

Good afternoon. My name is Paula Olszewski-Kubilius and I am the Director of the Center for Talent Development. It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Awards Ceremony for the Midwest Academic Talent Search. The students here today qualified to receive an award because they scored in the top 1% of students who took the Scholastic Aptitude Test or the American College Test, or in the top 2% of students who took the EXPLORE test in this year's talent search.
CONGRATULATIONS!!!!

The purpose of this ceremony is to publicly recognize our top scoring students and their families. We know that the development of ability or talent takes a great deal of support from families, schools, and communities and we want to acknowledge that with this ceremony.

To the students here, your achievement is truly remarkable! Your high scores on these tests reflect your natural ability to learn as well as your work in school and independent learning at home and outside of school. They attest to the fact that you have exceptional potential to learn, to achieve, and to contribute to this world.

Parents and family members, congratulations to you as well and thank you for your support of your talented child. Your role in your child's development is very special and important—and absolutely vital. You provide the nurturance, love and support that helps your students focus their energies on learning and serious study. You provide the materials and opportunities for them to pursue projects and activities at home. You provide the financial means for them to participate in special classes. You serve as role models who read, investigate, problem solve, analyze, and through your actions demonstrate a love of learning and an intellectual curiosity. You encourage and cultivate their creativity and independent thinking. You sacrifice your own personal time and organize family life so your student can make the most of school and partake of special opportunities outside of school. The students are here, in large part, because of your love, support and commitment—and we honor that.

My message to you today is simple. Though many past events and experiences have led you here today, we hope that this is a beginning for you in two important ways.

- (1) We want the talent search and awards ceremony to be the first significant encounter you have in a long term relationship with the Center for Talent Development. And,
- (2) we hope that this will be the beginning of your involvement in many special opportunities to develop your talents.

We ask you today to commit to developing your talents to the highest degree possible. Your SAT, ACT or EXPLORE scores have given you, your parents, and your school a much clearer picture of your learning capabilities. Now the challenge is to make the most of those abilities.

I invite you to consider the following opportunities for talent development as you proceed to finish elementary or middle school and move on to high school.

- 1) Consider participating in a special summer program with other talented students your age. Our programs here at Northwestern include Apogee, Spectrum and Equinox. There are hundreds of other special summer programs across the nation that are designed for students like you that use SAT or ACT scores as entrance criteria and the

talent search is your window to those opportunities. Now many more of these opportunities will be available to you. These programs offer advanced coursework at a more appropriate pace. Since most are on college campuses they offer exposure to college life, and higher education. And, they offer a unique social environment including many opportunities to interact and make friends with students with similar interests and great minds. Some great places to get information about these programs include the materials we sent you as part of your MATS participation, a magazine called Imagine—published for gifted kids and available through the Center for Talented Youth at Johns Hopkins University, and the Web site of the National Association for Gifted Children, the main advocacy group in the nation for families of gifted children.

2) Consider taking courses through some form of distance education. This is a way to take a class earlier than you would in school like Pre Calc, to fit in an extra course into your schedule like Latin, or to take a class that your school does not offer such as creative writing. Check out CTD's Gifted LearningLinks program which facilitates independent study of subjects through Web based

online courses, and CD ROM based courses—as well as other distance learning programs such as the ones at the Center for Talented Youth at Johns Hopkins University and the Talent Identification Program at Duke University. Recent research suggests that most high school students will stay fully enrolled in their local school but will take one or two classes via a distance education program to supplement their high school curriculum. Distance education courses really develop your abilities to study and learn independently, a necessity for high school and college study.

3) Start now to do some long term academic planning. Think about whether you are interested in using special summer programs, distance learning programs and other opportunities to accelerate or speed up your progress through the school curriculum—so that you can take more advanced classes or college classes while you are still in high school, or even enter college as a full time student one or two years early. Research has shown that when acceleration is a student's choice, it is generally a positive experience and has many long lasting benefits.

Or, start looking at these extra programs for classes that would enrich and extend your school program. The reasons to take such classes include challenging yourself, learning more deeply about a subject that interests you, or broadening your learning into new, unexplored areas.

4) With your parents, explore other possibilities for yourself. These include special residential, state supported high schools such as the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy, and the Indiana Academy for Science, Mathematics and Humanities or the International Baccalaureate program that operates within high schools. These programs offer specialized and challenging coursework. Investigate participating in contests such as the Mathematics, Physics, Biology or Chemistry Olympiads or the Intel Science Talent Search. Competitions exist in every subject area and can provide opportunities to meet other students with similar interests and to have your work judged by professionals.

Most of the midwestern states (Minnesota, Indiana, Wisconsin, Ohio, Michigan) have options called "dual enrollment" or "post secondary options" where students can spend part of their day in college classes while still primarily enrolled in

high school. In Ohio, you can do this as early as the ninth grade. Investigate these with your state education office or state gifted/talented programs coordinator.

5) With the help of teachers, parents, and other interested adults explore careers or fields that you are interested in. Investigate how others have combined their interests into unique occupations. You might do this through volunteer work or shadowing a professional in your community. Investigate mentorship and internship programs in your school or community. It is not too early to explore career interests.

6) Explore opportunities to do service work in your community. CTD offers the Civic Education Program and Civic Leadership Institute which enables students to investigate significant social issues such as poverty, racism or youth violence and simultaneously do volunteer work in a community—during the summer or on your spring break. Look into other opportunities to get involved in assisting your community as a way to enlarge your view of the world, to gain understanding about significant problems in our society, and to develop your leadership skills. You

are not too young to contribute significantly to your community.

As you make your choices in the future, do not be afraid to take risks—try something new—try something difficult—something you are not absolutely sure you will be good at. Studies of very successful people show that they experienced many failures along the way—they were not always successful. The essential difference between them and others was that they learned from their mistakes—and they tried again—they had tremendous persistence and tenacity. They gained confidence and experience from both their successes and failures. Also, though they focused in on an area and gained expertise in it, they were broadly educated which contributed to their ability to generate innovative ideas—they made unusual connections between seemingly disparate areas. Do not let fear of failure keep you from pursuing an interest or investigating a possibility. Get as broad an education as you can.

Whatever the decisions that you face in the future regarding your education, please keep two words in mind—challenge and support.

Students and parents, select classes and programs, whether in school or outside of school or extracurricular activities, that will challenge you—make you reach and grow either academically or socially or both—take the more challenging course rather than the easier one that you are sure to get a good grade in. Parents, provide support, emotional support in the form of guidance, and support in the form of information and access to others who can assist your child. If these two qualities exist in every situation you put your self in—challenge and support—you are likely to develop your abilities and become a talented, well adjusted adult.

Again, congratulations to the students on your achievements. Your drive to learn, to develop, to know, has gotten you here today. But much much more awaits you in the future.