



Founded 1984

WCGL Newsletter

The Wisconsin Center for Gifted Learners

Winter
2013/14

What Does *Gifted* Mean?

There is no universal definition of giftedness. Perceptions of the terms *gifted*, *gifted and talented (GT)*, and *gifted learner* are as varied as the individuals who encounter these descriptors of a child in a classroom or in a family. Each of the terms has multiple definitions, and each carries its own connotations. Some authors use the term *highly able* and avoid *gifted* altogether, but there is still the notion that some students have an advantage.

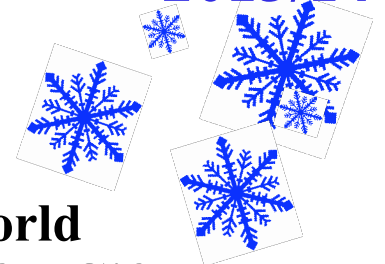
The use of *gifted* in America dates back to at least 1920; it replaced the term *supernormal children* in psychological and educational terminology.¹ One can only imagine the discussions of the many ways children manifest *supernormalcy* or the assertion that every child is *supernormal*. Although the use of *gifted* is uncomfortable for some, a better word has not caught on, nor is there agreement about exactly what *giftedness* is.

Definitions of giftedness are developed to delineate services and to determine who will receive them. Designating a student as *gifted*, *GT*, or *gifted learner* is of no advantage if special services for the student are not available. Differing abilities require cultivation and special needs must be addressed. Entities that oversee services or deliver services for the gifted define terms that match with goals of the services offered. A difficulty for those who study gifted learners, their development, and their education is determining purpose: What is the goal?

Those who promote education of the gifted as a measure for bolstering America's position as a global leader look at the individual child's potential to become eminent. It is relatively easy for society at large to grasp this concept of gifts and talents. In this framework, educators define traits of those with potential for high achievement, identify children who possess those traits, and develop educational plans that will result in the realization of potential. There is logic to investing in those who are likely to repay that investment with achievements that benefit society.

Others view education of the gifted as a process that equips the gifted child to self-actualize, or become everything he or she is capable of becoming. Educators determine the supports and challenges individual learners require, assist students to develop habits of autonomy, and provide complex learning experiences. Their purpose is to nurture lifelong learners who can reach self-determined goals. Logically, gifted learners should receive the same investment of educational resources that those with other exceptionalities receive. *Turn to page 2.*

Meeting of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children



WCGL representatives attended The World Council for Gifted and Talented Children (WCGTC) biennial world conference this year in Louisville, Kentucky. The location of the conference presented an opportunity for advocates for gifted learners from all over the United States to more easily acquire first hand knowledge about global efforts in the field and to consider how such efforts might inform their understanding and practices. Delegates, attendees, and presenters represented over forty different countries on six continents. WCGL is a lifetime affiliate of this organization.

The title of the conference, *Celebrating Giftedness and Creativity*, reexamined the critical role of creativity in the lives of most gifted learners. Creativity was an excellent umbrella under which to explore the many facets of an individual's complicated existence. Researchers and educators around the world are making efforts to identify and encourage creativity in educational settings in order to provide a more flexible and substantive experience for gifted learners. Speakers of note included Linda Kreger Silverman who spoke on several topics including assessment of the gifted, and C. June Maker, a researcher from the University of Arizona, who presented with her colleagues on the Real Engagement in Active Problem Solving (REAPS) model *(continued on page 3)*

Come to Learn.

Stay to Grow.

Leave to Serve.

Some Words About Funding...

The WCGL derives all of its funding from just two sources, **tuition and donations**. There are no federal or state dollars that are allocated to support gifted learners. What little funding the federal government supplied has been gone since 2011. WCGL periodically applies for grants but has found that gifted learners are not a population that foundations place a priority on serving.

Consequently, The Center has a consistent need for income in the form of donations in order to support a continuation of the mission to serve gifted learners, their families, and their teachers. WCGL has served **300 children** and their families in recent years. We are a statewide resource for gifted learners and offer the only **programming for gifted learners as young as 2-1/2 years of age**.

We appreciate and thank those who donate to The Center and hope you will continue to do so. Just \$200.00 will allow a family to have their child assessed in order to better understand them and put them on a beneficial educational path. \$300.00 will fund a child's participation for a series of Saturdays or an after school course. We ask those of you who have not yet donated to consider doing so. Your donations are key to our ability to offer ongoing programs and services.

If you have any questions about these matters, contact the Finance Director at 414-351-4441. Please forward donations to:

**The Wisconsin Center
for Gifted Learners**
2315 W Good Hope Road
Milwaukee, WI 53209

The Center is pleased to announce a full schedule of school adjunct programs. These consist of after school courses during the school year, interdisciplinary sessions and courses on Saturdays, and a four week summer interdisciplinary session from July 7 through August 1, 2014.

This summer session will meet from 8:30 a.m. until noon each week day, and on site child care is available in the afternoons if needed. A separate course of study of the Latin language and ancient Roman culture will be offered for two hours twice per week in the afternoons from July 7 through August 1, 2014. There are opportunities for learners ages 2-1/2 to 12.

For more information please see our website, thewcgl.org, or call us at 414-351-4441.

What Does *Gifted Mean*? (continued from page 1)

The two views described here are closely related. Those who focus on achievement do not deny the need of the person to self-actualize, and those who focus on self-actualization recognize that some will achieve eminence as they self-actualize. Nevertheless, emphasis on achievement narrows the pool of individuals who receive services and, more concerning, places value on products and not on persons.

WCGL uses *gifted learner* to name those who love to learn and have superior general intelligence (g) that enables them to satisfy that passion. Gifted learner is who the person *is*, and not who the person has the potential to become or what he or she does. Programming for gifted learners at WCGL is developed based on research and experience with such students. Because children are screened for their individual traits as persons and learners, staff can teach persons rather than simply deliver a curriculum.

Will the Response to Intervention (RtI) model change the vocabulary? The RtI model for high quality instruction for **all** students in general-education classrooms places a responsibility on schools to address individual differences. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) encourages schools to adopt the RtI model and use it to respond to the needs of **all** students. Applied as recommended in Wisconsin, RtI requires schools to make certain that **all** students are learning including those who have exceptional gifts and talents. In the language of RtI, some students who are identified as gifted in schools qualify for *Tier 2* support: They are challenged and supported in their learning within the general-education classrooms. Those who are highly or profoundly gifted qualify for *Tier 3* support, an individual differentiated education plan (DEP). It has been suggested that under this model, there is no need for a label of *gifted* since all students should be receiving appropriate instruction in one of the three tiers.

Whether schools develop DEP's for those whose abilities and pace exceed those of their age mates remains to be seen. For a more thorough treatment of this topic, read *RtI for Gifted Students: A CEC-TAG Educational Resource*; several RtI models developed in Wisconsin are featured in chapter 2, "State RtI Models for Gifted Children."²

Cited sources:

1. Borland, J.H. (1997). The construct of giftedness. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 72 (3 & 4), 6 – 20. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
2. *RtI for gifted students: A CEC-TAG educational resource*. (2011). Coleman, M.R. & Johnsen, S.K. (Ed.). Waco, TX: Prufrock Press Inc.

World Council *(continued from page 1)*

and its implementation in the classroom.

At a symposium entitled, "Asynchronous Development Revealed," the speakers reiterated a definition of giftedness that is in keeping with the way it is understood at WCGL. Although there is no one agreed upon definition, as stated in *What Does Gifted Mean?*, here is a definition first put forth by The Columbus Group* in 1991:

Giftedness is asynchronous development in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. This asynchrony increases with higher intellectual capacity. The uniqueness of the gifted renders them particularly vulnerable and requires modifications in parenting, teaching, and counseling in order for them to develop optimally.

The authors of this definition reaffirmed their beliefs that prompted them to pen this definition 22 years ago. Gifted learners are whole persons, not a collection of individual talents. One does not become gifted- he or she *is* gifted. Working with gifted learners is not simply about talent development, but about helping them develop as persons. Gifted learners require reinforcement that they are far more

than just a clever minds, and that to be healthy, they must be in touch with themselves.

**The Columbus Group consists of eight members with many years of experience working with, studying, and writing about gifted learners.*

Updating Communication from WCGL

The Center is making a transition from paper to electronic publications. Much of the information that was previously distributed exclusively on paper is now accessible at thewcgl.org. This is the first issue of the WCGL newsletter that is not being sent on paper to every recipient.

A PDF of the paper newsletter has been sent to every contact for whom we have an email address. Whether you have received a paper or electronic document you may copy and distribute it as you please.

We want you to receive the mode of communication you prefer. If you prefer electronic messages, please send a message to wcgl@thewcgl.org, and your email information will be added to our contact list. If you have received the PDF and would rather have your newsletter sent on paper, please send a message that includes your mailing address.

In the coming months, the website, thewcgl.org, will be "remodeled" to make it more easily navigated and better organized. The next WCGL newsletter will be published for screen reading on the website in addition to its current print format.

Parent Support Council

WCGL hosts monthly meetings at no cost to parents and other adults who are interested in understanding the challenges and joys of learning and living with gifted children. The purpose of these meetings is to collectively share resources and information and to offer support to one another. Two meetings, one in the morning and one in the evening, are held each month. The topic for December is "The Critical Role of Home;" meetings will take place on Tuesday, December 10, 10:00-11:00 a.m., and on Wednesday, December 11, 7:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Beginning in January 2014, we will discuss selections from the book, *Parenting Gifted Kids*, by Jim Delisle. For a complete list of meetings dates and topics, please visit our website thewcgl.org and click the "Parent Support Council" tab.

WCGL Open House

The Wisconsin Center for Gifted Learners will host an open house on:

Thursday, January 30, 2014

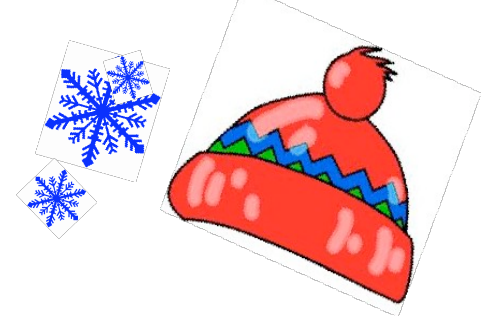
from 4:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m.

PLEASE JOIN US and bring a guest.

Book Sale

WCGL would like extends its gratitude to Marye Beth Dugan of Rainbow Booksellers, a bookstore just for children, who has provided The Center with high quality books and excellent titles for the past 16 years. Our recent sale was held November 12, 13, and 14, 2013, and was a a fine opportunity to meet with old and new Center friends. Thank you, Marye Beth.

WCGL Newsletter



**The Wisconsin Center for Gifted Learners
2315 W Good Hope Road
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53209 – 2735**

If you prefer to receive an electronic document, please send a message to wcgl@thewcgl.org

About WCGL

The Wisconsin Center for Gifted Learners is a non-profit organization. It was established in 1984 to provide educational and consulting services for highly intelligent children, their parents, and teachers who want to learn how to live and work with them.

The Center understands that gifted learners require like-level peer interaction in order to develop social skills, leadership abilities, self acceptance, and tolerance for challenge. WCGL programs are built on an amalgamation of theory and research, and curriculum is designed by Center staff to address the unique needs of gifted learners.

WCGL Programs

Opportunities for learners age 3-12. Mentoring and teacher assistant experiences for learners over 12.

- After school and Saturday courses on specific subjects

- Saturday Interdisciplinary Programs

- Summer Interdisciplinary Program in July

- Latin Language course of study

Parent Meetings and Educator Programs



Contact WCGL

Phone: 414-351-4441 Fax: 414-351-9792 E-mail: wcgl@thewcgl.org

WCGL is a lifetime affiliate of The World Council for Gifted and Talented Children (WCGTC) and a member of the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) and Council for Exceptional Children (CEC).

Look for us on the web at thewcgl.org