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Talent

The Center for Talent Development



CAREER LITERACY

Early Career Planning Is Essential for Gifted Adolescents

By Paula Kosin, M.S., L.C.P.C. and William Tirre, Ph.D.

There is often a major disconnect between the expectations of the educational system and the preparation for and selection of a career. Most people know that everyone needs education beyond high school; however, help with developing a thoughtful career plan is often not available. In today's world, parents cannot afford to ignore helping their children with this important task.

We live in a world of unprecedented change. Shifting demographics, technological change, and economic globalization are major trends that impact everyone. Jobs and companies are created and dissolved simultaneously. As professionals, we know that knowledge and skills may be out of date in three years or less. Education alone isn't enough. Forward thinking parents realize they are preparing their children for a world that will be very different than the one they live in now.

The New Literacy Requirement

For today's students, particularly gifted adolescents, *career literacy* is a competitive asset. Coined by Career Vision, the career services division of the Ball Foundation in Glen Ellyn, Ill., career literacy is the basic knowledge that

everyone needs to be able to compete in the 21st century work environment.

Career literacy is based on the premise that in order to make choices and navigate in a world in constant flux, we need to understand:

- 1) How the world of work and the economic system work
- 2) How to articulate what is unique and important about oneself (self-knowledge)
- 3) How to evaluate the alignment or fit between oneself and the workplace.

Career literacy is the ability to discuss these components within a framework of how and where an individual can make a

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For today's students, particularly gifted adolescents, career literacy is a competitive asset.

Grandparents: What You (and maybe only you) Can Do to Support Your Grandchildren's Talent Development

by Nancy Robinson, Ph.D.

"If anybody had told me how much fun grandchildren are, I'd have started with them first!" As a grandparent, you know the truth of that statement. The relationships we build with our grandchildren touch us very deeply and bring us special joy. We can generally choose our roles and responsibilities with them, and let their parents shoulder the rest. When grandchildren are advanced in their development, though, some special opportunities present themselves.



Nancy Robinson

As you may already well know from having parented your own children, rearing a gifted and/or talented child is both labor-intensive and resource-intensive. Grandparents can help both directly and indirectly. They can support their grandchildren indirectly by backing up their own children in fulfilling parental responsibilities. More directly, they can support the needs and passions of their grandchildren.

The reason the family environment is instrumental in helping young people develop their talent is because of the way families work. A combination of high expectations and warm involvement on the part of parents — and, no doubt, grandparents — sets the stage for youngsters' sustained efforts toward fulfillment of their promise.

As a fellow grandmother, let me share some of what I've found you can do to be helpful.

- Put effort into building the relation-
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What Grandparents Can Do

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ship. Valentines are not enough. These days, your grandchildren are likely to respond best to e-mail rather than letters and cards, so drop them a line at random times. Visit as often as you can.

- *Gifts.* Send unexpected token gifts when you see something that you think will strike a responsive chord. Find a birthday or holiday gift that will lend itself to multiple uses. Some of my most successful have been a puppet stage with a bunch of hand puppets, multiple-use construction sets, components for electrical circuits, and a suitcase full of dress-up stuff from Goodwill (two of each to share with a friend). And no holiday should go by without a book.

- *Don't play favorites.* This probably goes without saying — all your grandchildren deserve "special" attention. They are all special, not just the one(s) that show the most obvious talents.

- *Provide an extra pair of hands.* Talented children make huge time demands on their parents. If you're available, drive grandchild-

ren to lessons or soccer practice; be there when they get home from school. Stay with the children or invite them to your house, so parents can attend special events, including some that may take them out of town for the grandchildren's competitions. Cook dinner for the family from time to time, or drop it by. Consider paying for a cleaning service to simplify some household tasks.

- *Make yourself available* so that your grandchildren will naturally come to see you as both a confidante and a cheering section. Gifted children do have worries — sometimes worries that exceed their years — and may not want to burden their parents. You can be a safe haven, a source of strength. Be sure all your grandchildren know that you are there for them whatever they do, that they needn't always put on a brave face, and they certainly needn't make all A's or win competitions to make you proud of them. At the same time, let them know that you have faith in what they can accomplish if they choose to. You



especially want to recognize their efforts in developing their talents and to celebrate each new step and accomplishment. Remember that even if they don't become stars in their fields, their childhood studies will hook them as lifelong audiences.

- *Introduce your grandchildren to your own passions.* If you have sports skills, performance skills, or handicraft skills of your own, introduce them to those activities. If you're in love with fishing, basketball, or ice

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Early Career Planning for Adolescents

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contribution. For some people, this is a straightforward process. For many others, especially those who are multitabled, narrowing choices is a struggle.

The World of Work

First, children need to understand the workplace from a practical perspective; they need to understand *why* people work and how a career selection is really an adult lifestyle choice. A good way to introduce the world of work is to help them explore different industries. Most of today's industries — Government, Health, Education, Leisure, Transportation, Communications, Safety, Agriculture, Construction, Manufacturing, Energy and Spirituality — are built around a societal need. Within these different industries are different types of businesses needing different occupational skills. By breaking up the world of work into sections, it is easier to see how they contribute to our world and how they will be impacted by trends in science, technology, globalization, and geographic patterns such as weather. Conversations about current events are a way to broaden children's awareness. A discussion on the impact of hurricanes in Florida on the Agricultural (citrus), Transportation, and Retail Food industries can help bring different industries to life.

Developing an understanding of why

businesses exist and what purpose or market they serve makes it easier for children to evaluate their interest areas and to identify companies or the type of work they want to learn more about. A greater sensitivity to the challenges and changes occurring in the world of work will enable more accurate choices about the knowledge, skills, and abilities to develop now and in the future. To figure out how to best make a contribution, one needs to understand what one is contributing to.

Understanding Self

Secondly, career literacy emphasizes the importance of knowing oneself. This awareness helps students identify and communicate the talents they bring, and equally important, the keys to their own satisfaction. Understanding self is not a simple process. For gifted students, the task is even more complex.

Growing up, we typically learn about ourselves through achievement, competition, and exploration. Another way to learn is through a comprehensive, objective assessment and interpretation session that explains the results and the implications for work and school. A good time to consider such an assessment is in high school. Typically four aspects of an individual are useful when considering careers: aptitudes, interests, personality and values.

- Aptitude tests objectively measure indi-

viduals' potential to acquire skills used to perform tasks. The Ball Aptitude Battery® measures creativity, spatial abilities, and generalist/specialist work orientation, abilities that play a significant role in career planning. Other aptitudes measured include reasoning styles, numerical, memories, perceptual speed and accuracy, and psychomotor abilities. Other multiple ability measures are the Differential Aptitude Test®, and the Department of Labor's Ability Profiler™.

Aptitudes identify natural abilities and provide a work profile. They remain relatively stable throughout one's lifetime, so once completed, students are able to apply the information in their unique work profile to decisions throughout their career.

Gifted students often have an aptitude profile with many strengths. Career planning is more complex with these students, because they need college majors, jobs and work environments that use as many strong aptitudes as possible. Just as a strong muscle gets restless if it is not exercised, students with many strengths need to find opportunities to use them, or risk becoming restless and dissatisfied.

- Interest inventories yield information on what an individual likes and dislikes, including activities, subjects, occupations, and work environments. Examples of interest inventories are the Strong Interest Inventory™

You have an “expert” perspective on the way your grandchildren are being raised, but be very sparing with your advice!

skating, show them the role that passions can play in one’s life. If you love classical music, for example, take them to children’s concerts first, and by middle school, to grown-up events.

• *Take advantage of your locale.* Go for short visits to museums, zoos, and the like, heading first to the exhibits that are likely to grab their interest and leaving before they become bored. (If you have an annual pass, you won’t feel compelled to see everything on one visit.) Your grandchildren may have some surprising ideas themselves. (I know one



and the Self-Directed Search®. The response to these survey question assessments is based on what one has experienced or been exposed to. Teens often are attracted to careers with perceived glamour, status, and prestige, as seen in the media, rather than to more realistic career options. Gifted students often have a wide range of interests, and narrowing options to some manageable focus is best done when the results of interests and aptitudes are aligned. Career research suggests that these two assessments provide the most critical information to begin exploration.

• *Personality instruments* assess personal characteristics and preferences. This information helps individuals understand themselves as well as potential career options and work

youngster who likes to visit furniture stores!)

• *Invite your grandchildren for a solo visit,* or get away with them individually for short vacations, which needn’t be talent-related. Don’t pack the days too full — be sure to let teenagers sleep in — and let them choose some activities while you choose others. You will both treasure these times.

• *Wisdom and advice:* Be careful! You have an “expert” perspective on the way your grandchildren are being raised, but be very sparing with your advice! Your children are the decision-makers for their children just as you were with them. My own rule of thumb: Just once, when you have your children’s full attention, make your suggestion about something they have or haven’t done. Then leave it be.

• *Provide tangible resources.* When children are gifted and/or talented, often their needs exceed what the public schools have to offer. If you have the funds available without depleting your own resources, here are some things you might consider:

• *Special lessons, equipment, and competitions.* Private lessons and equipment cost money. If your grandchild’s talents lie in performance areas, master coaches, costumes, travel, and entry fees may be needed. One hint: When children are young, a warm teacher who likes children is most important; the higher-powered teachers can wait until the children’s own passions take over.

• *Summer camps and programs.* The regional talent search organizations (like Northwestern’s Center for Talent Development) provide many academic summer opportunities, and there are other camps for musicians and athletes. Tuition and travel can be costly, but, aside from what they’ll learn, nowhere else is your grandchild as likely to find a peer group of similarly talented and committed potential friends who share their interests.

• *Private schools.* If the public schools are unable to provide appropriate challenge, consider whether there may be a private school that would be a better fit. Not all private schools are ready to do so, but there are some that are either especially designed for gifted children or flexible and sensitive enough to meet their needs. This will be a major decision for your family, since private schools often cost \$10,000 to \$20,000, year after year. Be prepared for the extra fees and expectations for contributions to the

annual fund or a building campaign.

Many independent schools have financial aid available; be sure to inquire. Also be sure to speak to your financial adviser about tax-related savings plans.

• *College.* This can be the really big-ticket item, although financial aid is more readily available for college than the K-12 level. And your gifted child absolutely needs to go to college — a good college, not necessarily a private one. Remember that it is your children’s financial status that determines whether and what kind of help will be offered, so you may be able to help the family avoid taking on loans that would limit post-college choices. Again, make sure to speak to your financial adviser — now!

• *Graduate school.* Most gifted young people require graduate or professional study to fulfill the promise of their talents. In some fields, combinations of scholarships and research or teaching assistantships enable students to pay their own way for the most part; in other areas, especially professional schools, there are few such opportunities.

And what if you can’t help in these ways? What if your own ill health precludes your taking an active role in childcare, travel, or chauffeuring? What if your own financial resources are already stretched thin? What if you live too far away to see your grandchildren very often? What if — and this is the worst of all — you are estranged from your own children? You know the answer — you do the best you can. You let your grandchildren know how much you care, whether or not you hear back from them. The most important thing you can do is to let them know of your love and interest, your pride in their development, and your respect for the efforts they exert to fulfill their talents. Just as with your own children, the opportunities go by very fast, so you can’t wait. Grandchildren are very special — and so are grandparents! ●

Dr. Robinson is Professor Emerita of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Washington. A psychologist, her research interests throughout her career have been in the development of young children — first, those at the lower end of the distribution of intelligence, and then, those at the higher end. She assesses young, gifted children in her clinic and confers with parents.

LEARNING LINKS

"Far Beyond Our Imaginations": Gifted Students Excel in NAGC Award-Winning Course

Wendy Conklin earned her MA in Gifted Education from Northeastern Illinois University. She has taught elementary and middle school grades and currently teaches online courses for CTD's LearningLinks for the Young. In addition, she works as a freelance author writing curriculum for Teacher Created Materials, Pieces of Learning, and Scholastic.



Wendy Conklin

Journey to Middle-Earth: The Lord of the Rings Trilogy class you developed and taught in CTD's LearningLinks for the Young program recently won a National Association for Gifted Children's Curriculum Award. Can you explain what the award is for?

The award is given to recognize authors of outstanding curriculum for gifted students. The curriculum should be organized to allow gifted learners to move at their own rates, to provide in-depth experiences, to offer exposure to new knowledge areas, and to make interdisciplinary connections.

Why did you want to teach a course on Lord of the Rings? What made you think it could work online?

First of all, the story teaches so many great lessons about life, and gifted kids enjoy grappling with tough concepts. The recent Lord of the Rings movies have made Tolkien's book popular among the young audience, so I thought it would be a great way to get kids to read the book. The movies are great, but the book is always better.

Second, I thought a book discussion would work great online. I designed this curriculum to include discussion questions, which we talk about online, and also their choice of an activity, which they can email to me.

Can you provide an illustration that would give us a glimpse into what the class experience was like for the students?

I designed an activity sheet for each week that contained the reading assignment, discussion questions, and a list of activities from which they could choose one to complete. Each week I posted the discussion questions online. I thought it was important for students to know what I would be asking so that they would be thinking about the questions as they read. These discussion questions did not have a yes or no answer. They were designed to be open-ended so that students could enhance and expand their creativity.

These questions made students think deeply and sometimes they saw things I over looked.

For example, here are two questions that I asked in *The Fellowship of the Ring* course along with two student answers:

Q: How can courage be found in unlikely places? What did Gildor mean by this comment?

Student Answer: Because even in the dark and dreary

places, you can still find hope. Like the fact that Frodo knows what will happen to Middle Earth if he doesn't succeed. He finds courage to go through any kind of danger to keep that from happening.

Q: What if you were in Sam's, Merry's or Pippin's shoes? How would you feel about going with Frodo on his journey into the unknown?

Student Answer: Hobbits don't wear shoes, but if I were in their place, I would be scared, especially since I didn't know that much about what was going on.

I planned the activities to have a creative outcome while taking learning styles into

account. For example, some students created an Elven language and then translated it. Others reported on a battle as a war correspondent for Orc TV. And still others created a miniature model of Treebeard using twigs and other craft items.

How did you tailor or develop the course specifically for gifted kids?

I asked many open-ended questions. Most students are accustomed to the one right answer. At first, many of the students were afraid to type what they thought. After a few weeks students began to see that I wanted them to think deeper, not to find an answer in the text. I wanted them to be creative and use those higher thinking skills. Gifted kids enjoy making their own choices, so I also allowed students to choose an activity to complete each week.

What is the biggest challenge with teaching online? How is the class interaction different in this format? Does your role change with this format?

The biggest challenge for some students is the typing. Many of them don't know a keyboard well enough or they simply can't type

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BOOK REVIEW

Genius Denied: How to Stop Wasting our Brightest Young Minds

Jan & Bob Davidson. Simon & Schuster: New York, NY. 2004.

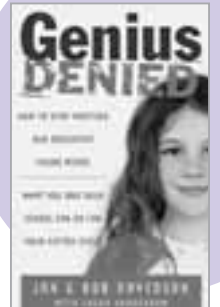
Review by Jenna Fournel

Written by the founders of the Davidson Institute for Talent Development, this book sheds light on the failure of our nation's public schools to adequately educate gifted students. *Genius Denied* makes the compelling argument that while school districts are required to "leave no child behind," the needs of our most talented students are being overlooked.

According to this book, most of the 29 states with funding for gifted programs are not specialized to address and develop the academic needs of highly gifted children. Also, in the midst of major federal and state initiatives to provide funding for low performing schools and children with disabilities, virtually no new funding is available for gifted and talented programming. The authors argue that the quest for equity in schools should aim to provide all children with "an education appropriate to their abilities—one that challenges them and helps them grow."

Genius Denied describes this "quiet crisis" in education with colorful examples and well-supported statistics, but it does not leave the reader hopeless. The book provides parents and educators with suggestions for how to overcome these inadequacies in the current educational system. Using real life scenarios, the book teaches parents about becoming their child's advocate, seeking out supplemental educational services, and finding mentors for their children. The authors discuss ways in which teachers, mentors and parents can work together to create more challenging academic programs in schools.

The Davidsons argue in this book that continued failure to address the needs of the nation's brightest students means a loss of potential in a country that depends on talented people to continue its forward progress. *Genius Denied* provides an eloquent illustration on this national problem complete with a set of action steps that could ultimately lead to a solution.



SUMMER PROGRAM

Top Reasons To Love the CTD Summer Program

From our survey of Summer Program 2004 students and parents

You get a taste of campus life.

"My son had a blast. This was his first experience away from home, and we were not sure how he would handle it. He changed so much in 3 weeks. He became unbelievably responsible (financially, laundry, getting himself up and ready, decision making). He developed several new friendships, one in particular from another country who he has continued to keep in touch with. He grew up a lot and learned many life lessons."

"He especially enjoyed the dorm experience. His roommate and new friends helped to shape the whole experience as one he won't soon forget — and in fact — wants to recreate next summer."

You get to study exciting topics that you just can't study at most schools.

"The classes that my children chose allowed them to expand their understanding of the world around them beyond the classroom and to pursue interests that they could not explore in school."

The teachers are talented and motivational.

"One thing I will never forget was the way our teacher taught us to write. On each quiz, we were given a prompt that required a response one paragraph in length. He reminded us that in that one paragraph, we needed to establish our position, provide ample supporting details and finish with a concluding thought that summed up the argument, all the while using original language that was concise and precise. My first paragraph took me half an hour to complete because the idea of thinking before writing was so foreign to me. With such innovative techniques in only three short weeks, I was able to learn more about the craft of reading and writing than in an entire year of freshman English in high school."

"[My son] was in a great mood for the 3 weeks because he was so challenged and excited about what he was learning. He loved his teacher. The teacher was passionate about the subject, knew it well and really made the class fun."

You develop lasting friendships with like-minded (smart) peers.

"[My daughter] found friends with similar interests who she would describe as being 'on the same wavelength as I am.' She has been keeping in contact with friends she made this year and last year at CTD."

STUDENT PROFILE

Program: Apogee
Name: Kimberly Kao

Age: 12

Hometown: Anandale, VA

Academic Interests: Science & History

What I hope to be/do someday: Ambassador, Lawyer

What I like to do for fun: Sports, Dance, Music

Favorite book: *The Rule of Four* by Ian Caldwell & Dustin Thomason

Favorite part of CTD: Afternoon and evening activities...weekends!

Interesting CTD occurrence or story to share: We went around as a group on a scavenger hunt and learned how to stay together.

Advice to other gifted students: Come to CTD 'cause you'll have lots of fun and learn a lot!

Wish I'd seen: The Civil War, even though it was horrible and bloody.

Wish I knew/want to meet: Oprah or Celine Dion

Challenge of your generation: Not becoming obese, not doing drugs

Who/what has had the largest impact on your talent development? Why? My 6th grade G/T Program teacher. This teacher not only taught us way beyond our level, but showed us how things would work in our lives.

Something unique about me: I love sliding in sports (especially soccer in the rain).



"My child enjoyed spending the entire day and some evenings with children having similar talents and interests. Although she was a commuter, she enjoyed the feeling of independence in being gone all day and walking around campus with friends."

It is lots of fun!

"Weekends going to Wrigley Field to see a Cubs game, shopping down on the Magnificent Mile, going to the John G. Shedd Aquarium, the Field Museum, or the Museum of Science and Industry were always a blast! And then on some afternoons or evenings there was always the beach or a dance or some other informal activity planned."

"My child really enjoyed the fact that even though this was class/academic camp, that there was a lot of other things to do as well."

You grow your academic talents.

"When I saw [my daughter's] writing when she came home, I realized she was focusing on each essay now in a new way. She went to her sophomore year, which was filled with academic challenges that I thought might undo her, with complete confidence that she could do this. She is focusing more on enriching academic selections, and I have learned to let her take a lead in this. She is taking a course on Greek and Latin terms this semester. She really wants to take a class on film appreciation, in addition to her high school work, at the local community college."

"My child was challenged in a way that had never happened before. This was a great way to learn that pushing oneself really pays off." ●

Summer Program information for 2005 now available at www.ctd.northwestern.edu/summer

"[My son] was in a great mood for the 3 weeks because he was so challenged and excited about what he was learning. He loved his teacher."

Early Career Planning for Adolescents

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setting preferences. Personality assessment may be more useful later in high school. However, understanding the difference between introversion and extraversion and how that may influence choices is helpful. Two personality instruments used for career purposes are the 16 PF® and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI).

- **Values inventories** allow an individual to rank principles, qualities or work characteristics on their level of importance. Super's Work Values Inventory® and other values-sorting activities, either using cards or completed online, are most commonly used. Adolescents are still in the process of clarifying their values, which may shift as they get older. When gifted students have many interests, values may provide meaningful insight to guide career choices.

These tools highlight talents and preferences and offer guidance for discussion and exploration. The results of these assessments should help parents and children make informed career decisions with greater confidence.

Figuring out "Fit"

Most students participate in career planning assessments at different stages of school. The interpretation they receive is accomplished in a group setting and results are sent home for the parents to decipher. There is little discussion of the individual implications of the information or the how and why a specific student will best fit in different jobs or work environments.

In contrast, students who can combine in-depth self-knowledge with a growing knowledge of the world of work achieve the third component of career literacy. These students have a more informed understanding and vocabulary to explore and discuss their different options. In doing so, they can identify and evaluate the fit of potential jobs and work environments that will enable them to make their best contributions and derive personal satisfaction. Career-literate high school students can select part-time jobs, internships and job shadowing opportunities that will trigger curiosity and motivation. Knowing what tasks, roles, and environments will be best for them informs their choices of courses, college majors, and college.

Highly talented individuals are often told, "You can be anything you want to be." While that may be true, it doesn't offer much direction. High-ability students might consider working with a career professional to understand how their talents can be combined. This can save years of frustration and dissatisfaction and increase chances for successful and fulfilling lives.

What Parents Can Do

Research shows that parents are the strongest influence on their children's educational and career goals. Here are some suggestions for activities to engage your gifted child in to building career literacy.

Elementary School

- Teach your children how to ask questions about work, perhaps role-playing a reporter with neighbors.
- Explore services and products available in your own community. For example, how many different jobs produced the food for your dinner?
- Visit work sites.

Middle School

- Talk about what your children see in the media. What is realistic? What is the real situation (if not realistic)?
- When visiting the doctor's office or clinic, observe what types of employees there are. What type of education do they need to do their work?
- Introduce children to informational interviewing by asking adults how they got their job, what they do, what they like and dislike, and what kind of training and education they needed.
- Seek job-shadowing opportunities.

High School

- Consider a comprehensive career assessment with interpretation by a credentialed career professional.
- Investigate how creativity is used in the workplace in fields other than art. What different types of designers can you identify?
- When interviewing colleges, ask if your teen can speak with alumni in their intended major to find out how their education fits in different careers.
- Become familiar with online resources that provide basic information about careers, projected availability, requirements, and salary. (See sidebar)
- Many talented students find themselves in competitive situations or performing independently. Recognize that teamwork is required in today's workplace. Community service, helping others and working on a project offer opportunities to stretch those interpersonal talents.

These are fun and exciting years. Being informed adds to the motivation and enthusiasm of your gifted child, and will help your gifted child establish an educational and career plan that will launch them into the 21st century workplace ready to make their contribution. ●

Resources

Kosin, P., Hendershot, P., Ryan Krane, N., and Bizot, E. *Getting Started: Talking with Your Child About Career Choices*. Career Vision/Ball Foundation, 2000. (Parent program materials also available)

www.careervision.org — Take a "Career Readiness Quiz" and find practical tips for guiding your children, as well as articles on aptitude-based career planning and other career issues.

The Occupational Outlook Handbook, a nationally recognized source of career information, provides assistance to individuals making decisions about their future work lives. It describes what workers do on the job, working conditions, the training and education needed, earnings, and expected job prospects in a wide range of occupations. www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm

The Occupational Outlook Quarterly provides practical information on jobs and careers. Articles cover topics such as new and emerging occupations, training opportunities, salary trends, and results of new studies from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. www.bls.gov/opub/ooq/ooqhome.htm

*The Occupational Information Network (O*NET™)* — Sponsored by the US Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, O*NET is the primary source of occupational information, covering education, training, career choices, and work <http://online.onetcenter.org/>



Paula Kosin is both Marketing Manager for Career Vision, the career services and consulting division of the Ball Foundation in Glen Ellyn, Illinois, and a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor. She is co-author of the award-winning parent guide, Getting Started: Talking with Your Child About Career Choices, published by the Ball Foundation, 2000. www.careervision.org



William Tirre, Ph.D. is the Research Manager for Career Vision. He is co-author of the chapter "Ability Assessment" appearing in Career Development and Counseling: Putting Theory and Research to Work, Steven D. Brown (editor) and Robert W. Lent (editor). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2004. www.wiley.com

Service Learning: A New Way for Academic Talent Development

Summary by Seon-Young Lee, Ph.D.

Service learning has been defined in many ways, but the core of its definition lies in connecting learning with community service. One frequently cited definition is based on the National and Community Service Act of 1990, proposed by the National Service Learning Cooperative, that views service learning as a method of learning through curriculum integration and actively participating in well-organized service activities in communities (Hinck & Brandell, 1999; Terry, 2000).

The origin of service learning has been attributed to John Dewey's (1938, 1956, 1962) understanding of community as a primary resource of educational opportunities and of learning as an interaction with one's environments. Dewey's conception of linking schools to real communities provided a starting point for service learning's marriage of school-based learning and hands-on learning activities outside of school. Another philosophical touch point for service learning comes from social action theory which encourages learners' active engagement in current societal issues (Wade & Saxe, 1996).

Service learning is often associated with both "community service" and "experiential learning" activities. However, researchers and educators assert that unlike community service, service learning is associated with academic studies and not estranged from traditional learning contexts (Chapin, 1998). Service learning is also different from general experiential learning due to its emphasis on community needs and connection with classroom learning (Hinck & Brandell, 1999). Furco (1996) asserts that, unlike experiential learning, service learning involves both learning and service activities, and benefits both the recipients of the service as well as the learners/service providers themselves.

Very little research has been conducted regarding the effects of service learning on gifted students' talent development. Generally, gifted students are not only academically precocious but also morally and ethically mature and sensitive. Researchers suggest that gifted students benefit from service learning because it provides them with challenging extended curricula which stimulate advanced critical thinking skills, higher level thinking processes, and problem-solving abilities (Lewis, 1996), and also enhance a self-directed independent learning ability (Sorenson & Francis, 1988). Benefits of service learning for gifted students either academically or socio-emotionally include: increased academic skills in relevant subjects (e.g., grammar, math, computer, art, public speak-

ing, etc.); an enhanced sense of confidence, self-efficacy, perseverance, and responsibility; and new perspectives on political (e.g., governments), interpersonal (e.g., coworkers), or occupational (e.g., career goals) relationships (Terry, 2000).

The Civic Education Project (CEP) at the Center for Talent Development (CTD) was designed to help outstanding high school students develop civic responsibility and leadership abilities through a combination of traditional academic work, hands-on community service, and field experiences. Through a three-week residential summer program called the Civic Leadership Institute, students participate in various activities including discussions and debates based on their textbook readings and experiences in the field, and independent and/or small group activities which are designed to explore students' leadership, teamwork, and group problem-solving abilities. Students travel to diverse neighborhoods including Chicago and/or other metropolitan areas, tour significant cultural and historical sites, and visit civic organizations, schools, or newspapers. They also select a social issue in which they are particularly interested, such as world poverty, public health, youth violence, criminal justice, or school reform. These self-selected social issues are explored, with the help of instructors and TAs, in the twice-weekly Integrative Seminar Group. In addition, each week, students meet with outstanding guest speakers from various fields through the Evening Colloquia. These wide-ranging learning activities encourage students to contribute to local organizations via interactions with residents, clients, staff, and other gifted students in the program.

In order to examine how students perceived the effects of the program, CTD conducted a brief survey study including 41 students who had attended our Civic Leadership Institute for the first time in the summer of 2003. In the survey results, students reported that their experience with the Civic Leadership Institute was consistently positive. They also reported that each of the different program components contributed

significantly to their overall learning experience. On the five-point likert scale (1 agree to 5 disagree), students generally agreed that their field experiences ($M = 1.30$, agree = 92.5%), Integrative Seminar ($M = 1.59$, agree = 85.4%), Evening Colloquia ($M = 1.78$, agree = 78.0%), and final class projects ($M = 1.78$, agree = 85.0%) contributed to enhance their academic experience. Students were also satisfied with their residential experience particularly on the campus space and facilities ($M = 1.56$, satisfied = 90.2%), and their relationships with residential staff ($M = 1.41$, satisfied



Generally, gifted students are not only academically precocious but also morally and ethically mature and sensitive.

= 90.2%), and felt satisfied that they developed a sense of community via interactions with other students and staff ($M = 1.61$, agree = 82.9%).

Open-ended statements made by the students reinforced their positive attitudes toward CEP as an academic program.

The most valuable asset perceived by the students was associated with "hands-on" field experiences accompanying "rigorous" discussions (62.7%). Students' comments included that CEP courses exposed them to numerous new perspectives and situations of social issues and enabled them to build a comprehensive picture on diverse social concerns. Other positive comments were related to a variety of activities and their quality (22.0%), and other gifted students whom they met through the program (15.3%). Consequently, an overwhelming percentage of students (85.4%) expressed that they would take a subsequent, second-level CEP course if offered in the future. ●

2005 UPCOMING DATES, DEADLINES, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Summer Program 2005

Leapfrog: July 11-15, July 18-22, July 25-29
Session 1: June 26-Friday, July 15
Session 2: July 17-Friday, August 5
Equinox at Case Western: June 26-Friday
July 15, Cleveland, Ohio
We are currently hiring teachers and staff!

Civic Education Project

Week-long spring trips leave March 20 & 28 to Chicago and New York, respectively. Civic Leadership Institute in Chicago: July 24-August 12

Saturday Enrichment Program

Spring courses begin April 16, 2005

LearningLinks Distance Learning

Winter Session starts in February; summer session starts in June.

Award-Winning Course

continued from page 4

fast enough. For these students, parents usually step in and type for them. That way the parents can see what we are discussing and they can also see how their child is progressing. It becomes a great family event.

Students in this class were typically very talkative. They enjoyed making small talk amongst themselves and getting to know each other. Some even emailed throughout the week.

My role in this format is definitely one of a facilitator. Rarely did I give my opinion, but I did throw out different ideas and sometimes used Socratic dialogue to get to the bottom of a question. Students had to think about what they were saying and decide if it really made sense.

It is true that it is harder to get to know students in an online format than in a traditional classroom setting. I don't see them

"Opportunities for the Future" Conference

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

Midwest Academic Talent Search

SAT testing — January 22
ACT testing — February 12
EXPLORE testing — January 29 & February 26
On-line registration continues through June test dates.

Jack Kent Cooke Young Scholarship Program

Applications deadline: May 2005

Visit www.ctd.northwestern.edu for more information. ●

face to face every day. I have to rely on communicating through email and the discussion board, and I keep notes on each student in an Excel file. However, I see their abilities and what they enjoy by the assignments they choose.

What do you enjoy about teaching online?

I enjoy teaching online because it is "virtually" a stress-free environment. We complete our work within a week and then meet to talk about it. I've gained just as much insight into the book as the students have through the discussions. I also love being amazed each week at what these students are capable of doing. When gifted students are just given a chance to be creative in a safe environment, they excel far beyond our imaginations. ●

**CENTER
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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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