

Systems Newsletter

Center for Gifted Education

Fall 2003

The College of William and Mary

Volume 12 Number 1

Ongoing Research and Evaluation: Addressing Essential Elements of Policy, Identification, and Curriculum

The Center for Gifted Education is constantly involved in projects related to the fourth goal which focuses on conducting research and evaluation for dissemination to relevant audiences and for data-based decision-making. This past year, the Center has contracted with several organizations to conduct research related to state-level gifted education policy, alternative identification tools for use with underrepresented students, and comprehensive curriculum evaluation.

The Ohio Policy Study

In the spring of 2003, the Center for Gifted Education contracted with the Ohio Department of Education to conduct a four-month policy review study. Based upon specific criteria established between grantor and grantee, five states were selected to be included in this study: Indiana, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina,

and Virginia. The overarching research questions guiding the study were: (a) In a selected set of states, what are Department of Education policies that represent effective practices for gifted education? and (b) What are the policy strengths and limitations?

The study integrated four data sources: (a) a document review of each state's gifted education policy, (b) interviews with key personnel from the State Department of Education, (c) focus group sessions with key stakeholders, and (d) a comparative analysis of state policy against the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) program standards. Data analysis techniques included content analysis techniques for documents and NAGC's program standards. All data were incorporated into within-state and cross-state analyses. A summary of the findings

Continued on page 4

In this Issue

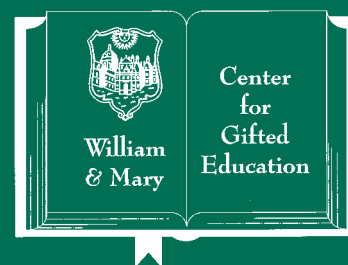
Executive Director.....2

Curriculum Corner.....6

An Interview With
Dr. Miraca Gross.....8

Rate of Advanced
Placement (AP) Exam-Taking
Among AP-Enrolled Students:
A Study of New Jersey High
Schools.....9

2003 Summer Programs
Through the Center for
Gifted Education.....10





From the Executive Director

Dr. Joyce VanTassel-Baska

**Remarks at the 2003
Graduation Brunch
Sunday, May 11th**

“The secret to life is to have a task you give everything to but can’t possibly accomplish.”

- Henry Moore

On this graduation Sunday, it may be fitting to reflect on what universities do for a society. First and foremost, they provide new knowledge through research and design centers that contribute greatly to understanding our world and how new knowledge may be harnessed and disseminated through technology. Secondly, universities try to prepare professionals and undergraduates to function at high levels within a society. Both liberal arts and professional schools perform an important mission to produce clear thinkers and visionary professionals to lead the society toward making a better world. Universities also serve as a forum for societal issues and communication. For example, Williamsburg was the host for a worldwide economic summit in 1983 which allowed the College to have a deep presence and voice in world affairs. This past year’s visit by the United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, on Charter Day again illustrated higher education’s role in facilitating the shaping and illumination of issues in our society.

The EPPL program in gifted education at William and Mary is

small in comparison to the examples noted, but it exemplifies the process of making a lasting contribution to a society in respect to educational emphasis. First of all, it prepares leaders; graduate programs contribute disproportionately to the future of fields. In gifted education, this is especially true. Everyone who enters and graduates is expected to become or continue to be a leader in gifted education, to have a vision for what contribution she is uniquely suited.

The program also provides specialized content knowledge and pedagogy unique to the work of a field called gifted education, intent on maintaining infrastructures within the society to ensure that this special population’s needs are met. Thus the program focuses on students’ understanding of complex issues such as gifted children’s psychological and educational needs, alternative ways to meet those needs in all dimensions, and the research and development principles necessary to contribute to a field.

Moreover, this program fosters lifelong inquiry. Each graduate of our program has the toolkit to conduct new studies, to make important decisions about education at whatever level he works, to study educational issues and write about them thoughtfully.

The program also creates innovators, people who want to change the world for the better for a targeted population (the gifted and talented).

In this case, each graduate can develop programs that meet specialized needs, create curriculum that is responsive to learners and to disciplines, and develop policies that impact learners and teachers in profound ways. Our graduates develop the capacity to be creative producers.

We hope the program inspires true collaboration by encouraging people to work together to accomplish a task bigger than themselves. Students learn to plan and execute projects, and they engage in research and writing in a team mode as it is done in the real world of education.

Finally, the program develops reflective practitioners. Each graduate student also leaves this place capable of thinking deeply about what really matters in education and how best to preserve it in her own work. Bedrock values about what quality and excellence are in education, the importance of hard work to reach worthwhile goals, and the necessity of commitment of self to the enterprise of learning all are transmitted through the program and hopefully internalized for life.

In summary, the program develops talent. We identify students by aptitudes and interests. We provide challenge and support through quality instruction and mentoring. We deepen values of scholarship and hard work to perform one’s chosen

Continued on page 3

Executive Director

(cont'd from page 2)

tasks. We provide “crystallizing” experiences in the form of meeting and interacting with leaders in the field, presenting at national and international conferences and participating in on-going research and publication efforts.

★ ★ ★

William and Mary’s doctoral program in gifted education is about positively changing lives. It is often frustrating, always challenging and requires deep persistence to stay the course. And, if you care to know, it is rocket science. My wish today for both of our graduates is to “find true self,” that place between our limits and our potentials where creative tension holds sway and propels us forward, according to Parker Palmer. The novelist Frederic Buechner once said: “Vocation is the place where your deep gladness meets the world’s deep need.” For the sake of gifted children everywhere, may your work always serve to create such joy.

I am most proud of the two women who are graduating today. They have embodied the talent development process just described and reached their goal.

Tacey Hopper has been interested in homeschooling as long as I have known her and engaged in the practice herself with all of her children, most notably her oldest daughter, Jessie, until she reached the senior high school years. Thus, Tacey’s interest in gifted education was fueled by her role as a homeschooling parent, seeing unmet needs emerge in her own children and wanting to know ways to respond to them. It was little wonder

then that Tacey’s focus in her program at various stages was on homeschooling issues and that her dissertation was a set of four case studies of homeschooling students and their families. Her work represents an important contribution to the literature on both gifted education and homeschooling. Tacey’s commitment to finishing her doctorate at William and Mary was so strong that she withstood several years of long distance commuting to make today a reality. She is a credit to her family and her university as she serves as a wonderful model of tenacity and spirit.

Donna Poland worked at the Center for Gifted Education for four years during her doctoral study, competently serving as a research assistant to our curriculum dissemination science grant, serving as editor of our *Systems* newsletter, and being “artist in residence” for everything from catering to planning the 10-year reception gala. Her work was stellar in all of these respects. The EPPL program hopefully prepared her well for her next and current role as director of the New Horizons Governor’s School in Hampton. Donna’s continued interest in innovative teaching strategies like problem-based learning and science learning in general led her to the dissertation study she has just completed, “An Analysis of Science and Gifted Instructional Practices in Virginia’s Governor’s Schools.” Donna’s study is an important contribution to understanding the practical realities of Virginia’s specialized secondary schools for the gifted during the second decade of their existence.

Several new graduate students entered the gifted education programs this fall. Students new to the master’s program in Curriculum and Instruction are Katherine Andrews, Ruth Beeler, Ai Lian Chee, Brandy Evans, Robin Jones, Kristen Sharp, and Julie Thompson. We also have one student in the new master’s program in Educational Policy, Planning, and Leadership, Nathaniel Elliot. Finally, we have seven new students in the doctoral program: Matthew Edinger, Brenda Hoffman, Susan McGowan, Pam Myers, Tamra Stambaugh, Kianga Thomas, and Kim Tyler. We are pleased to welcome these students into our program and wish them every success in their studies and scholarship as well as their work with gifted learners in a variety of settings.

★ ★ ★

The Center is pleased to welcome Kimberley Chandler as the new Curriculum & Instruction Coordinator. Kim comes to the Center with 13 years of experience in gifted education as a teacher and then as a central office administrator of gifted programs.

The Center also welcomes Dr. Ellen Fithian as the new Director of Precollegiate Learner Programs & Math/Science Curriculum Coordinator. Ellen successfully defended her dissertation in August, 2003.



Ongoing Research and Evaluation

(cont'd from page 1)

across eight categories is offered below.

In regards to governance, different states reflect differing models for the distribution of power between state and local control. Differences of interpretation around definition, identification, and services occur when states are not explicit in the distribution between local and state power. Attention to identification issues receives the greatest emphasis in all of the selected states' regulations. States that are more stringent in their identification procedures appear to exert greater pressure on other implemented policies.

While all states emphasize appropriate programs and services, the degree to which any clear articulation of service delivery models or programs is less prominent. While teacher preparation in the form of an endorsement or certification is present in all of the states studied, no state links staff development to improved teacher performance or student achievement, and no policy language seems to recognize the need for regular classroom teachers to receive sophisticated training in effective classroom differentiation.

Most states accord the state level personnel the responsibility for reviewing local plans but on-site monitoring is not evidenced. Most states also offer secondary gifted students the options of Advanced Placement classes, Dual Enrollment, or other specialized programs such as Governor's Schools. However, specific policies regarding these options or how the policies interface with gifted is not systemically addressed. All of the states studied have a threshold of

funding for implementing gifted programs statewide but the formulas and distribution of those funds vary across each state.

Finally, the issue of state leadership emerged as a critical factor in providing direction, development, implementation, technical assistance, and advocacy for local school systems.

South Carolina Project Star Follow-up Study

The South Carolina Project Star Follow-up study is related to the 1999 development of South Carolina's statewide implementation of the newly developed *Performance Tasks for*

"...State leadership emerged as a critical factor in providing direction, development, implementation, technical assistance, and advocacy for local school systems."

Gifted Identification, also known as the Project STAR tests. **The tests were developed to identify more gifted students from low income or minority families, a population against which traditional identification tools usually had a bias.** Across three years of implementation of this alternative identification tool, a total of 9,034 students were tested and 2,206 (24.4%) qualified as eligible for gifted programs. This mixed design follow-up study examined the learning characteristics of Star-identified students and their educational trajectories as a result of admission to gifted programs. The study also investigated the impact of this new population of gifted students on the education system.

The researchers analyzed the South Carolina GIFT Data Set, examined Star students' performance on state assessment measures, and administered stakeholder surveys to all local gifted program coordinators, a sample of teachers of gifted students and selected Star-identified students. The research team also conducted visits in seven sampled school districts to acquire more in-depth understanding of promises and issues that this new population of gifted students brought to the school system. The research team produced a final report documenting findings from each component of the study and the overall summary of findings across data sources, as well as recommendations at both the district and the state level. Dr. Joyce VanTassel-Baska will conduct an oral presentation to the State Department of Education during the fall of 2003.

Comprehensive Curriculum Evaluation

The Center also conducted a comprehensive curriculum evaluation to assist the Greenwich Public Schools of Connecticut in reviewing its Advanced Learning Program (ALP) curriculum during the early part of 2003. The curriculum review was composed of two parts: (a) the alignment of the ALP curriculum units of study to local and national standards, and (b) the evaluation of the ALP curriculum effectiveness.

The Center's research team conducted the alignment work of 14 units of language arts and science study used in the ALP program to the Greenwich Public School learning objectives. The researchers also conducted an alignment of the ALP

Continued on page 5

Ongoing Research and Evaluation

(cont'd from page 4)

curriculum to the NAGC standards in curriculum and instruction.

The curriculum effectiveness component of the study examined the impact of the ALP curriculum on program students' learning outcomes. The research team collected perceptual data through surveys of various stakeholders, conducted onsite visits to collect individual and group interview data from relevant stakeholders, and conducted classroom observations of all ALP teachers using a structured Classroom Observation Form.

Analysis of pre- and post- assessment data in key domains of language arts and science covering 1996 to 2002 school years and a comparison of ALP students' standardized achievement measure to their performance-based outcomes allowed the researchers to examine the ALP students' learning impact in the program. The research team also investigated the effectiveness of the ALP curriculum by comparing it with national peer districts through phone interviews, document reviews, and comparative analysis of students' impact data. The research team produced a final two-volume report to present findings from each component of the curriculum study and presented a summary of findings and recommendations to the district.

Project Athena: Full steam ahead

The Center for Gifted Education is finishing the first year of *Project Athena*, a scaling-up research study targeting low-income high ability students in grades 3-5 in seven school districts across three states. Using a randomized sampling design, experimental classrooms will

implement the William and Mary Language Arts curriculum during the fall of 2003 while comparison classrooms implement the designated school district's language arts curriculum. Both groups will receive pre- and post- assessments as well as classroom observations by project staff, graduate students, and local personnel.

During the past year, the focus for *Project Athena* was on planning and development. The College of William & Mary Project Staff met with school district personnel responsible for implementing *Project Athena* from the seven participating school districts (Fairfax County, VA; Gloucester County, VA; Greene County, VA; Greenville, SC; Montgomery County, MD; Newport News, VA; and Westmoreland County, VA). Dr. Joyce Van Tassel-Baska and Dr. Bruce Bracken, co-principal investigators, and Dr. Elissa Brown, project manager, conducted ambassador visits to each district to meet participating teachers, central office personnel, Superintendents, and, in some cases, School Board members. Concurrent with the spring visitations, Dr. Bracken led an in-house team to develop and pilot a critical thinking assessment that will be used for pre- and post- assessment data, the *Test of Critical Thinking* (TCT). The TCT, developed specifically for this research project, is based on aspects of the Delphi Report (Facione, 1990a) and Paul's (1992) model of reasoning. It also has broad implications for use beyond the scope of this study.

During June, 2003, a Summer Institute was held in order to provide extensive professional development for the experimental teachers,

administrators, and district personnel responsible for assessment. In addition to training in curriculum and administrative support, school personnel responsible for testing received training on administering the *Universal Non-Verbal Intelligence Test* (UNIT), another instrument that will be used for base-line data as one of the pre-assessments.

The Center for Gifted Education is pleased with the reception, commitment, and work on behalf of the participating school districts, and we look forward to further implementation of *Project Athena*.

Conclusion

Under the leadership of Dr. VanTassel-Baska, Executive Director, Dr. Elissa Brown, Director, and Dr. Annie Feng, Research and Evaluation Coordinator, the staff and graduate students of the Center continue to engage in research and evaluation projects. At a recent meeting, this research team, led by Dr. Feng, discussed an ongoing agenda for research and evaluation projects. Look for more information regarding Center research in upcoming issues of *Systems*.

by Elissa F. Brown, Ph.D.
and Annie X. Feng, Ed.D.

Publication of Language Arts Units by Kendall/Hunt



Two additional language arts units have recently been published by Kendall/Hunt and are now available for purchase: *Utopia* and *Patterns of Change*.

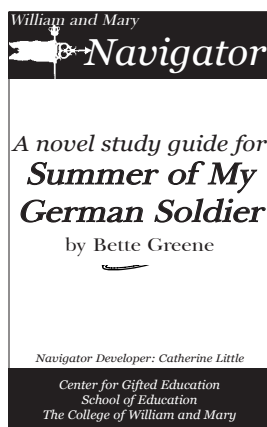
Patterns of Change is designed for use with students in grades 4 – 6. The concept of cyclic patterns of change was chosen as the unifying theme for this unit. Selected literary works deal with cycles in nature, knowledge, history, and human life. Students are introduced to some of the important approaches and ideas of literary criticism and encouraged to use journals, literature webs, essays, and visual projects to organize and express their ideas about various literary selections.

Utopia is designed for use with students in grades 7 – 9. This unit provides an overview of the concept of utopia as seen by various individuals, groups, and countries, and gives students an opportunity to examine why ideas about utopia undergo change. Through the study of literature, art, music, and other classroom activities, students learn about the search through the ages for utopia and the struggles to grasp and maintain it on both personal and

societal levels. Exploring utopia through personal dreams and goals allows students to analyze the literature they read more thoroughly throughout this unit.

Contact Kendall/Hunt at 563-589-1133 or visit www.kendallhunt.com or for more information about these units.

William and Mary Navigators



In the fall of 2002, the Center initiated a new curriculum development project in the language arts: the William and Mary *Navigators*, which are designed to support teachers and students in the study of selected novels. Each *Navigator* is designed to be used as an instructional tool by a teacher or as an independent study guide by a student or group of students. The William and Mary Teaching Models are incorporated in each *Navigator* and provide opportunities for advanced readers to develop their skills at analyzing and interpreting literature.

Navigators currently available are:

- *Charlotte's Web*
by E.B. White
- *The Dark is Rising*
by Susan Cooper
- *The Egypt Game*
by Zilpha Keatley Snyder
- *Everything on a Waffle*
by Polly Horvath
- *Number the Stars*
by Lois Lowry
- *Sarah Bishop*
by Scott O'Dell
- *Sarah, Plain and Tall*
by Patricia MacLachlan
- *Snow Treasure*
by Marie McSwigan
- *Summer of My German Soldier - New*
by Bette Greene
- *Tuck Everlasting*
by Natalie Babbitt
- *Walk Two Moons*
by Sharon Creech

Additional *Navigators* are being developed and titles will be posted on the Center's website as they become available.

Updated Curriculum Materials

Several items that have been available from the Center have been updated or are currently undergoing revision and will be available in 2004.

Notes From a Scientist: Activities and Resources for Gifted Children by Beverly Sher has been updated. This document contains recommended activities and key resources that are useful for parents of gifted elementary students. It enumerates ideas to stress in teaching children

Continued on page 7

Curriculum

(cont'd from page 6)

science at home or in other informal contexts.

A Guide to Teaching Research Skills and Strategies for Grades 4 – 12 is being restructured into separate guides for grades 1 – 3, grades 4 – 7, and grades 8 – 12. The guides will support the research strands in the William and Mary language arts, science, and social studies units as well as provide a way for students to learn information strategies while researching a significant issue. They are designed to have students to explore the critical intellectual stages of a research project and be able to apply them to a research study of interest. Draft versions of the guides will be available in 2004.

Curriculum Assessment Guide for Materials in the Core Content Areas, a new publication that will combine resources from previous Center work and provide a curriculum evaluation system in the core content areas. By delineating a set of curriculum standards, this evaluation system provides schools with a template for reviewing any new curriculum materials that are teacher-made or commercially developed according to several criteria: (a) general curriculum design features, (b)

exemplary features specific to language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, and (c) tailoring for high ability learners. This guide will be available in 2004.

Certified Curriculum Consultants

The Center for Gifted Education has developed a program to extend our professional development capacity, to acknowledge practitioners who have developed expertise with the Center's curriculum, and to strengthen our national network of curriculum users. Four certification workshops for Center for Gifted Education Curriculum Consultants have been conducted. The purpose of each workshop was to review the major goals and teaching models of the units in the areas of science, language arts, and social studies, and to provide an overview of how to construct professional development workshops around these goals and models. Using a "training of trainers" orientation, these workshops encouraged discussion among educators who already provide professional development on the units as well as master teachers to take the next step toward providing learning opportunities for their colleagues.

The ultimate goal of the certification program is to develop a nationwide network of consultants, such that each state or region will have local experts who can provide professional development and support on implementation of the Center's curriculum. Information on consultant expertise will be disseminated to schools through several avenues, including listings and contact information on the Center's web site and individualized brochures that each consultant will distribute to relevant audiences. In addition, the Center is sharing the contact information on the consultants with Kendall/Hunt to provide individuals and institutions who purchase the units with access to professional development possibilities. Contact Kimberley Chandler at klchan@wm.edu for additional information about this program or to obtain contact information on consultants in your local area.

Finally, the William and Mary Teaching Models are now available on the website. Please visit the Curriculum section of the Center's web site, www.cfge.wm.edu, for information about curriculum materials, their use, and related resources.

by Kimberley Chandler

Upcoming CFGE Events

**FOCUSING ON THE FUTURE
CAREER CONFERENCE**
January 24, 2004

SATURDAY ENRICHMENT PROGRAM
February 14 - March 27, 2004

**NATIONAL CURRICULUM NETWORK
CONFERENCE**
March 11-13, 2004

**SUMMER INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATORS OF
THE GIFTED**
June 21-23, 2004

SUMMER ENRICHMENT PROGRAM
JULY 12-16, 2004 (SESSION I)
JULY 19-30, 2004 (SESSION II)

ADVANCED PLACEMENT INSTITUTE
August 2-6, 2004

Systems is a newsletter published by:

Center for Gifted Education

232 Jamestown Road

Williamsburg, VA 23185

Postal Address: Center for Gifted Education

The College of William and Mary

P.O. Box 8795

Williamsburg, VA 23187-8795

Phone: 757-221-2362; Fax: 757-221-2184

Web Address: www.cfge.wm.edu

email address: cfge@wm.edu

Executive Director: Dr. Joyce VanTassel-Baska

Systems Editors: Dr. Elissa Brown and Bess

Worley II

Layout/Technical Assistant: Sharron Gatling

An Interview with Dr. Miraca Gross

Dr. Miraca Gross, director of the Gifted Education Research, Resource and Information Center (GERRIC) at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia, gave a presentation to students, staff, and faculty of the College of William and Mary School of Education on Friday, August 29, 2003. During this presentation, Dr. Gross shared her research findings concerning ability grouping and gifted children. In her presentation, "To Group or Not to Group: Is That the Question?," Dr. Gross advocated ability grouping, the placement of students of high intellectual potential together in a learning environment, to aid their academic achievement, self-concept, and overall attitude toward school and other academic pursuits. Her presentation was based on research from the forthcoming new edition of her book, *Exceptionally Gifted Children* (2004). This text is based on a two-decade longitudinal study of 60 students with IQ's of 160 and above.

According to Dr. Gross, mental age is by far the most important factor in grouping. "Mental age affects the way they learn and socialize far more than chronological age. A child who is nine with a mental age of twelve is not nine in the way that he understands the world. There are different expectations and conceptions of friendship. Twelve-year-old students with a mental age of nine naturally gravitate towards students with a similar mental age. Water finds its own level, and so do students," Dr. Gross stated.

Once students are grouped according to their intellectual capacity, she advocates a full-time ability-grouped

program for gifted students by content area. "There is a term used in Australian educational policy – 'the least restrictive environment.' Putting children in the learning environment they would actually choose for themselves is beneficial. An environment where the child is learning full-time with similar children is the environment that least restricts him from fulfilling his potential."

Dr. Gross responds to many of the arguments against ability grouping. One such argument is that gifted students in ability-grouped classes suffer a decrease in self-esteem. Based

"Putting children in the learning environment they would actually choose for themselves is beneficial. An environment where the child is learning full-time with similar children is the environment that least restricts him from fulfilling his potential."

on her research, she has concluded that there is a momentary dip in the child's self-esteem, but it subsequently rises with continued interaction in the program. She also cited the research of Delcourt et al. (1994) which concluded that students' attitudes towards learning improved as they were more specifically grouped by ability. According to the study, similarly gifted children in mixed-ability settings had an inflated idea of their own ability, while those in full time ability grouping settings were more realistic about their talents.



Dr. Miraca Gross, Director of Gifted Education Research, Resource and Information Center.

She also refutes reasoning which claims that top students should be left in mixed-ability classes as models for less able students. "Students tend to model themselves on individuals with similar ability levels who can master the tasks assigned." Dr. Gross also stresses that because students of high ability and students of average ability understand and learn concepts in completely different ways, the highly gifted often prove to be unsuccessful mentors.

Finally, Dr. Gross highlighted the conflicting use of ability grouping in most schools. "In performance areas, it is generally accepted that you put high performers together," she stated, citing the examples of music and sports. "Not one team sent a mixed ability team to the Olympics." She asserts that the educational community needs to treat intellectual ability the same way that musical and athletic ability are treated in our society – by placing the top students

Continued on page 10

Dissertation Abstract

Rate of Advanced Placement (AP) Exam-Taking Among AP-Enrolled Students: A Study of New Jersey High Schools

The primary purpose of this study was to explore the phenomenon of Advanced Placement (AP) exam taking among AP enrolled students in the 309 New Jersey public high schools that had at least one AP course enrollment in 2001-02. New Jersey was chosen because its School Report Card, available on the New Jersey Department of Education web site as a downloadable data file, contains an unusual amount of course-level AP data along with a rich assortment of other school-level information. A second data source was a survey mailed to the 2001-02 AP schools that asked principals whether their school required AP-enrolled students to take the AP exam and whether it paid the exam fee. A total of 256 schools (83%) responded.

The major findings were: (a) approximately 30% of schools required AP-enrolled students to take the AP exam; (b) the percentage of schools that required students to take the exam was greatest for schools in districts with the lowest socioeconomic status (SES) and decreased as the SES of districts increased; (c) this same inverse variation was observed for the percentage of schools that paid the exam

fee; (d) there was a strong linkage between requiring students to take the AP exam and paying the exam fee with approximately 82% of the schools that paid the exam fee requiring students to take the exam, and approximately 63% of the schools that required the exam also paying the exam fee; and (e) schools that required AP-enrolled students to take the AP exam had lower AP enrollments per 100 11th and 12th grader, lower SAT scores, lower percentages of graduates going to four year colleges, and a lower percentage of students scoring Advanced on the state-wide High School Proficiency Assessment Math and Language Arts sections.

The findings suggest a possible equity issue in that schools in which students are required to take the AP exam tend to be those that have lower academic achievement and socioeconomic status than schools in which students are not required to take the exam.

by Ellen Fithian, M.D., Ph.D.

2003 Summer Programs Through the Center for Gifted Education

The Center for Gifted Education hosted several learning experiences for both educators and precollegiate learners during the summer of 2003. These programs are some of the many that fulfill the mission of the Center to “foster the talent development process of individuals over the lifespan.”

Summer Institute on Curriculum and Programs for High Ability Learners and Advanced Placement (AP) Institute

This summer the Center hosted two professional development experiences:

the Summer Institute on Curriculum and Programs for High Ability Learners, June 23-25, and the Advanced Placement (AP) Institute, August 4-8. For the Summer Institute, 113 teachers from across the country spent an intensive two and a half days in workshop of their choice selected from one of five strands. In addition to the in-depth training on the Center’s curriculum in language arts, social studies, and science, participants could explore various ways to deepen challenge for highly able students in mathematics. Participants could also choose to

explore the components that make up exemplary gifted programs.

Training for teachers and administrators participating in *Project Athena* was held in conjunction with the main institute. Drs. Joyce VanTassel-Baska, Elissa Brown, and Jeanne Struck shared their expertise with both *Project Athena* participants and participants in the *Designing Exemplary Gifted Programs* strand.

Continued on page 10

Summer Programs

(cont'd from page 9)

This summer also brought the Center's fourth, and largest, Advanced Placement (AP) Institute with 337 participants. New subjects for this year included European History, Psychology, and World History. The AP Institute is the Center's most complex professional development event, spanning five days, six buildings, consultants from multiple states, and involving members from at least five academic departments of the College of William and Mary as well as the College Board, the parent organization of the AP program. A highlight of the event for many participants was an unplanned presentation by the French consultant, Dr. Pierre Chanover. He spoke to an audience of over 100 participants on his experiences as a Jewish child in France during World War II, his escape from a concentration camp, and his reunion with his mother. Participants also attended a presentation and reception co-sponsored by the Admissions Office of the College of William and Mary to learn about the William and Mary admissions process and how academic departments use AP test scores.

Summer Enrichment Program Serves as Learning Laboratory for New Curricula Development

The Center's Summer Enrichment Program (SEP) continued to grow in enrollment and program quality with a new record enrollment of 612 pre-kindergarten through tenth grade students in the summer of 2003. While most students were local, others traveled a significant distance to attend the program. The Center for Gifted Education is gratified to provide a valuable and enjoyable

learning experience for so many gifted learners, but another major focus of the program has been to serve as a laboratory for the development of new curricula. In 1990, a program entitled Libraries Link Learning, funded by Virginia State Library and Archives, represented the first time that a curriculum developed by the Center for Gifted Education was piloted in SEP. Many others have since been developed, including four favorites of students and teachers: *Electricity City*, *Utopia*, *Beyond Words*, and *Dust Bowl*.

Electricity City is a problem-based science unit for grades 4 - 6 that has students assume the role of electric company employees to design an electrical plan for a recreational complex. In *Utopia*, a language arts unit developed for students in grades 7 - 9, students study literature, art, and music to develop an understanding of the concept of utopia and changing ideas about the concept of utopia. *Beyond Words* is a literature unit for grades 1 - 2 that explores the use of figurative language, such as simile, metaphor, and personification, in children's

books and poetry, as well as involving students in incorporating literary images in their own writing. This unit received a 2001 National Association for Gifted Children Curriculum Division Award for Outstanding Curriculum. Finally, *Dust Bowl*, a science unit for grades 1 - 3, utilizes a problem-solving approach to learning wherein students construct a model ecosystem and search for solutions to problems faced by farmers and ranchers during drought conditions.

In other news, SEP is sorry to say goodbye to Dr. Jeanne Struck, Director of Precollegiate Learner Programs since January of 2000, who has accepted a position as Curriculum Specialist for Gifted and Talented for Alexandria Public Schools. She will be sorely missed by SEP and Center staff members. As Jeanne's successor, I am excited to become part of such an outstanding program and will strive to continue her excellent work.

by Dawn Benson and
Ellen Fithian, M.D., Ph.D.

Interview

(cont'd from page 8)

together to do advanced work.

Dr. Gross is hopeful that her work will have positive effects, but continues to emphasize the importance of the teacher's role. "We need to talk to teachers about these issues in a language they can understand. Explain

...the educational community needs to treat intellectual ability the same way that musical and athletic ability are treated in our society - by placing the top students together to do advanced work.

Continued on page 11

Interview

(cont'd from page 10)

the research. That is the only way to effect a change in the system." Dr. Gross's presentation provided a forum for members of the William and Mary community to reflect upon the research behind ability grouping as a strategy to meet the needs of gifted learners.

Delcourt, M. A. B., Loyd, B. H., Cornell, D. G., & Goldberg, M. D. (1994). *Evaluation of the effects of programming arrangements on student learning outcomes*. Research Monograph 94108. Washington, DC: Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

Gross, M. (2004). *Exceptionally gifted children*, 2nd ed. London: RoutledgeFalmer

by Ariel Baska

Graduate Education Programs in Gifted Education at the College of William & Mary

Several opportunities at the Master's and Doctoral level

M.A.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction with an Emphasis in Gifted Education

M.A.Ed. in Educational Policy, Planning, and Leadership with an Emphasis in Gifted Education

Doctor of Education in Educational Policy, Planning, and Leadership with an Emphasis in Gifted Education (Ed.D.)

Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Policy, Planning, and Leadership with an Emphasis in Gifted Education (Ph.D.)

For more information, visit www.cfge.wm.edu or call (757) 221-2362.



New Release

Designing and Utilizing Evaluation for Gifted Program Improvement

Edited by
Joyce VanTassel-Baska
Annie Xuemei Feng

Overview of Contents

Survey construction and implementation
Use of focus groups
Assessment of classroom practices
Outcome assessment
Alignment with best practice standards
Strategies for synthesizing finding
And much more

"This unique resource is a critical piece of the program improvement process."

- Prufrock Press

"This new text is a gold mine of useful "how-to" information and revealing evaluation results. If we heed the message, the field will move forward."

-Dr. Ann Robinson, University of Arkansas at Little Rock

Published by Prufrock Press Inc.
ISBN: 1-882664-99-X
Price: \$35

Coming Soon

the Ninth Annual

National Curriculum Network Conference
Talent Development Through Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

March 11-13, 2004

Registration materials are available; visit our website: www.cfge.wm.edu

Center for Gifted Education, School of Education
The College of William and Mary
Williamsburg, Virginia

Keynote Speakers:

Dr. Donna Y. Ford, Ohio State University
Dr. Rick Olenchak, President, National Association for Gifted Children
Dr. Jane Piirto, Ashland University

Featured Speakers:

Michael C. Thompson, Educational Consultant
Dr. Susan Johnsen, Baylor University



Center for Gifted Education
The College of William and Mary
P.O. Box 8795
Williamsburg, VA 23187-8795

