for course-taking.

A good high school program includes significant opportunities for honors and Advanced Placement courses. Some high

schools also encourage independent study and mentorship programs that allow talented students to work with writers or to study a particular author or work, or to proceed with advanced foreign language study beyond the school's regular program.

### What other options may be appropriate?

Acceleration in its various forms may be beneficial to verbally talented students. Some students benefit from moving ahead in a particular subject, such as reading. A gifted reader may leave her third grade classroom and read with fifth graders. Careful assessment of another student may result in advancing him from second to fourth grade based on his overall readiness for the curriculum. Program options at the middle and high schools may include specialized seminars for high ability students, which allow focused study of a topic, an author, a work of litera-

ture, a period in literary history. Examples that I have observed include "Dickens and the Industrial Revolution" and "Literature of the Lost Generation."

In summary, verbally talented young people benefit from intensive reading and writing experiences, advanced level study with others of similar ability, and guidance provided by families and educators. ●

Reference: Carson, B. (1990). *Gifted Hands*. New York: Harper Paperbacks.

*Penny Kolloff is Associate Professor Emerita from Illinois State University and currently serves as president of the Illinois Association for Gifted Children. She is a member of the advisory board for the Center for Talent Development at Northwestern University. Penny is the author of a number of book chapters and articles and a frequent speaker and consultant on literacy and gifted children.*

## 2005 UPCOMING DATES, DEADLINES, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Summer Program 2005

*We are currently hiring teachers and staff.  
Online registration now available!*

- **Session 1:** June 26-July 15 (Northwestern & Case Western Reserve)
- **Session 2:** July 17-August 5 (Northwestern)
- **Leapfrog:** July 11-July 15; July 18-July 22; & July 25-July 29

Leapfrog courses are now offered in Glen Ellyn!

New 2-week courses for 2nd-3rd graders!

### Civic Education Project

- CivicWeek, March 20-26 (Chicago, Hunger & Homelessness)
- CivicWeek, March 28-April 3, (New York, Education & Youth Development)
- Civic Leadership Institute, July 24-August 12 (Northwestern's Chicago Campus)

### Saturday Enrichment Program

*Spring courses: April 16-May 21, 2005  
(Evanston & Glen Ellyn)*

### LearningLinks Distance Education

Summer session starts in June, 2005.  
Schools may enroll students in LearningLinks in Schools program.

### "Opportunities for the Future" Conference

Sat., June 25, 2005, 1-5 pm at Northwestern

### Midwest Academic Talent Search

ACT testing — April 9.  
Online registration for MATS continues through June test dates.

### Jack Kent Cooke Young Scholarship Program

Application deadline: May 1, 2005

Visit [www.ctd.northwestern.edu](http://www.ctd.northwestern.edu) for more information. ●

## New Online Registration Available for CTD Educational Programs in 2005

Due to the success of the Midwest Academic Talent Search online application, CTD is developing an online registration process for its educational programs to make the application process faster, easier, and more flexible, particularly for returning students. Starting in February, the Center will roll out this option to families signing up for the Summer Program, gradually expanding it to include all other CTD programs by the end of 2005. While anyone with Internet access will be able to register online, some students will need to mail in materials to complete the registration process. For updated information on the rollout of online registration for other CTD educational programs, visit the CTD web site: [www.ctd.northwestern.edu](http://www.ctd.northwestern.edu).

### Benefits of online registration:

- Enjoy a speedy, paperless process if your child is a returning student with appropriate test scores or portfolio on file with the Center
- Register more quickly to have a better chance of being placed in your first-choice courses
- Receive an email confirmation of registration or reminder of incomplete registration
- Pay online via credit card through a secure server

## CENTER for TALENT DEVELOPMENT

Northwestern University  
617 Dartmouth Place  
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The Center for Talent Development at Northwestern University is an accredited learning center and research facility serving the gifted community of the Midwest. Through the Midwest Academic Talent Search and other programs, CTD has assisted more than 350,000 families. Offering a variety of learning alternatives for the gifted student, CTD provides school-year programs such as Saturday Enrichment Program, LearningLinks distance learning, Civic Education Project, and Project EXCITE, as well as summer academic programs (Leapfrog, Apogee, Spectrum, and Equinox), informational conferences for families and educators, scholarships, and graduate courses on gifted education. Led by nationally recognized scholar Paula Olszewski-Kubilius, Ph.D, the Center also conducts and publishes academic research on gifted students, particularly in the areas of accelerated learning and special populations of gifted learners. CTD is accredited as a special function school for the gifted by North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.



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