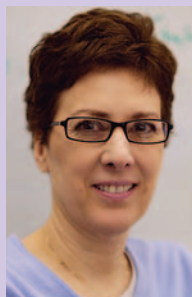


# Talent

Winter 2008

CENTER  
for TALENT  
DEVELOPMENT®



## Director's Message

When Michael Clay Thompson walked into Northwestern University's Annenberg Hall one Saturday last fall, he first checked out the room in which he would be speaking.

Thompson then walked out into the hallway and over to the sign CTD staff had just posted outside the men's bathroom and asked, "What's a Bathroom Men?"

We've used the sign before, and hadn't thought twice about it. Michael was the first person to notice.

And that's a problem. When we misuse language long enough or someone who is perceived as being authoritative misuses the language, we all start to think that's the norm even when it isn't. I worry that if we continue to tolerate mediocrity or use language without considering its meaning, communication will become even more difficult. What a pity.

Language is powerful. No wonder Michael is passionate about the subject. Every time I hear him speak I am reminded of his ardor for words. For language is the vehicle we use to share knowledge. Occasionally we may grunt or point but when we use words, and use them properly, we impart information to each other well, which is just one reason that good communication is critical to the teaching process in general. That's why we hired Michael to come to Center for Talent Development this past fall to speak to area teachers about the importance of language and vocabulary development.

Obviously we couldn't print everything Michael had to say. But we believe we have provided you with the highlights. Enjoy.

*Paula Obezuski-Kubilus*

## Michael Clay Thompson Language Arts: The core of all content and vocabulary

*Michael Clay Thompson believes that the way many schools teach language arts is "disintegrated" and that schools need to incorporate more formal language study in their English curricula. "Students should be excited and positive about words," he said during his day-long presentation for teachers held at the Center for Talent Development (CTD) in September 2007.*

*The Center for Talent Development interviewed him about his views on language and vocabulary development while he was on the Northwestern University campus. Excerpts from the discussion are below.*

**CTD: Many people might find listening to someone talk about the importance of Latin and Greek stems for an entire day to be a bit much.**

*MCT: Bottom line, Language Arts is the core of all content and vocabulary is the gate that gives you access to the core. Many students feel like outsiders to their own language. For one thing, they don't all have classes in vocabulary. And, unfortunately, many school systems have removed advanced vocabulary instruction from their curriculum.*

*We have all been victims of a national negative assumption, that students can't handle a rigorous vocabulary program. But the idea of grade-level vocabulary is out of sync with the real abilities of gifted students.*

*In my presentation I put lists of words up on the screen, such as "odious," "manifest," "serene," "countenance," and "visage"—each list from one book. We look at those lists and think the book*

*must be a sophisticated adult classic.*

*We are amazed to learn that the words come from classic children's books such as *Peter Pan* and *Wind in the Willows*.*

**CTD: I was among those who were amazed. I have vowed to reread those books!**

*MCT: The problem is that we wait too long to teach realistic vocabulary in schools. I call the overall curriculum in USA schools, at least in terms of learning vocabulary, a "National Vocabulary Prevention Program."*

*If students are to write formal essays – for whatever reason, whether it be college applications or a PhD thesis – they need formal words. There's no question that there is a direct connection between having an extensive vocabulary and being able to write well – being able to say what you mean and in a way that other people will understand the point that you're making.*

**CTD: That makes sense, but how do you explain the importance of incorporating vocabulary into the curriculum of all subjects? Basically, that vocabulary is critical in the education of us all.**

*MCT: There are myriad reasons to study vocabulary: For one, the English language is generally derived from Latin. There are*

*continued on page 2*

## WHO SAID THIS?

**“Flaming enthusiasm, backed up by horse sense and persistence, is the quality that most frequently makes for success.”**

Answer at <http://www.ctd.northwestern.edu/resources/newslettersolutions>



# Michael Clay Thompson

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thousands of English words that are identical in spelling and meaning to Latin words – enigma, martyr, regimen, caveat, census, discus, spectrum, duplex, terminus, stratum, and even educator.

Second, you need to remember that the United States is still a new nation. Studying Latin vocabulary not only teaches students the words they need to function well but it also shows kids the history of the Roman Empire – not a bad add-on.

### CTD: So what about the stems....

*MCT:* If you know 100 stems, this gives you a knowledge of 5,000 words. It is power learning at its best. Look at the stem *ante*, for instance, which means before. We see *ante* in antedate, antecedent, antebellum, anterior, ante meridiem, antepenult. Or consider *anti*, meaning against. You have anti-aircraft, antibody, anticlimax, anticline, antitoxin, antithesis.

### CTD: And how did you come up with the 100 that you listed for us (visit <http://www.ctd.northwestern.edu/resources/mct100words/>)?

*MCT:* I asked my colleagues in middle school and high school for their textbooks that had glossaries. It didn't matter what they taught—civics, biology, world history, AP chemistry, Spanish. Then I analyzed them all and came up with the 100 stems that were common to the words.

### CTD: It was clear from your presentation that you love databases for words.

*MCT:* I'd have a difficult time doing what I do without computers!

### CTD: And, of course, if 100 stems are good, are 500 five times as good?

*MCT:* Absolutely.

If students know the stems it really can change their lives – have a profound and permanent effect on them. The advantages are so clear. First, as I mentioned, language is interdisciplinary – knowing more words doesn't just make reading classics more rewarding. The stems are important to every educational discipline. Where does the word *anthozoan* come from? A sea anemone is an anthozoan, literally a flower-animal!

Second, the Latin stems help you with other languages. Look at pairs of English and Spanish words: biology/*biología*,



autocracy/*autocracia*,  
neophyte/*neofito*.

Third, if students know stems, it gives them confidence. They will be able to figure out the meaning of a word because they know the two or three stems that are the base. After they are successful a couple of times, they'll tackle almost any book. Knowing word stems and being comfortable with them gives these students a tremendous advantage.

Fourth, the stems show students the inner secrets of words. There is poetry in words. It gives them respect for words. They may stop and look at a particular word a second time and gain new understanding of why the author used that word and not another. Think about the word "subterfuge." It's an especially descriptive noun. It refers to the evasions we use to avoid being pinned down. You can evade a question with a subterfuge, as by distracting the questioner with an unrelated counterquestion. But the word contains a metaphorical image of what is really happening: to use a subterfuge is to duck, to flee (fug) underneath (sub).

Another example: "Intractable." It is not made of *intra* (within); it is made of *in* (not) and *tract* (pull). It suggests a mule-like stubbornness so firm that even pulling is of no avail. To be intractable is to be resistant to persuasion, logic, coercion or compromise.

Interiors of a word often contain a striking image that only a person who knows the meaning of the stems will enjoy. In the case of "circumspect," which means

cautious, we see the cautious person looking (spect) around (circum) for signs of danger. In *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Maya Angelou wrote, "If Dolores knew, she would crawl up in her blanket of affectations and die circumspectly."

The last advantage is to help students do even better on their achievement tests. The stems help with the basics such as word definitions and analogies. For example:

Biped : bicycle::  
Quadruped : automobile  
Rectangle : tetragon  
Binary : unitary  
Biceps : triceps

The answer is quadruped : automobile. Two feet/two wheels, four feet/four wheels. The relationship is two-fold: numerical identity and foot vs. wheel.

### CTD: We really enjoyed the vocabulary workshop. How can people find your textbooks and other work?

*MCT:* My workshop here focused on the content of my "Word Within the Word" vocabulary program, but I have a series of six vocabulary textbooks with both student and teacher manuals, and they are all available at the Royal

Fireworks Press Web site ([rfwp.com](http://www.rfwp.com)). The vocabulary in those texts is also reinforced in my grammar and writing books. There are also a lot of free downloads of my handouts and speeches there that people are welcome to

"If students know stems, it gives them confidence. They will be able to figure out the meaning of a word."

access. If they have more questions, they can call Royal Fireworks or e-mail me at [mith@mac.com](mailto:mith@mac.com). I do lots of faculty inservice workshops across the country, and anyone who wants that can arrange it by calling Tom Kemnitz at Royal Fireworks.

I also offer vocabulary (and elementary grammar) classes directly through Northwestern's Center for Talent Development Gifted Learning Links program, so if anyone wants their elementary or middle school child to take my course from me directly, that is the way to do that. It is a lot of fun for me. ●

To read Michael Clay Thompson's biography, visit <http://www.ctd.northwestern.edu/resources/mctbio>

## Mitchel Hochberg for president...in 2028

Most people would think it a bit presumptuous for a high school freshman's e-mail address to be mitch4prez2028. But that would be before they had talked to him on the phone or seen him in action.

**Scenario #1:** It's the student's first Expo at Northwestern University's Center for Talent Development (CTD). He's going into seventh grade and he's just been through three incredibly intense weeks of education, taking a class called "Model United Nations" every day (including July 4th for goodness sakes!) from 8:30 to 2:45. He is chairman of the United Nation's committee, which means the success of the presentation of the Model United Nations class at the final day Expo – on a stage at Northwestern University for a gallery of friends and family – pretty much rests on his shoulders. He walks up to the podium. He starts his presentation. The audiovisual system crashes. With amazing aplomb, the student adlibs his way through the presentation, explaining what the class did, why, what they learned, and what an incredible experience it had been for each of them.

**Scenario #2 (two years later):** The same student, Mitchel Hochberg, is taking "Youth & Society," a Summer Program course run by CTD's Civic Education Project, which integrates academic study with meaningful community service to create a powerful, eye-opening experience for young student leaders. As part of the class, the 18 students, instructor and teaching assistant visited an editorial board meeting at the Chicago Tribune to watch how decisions about coverage and story placement are made at the newspaper. The experience was definitely memorable.

"We watched the process of how an

editorial board decides what gets covered," says Hochberg. "We really saw the free press in action. But we also saw its limitations. It was very eye-opening. They even let us participate, let us voice our opinions. But just hearing their discussions was cool. And I later saw some of the material they had been debating printed in the Tribune – whether schools should be named after politicians, for example, a graphic about US vacation time relative to the vacation time taken by Europeans, a story about Latin being reintroduced as the official language of the Catholic Church."

That night, young Hochberg, still heady from the experience and eager for more, tracked down the e-mail of Bruce Dold, editor of the editorial page and a member of the board for the past 17 years, and wrote him a note. "I reflected on how exciting the experience had been and how I really liked being part of the proceedings," Hochberg explains. "And, of course, I thanked him for the opportunity. And I made some comments about how watching and better understanding the process had helped increase my hope for the future of newspapers and a free media in America and in the world – despite the nay sayers."

His words made a very positive impression. The next day Hochberg's inbox contained the following message:

*Mitchel*

*Thanks for your very thoughtful note. I'm glad you enjoyed the experience. You asked some very good questions, and I can tell from your note that you're a solid writer.*

*The editorial board is meeting at 10:30 a.m. Tuesday with Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff to talk about the national terrorism threat. I'd like to invite you to join us for that meeting. If that conflicts with the Civic Education Project (CTD course) and you can't make it, I understand. But if you would like to join us, let me know.*

*Bruce Dold*

Although unscheduled trips are not the norm at CTD, the Summer Program staff (and Hochberg's parents) knew this was no ordinary invitation. So two days later Hochberg and the teaching assistant from the "Youth & Society" class, Michelle Naffziger, took the elevated train downtown to the very same room in the very same building that they had visited just the past week.

But this time there were only three visi-

tors total, and two of them, Hochberg and Naffziger, were from CTD.

"The entire editorial board was there for Chertoff," says Hochberg. "That wasn't true when we visited their regular meeting." The event took about an hour and was "rigidly scheduled," according to Hochberg. After Chertoff entered the room, he systematically shook the hand of everyone present. When he stood before Hochberg he said, "You must be the commander in chief."

"Mr. Dold talked for a few minutes," says Hochberg. "Then Mr. Chertoff spoke. I suppose it was somewhat of a standard speech. He spoke about the different security concerns, about national ID cards. After that he took questions. It was pretty exciting to watch. Everyone was trying to talk over everyone else.

"It was an honor to meet Mr. Chertoff," says Hochberg. "Hearing a member of the Cabinet speak and seeing him that close – well, it's just not an experience you're going to get every day."

Most people would probably think that attending an hour-long meeting with Michael Chertoff would be the highlight of Hochberg's two Summer Program sessions at Center for Talent Development. However, that highlight doesn't stand alone. Hochberg says that getting to interact with other students his age whom he could "talk to as adults" was also significant. He also said that he learned a lot about leading a group of peers when he was chairman of the United Nation's class. The experience fostered an interest in the art of debating which continues today; Hochberg is a member of his school's debate team and traveled to Michigan this fall to participate in their High School Debate Tournament, where he and his partner took second place.

Hochberg said that the "Youth & Society" class had further boosted his social awareness level, creating a "sense of urgency," as he described it, to have a positive impact on the world – to leave it a better place. He's not sure which career path he will take to accomplish that goal. Options include journalism and teaching, Hochberg says. But it's clear from his e-mail address that he sees potential in politics, as well. ●



### FUN & GAMES

Answer is at <http://www.ctd.northwestern.edu/resources/newslettersolutions>

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## NEWS, DATES & OTHER IMPORTANT CTD INFORMATION

### **MATS DVD Available!**

Need a visual aid for a parent meeting? Just want to know more about Midwest Academic Talent Search (MATS)? CTD 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. They're so popular that we're into our second printing. Want a copy? Send your contact information to [ctd@northwestern.edu](mailto:ctd@northwestern.edu), write MATS DVD in the subject line and we'll put one in the mail to you — free of charge.

### **What's Happening at CTD**

Sign up for Midwest Academic Talent Search (MATS). Above-grade-level-testing program for students in grades 3 to 9.

Sign up for *February 23, 2008* Explore test, *March 1* SAT test and *April 12* ACT test. Registration ends on *February 2*.

Gifted LearningLinks online distance-learning winter session starts on *January 15, 2008*; spring on *April 12* and summer on *June 1*.

Saturday Enrichment Program Winter session starts on *January 12*.

### **Terrific Summer at CTD**

Sign up your children completing grades PreK through 12 for CTD's Summer Program. Course listings available online. Or send us an e-mail requesting a brochure. We also have a terrific eight-minute video available with interviews with students, teachers and parents talking about the CTD Summer Program experience. Send us an e-mail with Summer Program Video in the subject line along with your snail mail address, and we'll put one in the mail to you.

### **Great Opportunity**

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

*For more information on any of these programs or offerings, go to the CTD Web site, [www.ctd.northwestern.edu](http://www.ctd.northwestern.edu), write us an e-mail at [ctd@northwestern.edu](mailto:ctd@northwestern.edu) or call us at 847/491-3782.*

## CENTER *for* TALENT DEVELOPMENT®

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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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