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Winter 2007

Resources & ideas for parents & educators of gifted children

# Talent

CENTER  
for TALENT  
DEVELOPMENT®

## Louisiana Gumbo: Understanding Creativity

An Interview with Dr. Bonnie Cramond

**CTD: What are some of the major theories or perspectives on creativity?**

**Bonnie Cramond:** There are several “schools” of theories. I think they all have some truth to them.

There is the spiritual approach, which can be traced back to the ancient Greeks and Romans who believed that creativity came from the gods. Thus, the Latin word *inspirare*, meaning “to breathe in,” is the root of our word “inspiration” because there was a belief that the gods breathed creative inspiration into mortals. However, many people now credit God or spirits for their creativity. I read an interview with Lionel Ritchie, for example, in which he credited divine inspiration with his

idea for a song, and Elaine Frank did research which described the spiritual nature of Native Americans’ conceptions of creativity.

Of course, the theories for creativity pretty much have followed the route of psychology. There are behavioral theories that relegate creative activities to stimulus, response, and reinforcement conditions. This may account for the fact that some creatives get caught in a rut by continuing to produce similar products because they are rewarded for doing so.

There are psychoanalytic theories that relate the drive to create to unrealized desires of the id. On the other hand, humanistic theories consider creativity the highest form of human development, and separate creative talent, as expressed by van Gogh, from creative style of life, expressed by someone like

Gandhi. There are trait theories, which attribute creativity to people with certain personality traits, and cognitive theories, which relate style of thinking to creativity. And, there are social theories that emphasize the zeitgeist and cultural factors.

However, more recent systems theories, which include many of the factors above, seem to be most accepted now with the recognition that creativity is multidimensional.

**CTD: How is creativity related to giftedness? Are these the same? Different?**

**Cramond:** That depends upon who you talk to and what their conceptions are. I believe that creativity is the highest form of giftedness. It goes beyond mastering knowledge to creating knowledge.

**CTD: Is creativity a trait or a skill or both?**

**Cramond:** Both and more. As a native New Orleanian, I have compared  
*continued on page 2*



## No Summer Vacation for CTD!

Center for Talent Development was an extremely busy place last summer. We served more than 2,600 students in four summer programs. Students came from 41 states and 13 countries to participate in academically challenging courses in math, science and the humanities. In addition, we expanded our joint Summer Program with Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland for students in grades 10 to 12 by developing a program there for students in grades 7 to 9.

The Civic Leadership Institute, CTD’s award-winning experiential service-learning program, was so popular in 2005 that it expanded to the West Coast in 2006 with a three-week program at San Francisco State University (we continued our programs in Baltimore and Chicago).

Currently more than 650 students in grades K to 12 from around the world are participating in distance-learning classes through CTD’s Gifted LearningLinks (GLL). New web-conferencing capabilities allow GLL students increased interactivity with instructors and peers, further enriching their learning opportunities.

Last fall, more than 800 academically gifted students in grades PreK to 9 spent eight consecutive Saturdays expanding their horizons via CTD’s Saturday Enrichment Program. This winter, SEP is extending its geographic reach, providing classes in Gurnee, Illinois, at Woodland Intermediate School West (in addition to CTD’s Glen Ellyn and Evanston sites). The six-class spring session begins April 14, 2007.

Creativity is the highest form of giftedness. It goes beyond mastering knowledge to creating knowledge.

— Cramond

## WHY ONLY FOUR PAGES IN THIS ISSUE?

Your time is valuable. Surveys also tell us that readers are particularly covetous of their “free” moments. And so, we’re changing the Talent newsletter format. We’re printing fewer, shorter articles *but* providing the complete text (plus bonuses such as recommended readings) on our web site. Like the idea? Don’t like the idea? Let us know by sending an email to [ctd@northwestern.edu](mailto:ctd@northwestern.edu). Please type *Talent newsletter editor* in the subject line. Thanks.

# He Called Me a Geeky Nerd! Bullying & Gifted Students

CTD Interviews Dr. Jean Peterson

## CTD: How is bullying defined? How is it measured?

**Jean Peterson:** Bullying is generally defined on questionnaires and in prevention programs as repeated hostile behaviors intended to cause distress in someone who is physically or psychologically weaker. In research Karen Ray and I conducted during two national studies of bullying among gifted children, we listed 13 kinds of bullying and asked gifted eighth-graders to reflect on experiences from kindergarten to grade 8. Victims could check categories from 1 to "more than 10" incidents per grade level. According to the interviews (conducted with approximately 12%), even one incident in kindergarten was recalled vividly. We therefore question the *repeated* aspect. Extreme bullying was experienced by 11% in our study.

We found that the greatest negative impact was related to teasing about physical appearance. Adults may think that teasing is not bullying, yet the distress and the power differential are clearly there, including on Internet chat rooms, at the mall, and at home among siblings.

## CTD: What are the predictors of who will be bullied in school?

**Peterson:** Quantity and quality of friends are perceived to be protective factors. Researchers have noted that victims perceived that they were physically weak and lacked social competence, parents said that male victims were sensitive at a young age and had positive relations with their parents, and teachers believed parents were overprotective.

Another study connected vulnerability to a sad, anxious response to the school milieu, which increased when the child was bullied. Boys who are "nice," academically oriented, and overly sensitive to the needs of others often do not fare well in the peer culture. Victims can be passive or provocative, with the former being lonely and not aggressive or teasing. Some interviewees in our study said that bullies simply pick on anyone who is different. Having relatives in school offered protection in inner-city environments, but rarely elsewhere.

The mobility of suburban communities may mean that kids there don't have that protection.

## CTD: What are the characteristics of bullies?

**Peterson:** Bullies may have had power relationships modeled. They may have a need for control, feel permission to bully, and even use bullying to prevent boredom. They may be exploring social roles and use bullying to maintain social status and reduce anxiety. One study found that bullies were psychologically stronger than victims and had higher social standing.



## Understanding Creativity *continued from front page*

creativity to gumbo—the thick, spicy stew that is a Louisiana favorite: It is unique to each person, the ingredients may differ, combination is the key, and it takes time to simmer. In more conventional terms, creative productivity is the confluence of inherited traits, temperament, brain organization, physical attributes, etc., affected by environmental influences, honed with hard work and practice, and enabled with some chance or luck.

## CTD: Is creativity in children different than creativity in adults? How, and at what age, can creativity in children be identified?

**Cramond:** I think that the basic creative process is pretty much the same regardless of age or field. The difference comes from the amount of knowledge, skill, and intention applied. So, for example, a very creative physicist must have a great deal of knowledge, research skill, and persistence to make a creative contribution to that field. However, she may operate in another field, let's say painting, very much like a child would. On the other hand,

children may develop very strategic ways to approach new problems creatively—especially if they are trained to do so.

## CTD: What criteria can parents use to determine whether a school will be a good fit for their creative child, or if it will nurture creativity in their child?

**Cramond:** At an elementary school, look around. Are all of the students' products alike, like cookie cutter models?

At all levels, talk to teachers and other school personnel. Do they emphasize creative values, whether or not they call them that? Don't believe that creativity means no structure; it is the type of structure in the school that is important. Are students allowed some reasonable choices in regard to class rules? Are there opportunities for problem solving, or are all problems given to the students to solve a certain way in order to arrive at the correct answer? Are there opportunities for problem finding? For example, are students given some choices about what and how they learn? Is the emphasis upon helping students become independent learners and continue learning

outside of the classroom? The more of these positive indicators, the more likely that the school or class will foster creativity.

*Bonnie Cramond, an expert on creativity, is an associate professor at the University of Georgia, where she has taught since 1989. Cramond has written many book chapters, monographs and journal articles and spoken at various gifted shows on such subjects as "Creativity: Problem or Promises" and "The Nature of Creativity."*

*Dr. Cramond answers additional questions about creativity on the CTD web site including: What home and school factors contribute to the development of creativity in children? How can parents and schools deliberately foster creativity? Cramond also gives a list of:*

- *Biographies of creative people*
- *Internet sites for parents who want to encourage creativity in their child*
- *Sites that publish teens' creative work.*

*Go to [www.ctd.northwestern.edu/resources/talentdevelopment/gumbo.htm](http://www.ctd.northwestern.edu/resources/talentdevelopment/gumbo.htm)*

Another study found that bullies were more delinquent and experienced more depression than did nonbullies. Generally, quantitative studies have not connected family factors with bullying.

Our findings showed that percent of gifted bullies steadily increases from kindergarten to grade 8, with *kinds* of bullying also increasing. We could not ascertain whether gifted middle-school bullies were formerly victims. However, given the trend away from physical bullying, with age, we speculated that gifted bullies' verbal skills may give them increasing power. Several interviewees mentioned that it was other gifted kids who bullied them.

Parents, counselors, teachers, and administrators need to be concerned about both bullies and victims. Bullies may carry their aggression into the workplace and into other relationships, and some studies have connected school bullying to later involvement in corrections.

*Jean Peterson, coordinator of school counseling at Purdue University, was a classroom and gifted-education teacher prior to her career in counselor education. She has contributed over 60 publications to the school counseling and gifted education literature, many of them focusing on the social and emotional development of gifted adolescents. She is currently chair of the Counseling and Guidance Division of NAGC. Her two Talk with Teens books are used in schools and counseling centers as an affective curriculum.*

*Dr. Peterson answers more questions on bullying – whether there are long-term effects and what educators and parents can do to help a child who is being bullied – on the CTD website. She also includes a list of very useful resources. Go to [www.ctd.northwestern.edu/resources/socemoachieve/peterson.htm](http://www.ctd.northwestern.edu/resources/socemoachieve/peterson.htm)*

The research described in this article was published in *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 2006, Volume 50, No. 2, pages 148 – 168.

## Insiders in the Mysteries of English Vocabulary Notes from a distance-learning teacher

by Michael Clay Thompson

I joined the Gifted LearningLinks (GLL) program about five years ago, after initial hesitation. I had never taught through any form of distance learning, and was uncertain how it would work, or even if it would work, since I have always taught with a real sense of engagement with the students, and have felt that the art of positive encouragement benefits from face-to-face experience with students. My respect for Paula Olszewski-Kubilius, the director of Center for Talent Development, was what reassured me; if she had anything to do with it, I should give it a try.

I have discovered that although not every course I have tried has worked well in the distance-learning format—and I have dropped courses I couldn't solve via this teaching method—the vocabulary courses I am teaching now work very well. Beyond that, I am pleased with the environment of the courses: the students get to work at their own pace, I get to grade papers at all hours of my life, and the students and I really get quite a good sense of each other as the course develops. This is aided by the fact that I ask every student to send me a jpg or digital image of his or her face to put in my email program. Until I did that, it did feel a little too anonymous; I was just grading papers submitted by mystery students.

I am using my own textbooks in my vocabulary classes, and I have had to make special versions of my quizzes, tests, and assignments, so that they fit well within the email framework. I also find that I have to make comments—not just give numerical grades—to show the students I have read their papers. So, over time, the courses evolve as an email dialogue about the students' learning experience.

The pros of distance learning include flexibility of time, and a personal touch through this kind of email conversation. You might think that the cons would include students just copying their answers from the book. That's just not what occurs. First, my assignments make that impossible, and second, my experience over five years has shown me that when students take their quizzes, most of them just take the quiz "blind," as they would in any school, making the same kinds of errors I have always seen in the classroom. I think the GLL students really want to learn, and they do their honest best.

I have many students who, after taking my level I class, sign up for my level II class. This year we added a level III and it, too, has an enrollment. This means that I may have the same vocabulary students for a year, two years or even three years in a row. Sometimes, a little brother signs up afterwards, and then even a little sister! In time, I have corresponded with the mom, the dad, and the students, and get to know the family. It is a lot of fun, especially since the purpose of our joint effort is a good one – to become insiders in the mysteries of English vocabulary.

*Michael Clay Thompson is a writer, consultant, and presenter at district, state, national, and international conferences on gifted education. He is on the board of directors of the National Association for Gifted Children, the editor of Our Gifted Children magazine (since 1994), the creator of the Classic Words vocabulary software, and the author of several grammar and vocabulary series. He holds a BA in philosophy and anthropology from Washington and Lee University and a master's degree in gifted education from Western Carolina University.*



### Graduation of first Project EXCITE class

Pictured are 15 of the 17 students in the first Project EXCITE class to complete the program, which involves six years of challenging after-school, Saturday, and summer academic programs. Started by Center for Talent Development (in partnership with Evanston/Skokie school districts 65 and 202), this rigorous program is designed to help increase the number of underrepresented students in Advanced Placement and honors mathematics and science courses offered by Evanston Township High School in Evanston, IL. Each year a new group of qualifying local third-graders is invited into the program to follow in the footsteps of this group of pioneers. "The most vital work of Center for Talent Development is developing talent," says Project EXCITE Director George Peternel. "That is the essence of Project EXCITE."



## NEWS, DATES & OTHER IMPORTANT CTD INFORMATION

**Summer Program 2007** information, including Civic Leadership Institute and Spectrum and Equinox at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, is on the CTD website.

### **Saturday Enrichment Program**

Spring session: starts April 14, 2007. Classes in Evanston (morning and afternoon), Glen Ellyn (morning), and Gurnee (morning), Illinois

**Gifted LearningLinks** on-line distance-learning summer sessions start June 1.

*For more information on any of these programs, go to Center for Talent Development's website: [www.ctd.northwestern.edu](http://www.ctd.northwestern.edu) or email us at [ctd@northwestern.edu](mailto:ctd@northwestern.edu) and we'll send you a brochure.*

### **New Program!**

Create a challenging learning environment for a wide range of student abilities by completing a Gifted Master's Degree OR Advanced Teaching Certificate program at Northwestern University's School of Education and Social Policy. Check out

[www.sesp.northwestern.edu/mسد](http://www.sesp.northwestern.edu/mسد) for more information or call 847/467-1458.



### **MATS DVD available!**

Need a visual for a parent meeting? Just want to know more about Midwest Academic Talent Search (MATS)?

CTD now has a DVD that explains the entire MATS process—and its benefits. All your questions will be answered in 15 minutes via interviews with parents, students, gifted coordinators, and program administrators. It's a great aid for parent meetings.

Want a copy? Send your contact information to [ctd@northwestern.edu](mailto:ctd@northwestern.edu) and we'll put one in the mail—free of charge.

### **Make a Difference!**

Help us continue to provide our programs and classes to every child who could benefit from attending one of them.

Please send a tax-deductible check in any amount to Center for Talent Development *Scholarship Fund*, 617 Dartmouth Place, Evanston, IL 60208. Thank you!

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Center for Talent Development at Northwestern University is an accredited learning center and research facility serving the gifted community. 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, Gifted 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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