

Winter 1999

# The Challenge: The Newsletter of The Center for Gifted Studies (No. 4, Winter 1999)


Center for Gifted Studies

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# the challenge

## *our mission*

We are committed to encouraging excellence by providing educational opportunities and resources to three populations: gifted and talented students, teachers working with gifted students, and parents of gifted students.

## *our vision*

Becoming an internationally preeminent center is the vision of The Center for Gifted Studies. This vision includes expanding services in five areas: (1) offering educational programs for gifted children and youth, (2) providing professional development opportunities for educators, (3) enhancing communication and advocacy for gifted children, (4) conducting research and developing curriculum to remove the learning ceiling, and (5) building a testing and counseling component for gifted children and their families.





***"The greatest invention ever  
made was the mind of a child."***

Anonymous

# letter

FROM JULIA ROBERTS



*Dear Friends of the Center,*

Young people with high ability deserve to be academically challenged but also supported in meeting the challenge. Recently I had the opportunity to address the Louisiana Conference on Gifted Education. I chose as the title of my address: "Challenging and Supporting Gifted Young People." Challenge can be devastating without support. On the other hand, support without academic challenges will not get anyone very far,

even a very bright child. One of the major objectives of The Center for Gifted Studies is to offer challenging learning opportunities while also providing social and emotional support. Young people who successfully meet academic challenges will have the positive self-esteem to tackle subsequent rigorous learning opportunities. Susan Winebrenner, an educational consultant, says, "Self-esteem is enhanced when success is attained at a task that had been perceived as difficult or challenging" (*The School Administrator*, October 1999).

Challenge and support present a "chicken and egg" issue. Which comes first? The most difficult myth to overcome about gifted children is that "they will make it on their own." Children and youth who are gifted and talented need both academic challenge and the supportive

environment in which to meet that challenge. Without academic challenge and social-emotional support, there will be young people who do not succeed as their potential would indicate they should.

Becoming informed about the needs of children who are gifted and talented is so important for parents and educators. The Center for Gifted Studies has been a source of information about giftedness and educational opportunities that are appropriate for gifted and talented children and young people for eighteen years. Information can be located on the web site at <http://www.wku.edu/gifted/>, in *The Challenge*, and from asking questions by e-mail at [gifted.studies@wku.edu](mailto:gifted.studies@wku.edu) or by phone at 270/745-6323 or fax 270/745-6279. Please stay informed and advocate for the needs of gifted children. Remember that their needs are created by their strengths and the needs are not visible at a glance!

Please support gifted young people by staying informed and sharing information about program opportunities. If you are able to provide financial support, I hope you will make a commitment to create a bright future for children who are gifted and talented and to help build a solid future for The Center for Gifted Studies.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Julia Roberts".

Julia Link Roberts, Director

## We're on the Web

Visit The Center for Gifted Studies' web site at <http://www.wku.edu/gifted/>. We're currently adding new areas: an alumni section, a personnel section, and *The Challenge* in its entirety. Please be patient as we're under construction.

[The Challenge](#)

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## ***The Challenge is a Winner!***

*The Challenge* earned the 1999 Blue Pencil Award of Excellence from The Kentucky Association of Government Communicators. Designers of The Center's newsletter, Marcus Dukes and Tom Meacham, received the award.

# students



## *Kentucky Academy of Mathematics and Science: A Real Need*

MANY GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS ACROSS the nation – and most definitely in Kentucky – are frustrated. Unfortunately, too many schools lack the rigorous, challenging curriculum so desperately needed by this population. Of course, some high schools do offer a full spectrum of Advanced Placement courses that stimulate and challenge. (This year alone, for example, Louisville’s DuPont Manuel had 53 National Merit Semi-Finalists.) But most don’t. So what happens to this group who should

disproportionately make more positive impact on society than any other group? Some drop out of school due to boredom and frustration. Some involve themselves in as many extra programs as possible trying to find fulfillment. Some – who can afford to – go to out-of-state boarding schools that promise to meet their needs better. And then a few – again those of means – go to colleges or universities that accept underclassmen in special programs. Hopefully, that’s about to change in Kentucky.

Dr. Julia Roberts and Dr. Charles McGruder, Head of Physics and Astronomy, made a proposal for the establishment of the Kentucky Academy of Mathematics and Science at Western Kentucky University. The mission of the Kentucky Academy is to offer a residential early admissions college program for bright, highly motivated high school students who have demonstrated an interest in pursuing careers in mathematics and science. The Academy also seeks to provide its students with the companionship of peers; to encourage students to develop the creativity, curiosity, reasoning ability and self-discipline that lead to independent thought and action; and to aid students in developing integrity that will enable them to benefit society.

The establishment of the Kentucky Academy will be a key to building a workforce which is scientifically and mathematically oriented. Such a workforce is the prerequisite for Kentucky’s economic future. Kentucky’s juniors and seniors in high school who have exceptional interest and ability in science and mathematics need opportunities to learn at the highest levels possible (which are available in a few Kentucky high schools, but which are offered to young people in North Carolina, Indiana, Illinois, Georgia, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas.) The Kentucky Academy of Mathematics and Science will enable Kentucky’s exceptional young scientists and mathematicians to learn in an environment which offers advanced educational opportunities, preparing them for leadership roles in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

According to the *Courier-Journal*, this is a necessity: “Western Kentucky University’s proposed Kentucky Acad-



Photo by Sheryl A. Hagan



emy of Mathematics and Science could make major strides in encouraging more students not only to enter science and technology fields, but also to stay and work in the commonwealth” (August 9, 1999). In addition “The Kentucky Academy would provide a unique academic opportunity to students who might otherwise lose interest in math and science. The intensity of the program would be paired with a genuine dedication to provide the students with a normal teen-age experience.” The Kentucky Academy would provide a rich living/learning environment designed specifically for adolescent students. The Academy life staff supports extracurricular organizations, many of which would be similar to those found in most Kentucky high schools. These include student council, yearbook and newspaper staffs, Key Club, drama and music groups.

Instead of spending their junior and senior years in a traditional high school, students would enroll in the Academy and live in a uniquely dedicated Kentucky Academy residence hall which will become a supervised home-away-from-home. Their classmates would be fellow Academy students and Western Kentucky University undergraduate students. At the end of two years, Academy students would have earned at least sixty college credit hours and would receive a high school diploma from the Academy. Academy graduates might choose to stay at Western Kentucky University or transfer to other universities (our data suggests many will stay) to complete their

bachelor’s degrees. The highly successful Texas Academy of Mathematics and Science, which has been operating for a decade, will be used as a model for the Kentucky Academy.

Consider one example: Ian Driver of Owensboro, KY. Ian, as a sophomore, had taken the most challenging classes his high school could offer him. He had already enrolled in a few more AP classes for his junior year, but wanted more, needed more. He and his family looked for alternatives and came up with Bard College in Connecticut. It provided a program similar to The Academy’s. But it cost – greatly. Of course, Ian was accepted because of his incredible talents and scores. He was even given a partial scholarship. But with his coming from a family of an artist and teacher, it wasn’t enough. He was forced to decline. And forced to continue schooling in an environment he felt didn’t challenge him. His response? “The problem is that our public schools teach to the people who are average. The extreme, mentally retarded or gifted, if they are truly to learn, must be taught differently. Almost every school has a special ed program to teach the handicapped or mentally retarded students, but very few have a program for the gifted students. These students have to look elsewhere if they wish to learn to their full potential. Having been to TIP camps and trying to get into college early, I know that it is hard to do (and often expensive.) Why should, in a state whose number one concern is edu-



cation (so they say), a gifted student such as myself has to devote so much time and money looking for places where he can learn?"

The Kentucky Academy of Mathematics and Sciences could change that. Students like Ian could find themselves stimulated in an academically challenging environment with room and board, tuition, fees and books all paid for. As Governor Paul Patton urged in his inaugural address, "Kentucky must be the place people want to be ... not the place from which they fled." The Academy could help make that happen.

### *SCATS – A Discovery of Self*

MIDDLE SCHOOL TYPICALLY CAN BE A CHALLENGING time for young people – physically, bodies change; socially, males and females view each other differently from before; and emotionally, life can be a roller coaster. Unfortunately, though, the challenge concept doesn't always fit into the academic part of middle school. Gifted and talented middle schoolers often find their needs not being met in the traditional classroom. So they come see us.

Every summer since 1983, The Summer Camp for Academically Talented Middle School Students (SCATS) provides a diverse curriculum and a wide range of enrichment experiences for almost 200 residential and non-residential students. Here they can choose four classes that stimulate and challenge. This year, one such class was Poetry taught by Kim Sterett of Daviess County. Kim taught the class as part of her practicum requirement in earning the Gifted Education Endorsement through Western Kentucky University. She found her experience "very beneficial for teachers and students – and a lot of fun!" She observed that "these programs may be the only time students are motivated and challenged; The Center provides students intellectual stimulation." And the students thrive on stimulation. Just ask Jennifer Wrenn from Westview, KY. Jennifer selected the poetry class because she loves poetry: "I love any kind of writing. If you want me to be interested in something, communicate with me." And her class did plenty of that as they experimented with different forms of poetry. They even published their work at the end of class. Jennifer also selected a Spanish class: "I took Spanish to give me a little base in my high school course. You would not believe how much it has helped so far! School is well into session, and the Spanish I got in those two weeks continues to pay off handsomely!" For Jennifer, SCATS definitely challenged and stimulated, and not just academically: "I found people I could relate to. Peers that shared my enthusiasm in education surrounded me; it was truly a mystical experience." Others agree.

Jessie Bowers from St. George, UT, loved SCATS: you "get to meet a lot of people, but you don't feel different. People don't think you're weird if you want to learn." She also added that she'd be back next year. And just as she followed her big sister's footsteps in coming here, next year she's bringing her little sister with her.

SCATS indeed provides the opportunity for challenge that gifted and talented middle school students so desperately need.

### *Never Shall They Forget*

ELIE WIESEL, A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR, PENNED similar words in his book *Night* that horrifically portrayed his experience inside Auschwitz: "Never shall I forget that night, the first night in the camp, which has turned my life into only night, seven times cursed and seven times sealed." Ron Skillern, teacher of VAMPY class The Holocaust and Nazi Germany, doesn't want his students to forget either. He doesn't want them to forget how quickly Germans gave up their rights to a strong authority, and how they were eager to do it during World War II. He doesn't want them to forget how the 1965 Stanley Milgram Study at Yale University proved the almost unbelievable concept that humans will harm other humans when authority instructs them to do so and individual blame is removed. He doesn't want them to forget the power of hate – as the Kosovo tragedies attest and the Columbine school shootings (committed on Hitler's birthday) recon-



Photo by Sheryl A. Hagan



firm. He doesn't want them to forget that even though we "study" the hatred so manifested in the Holocaust and World War II with the dates and battles and generals and who's on whose side — it still happens. So he "studies" it in a different way with his students.

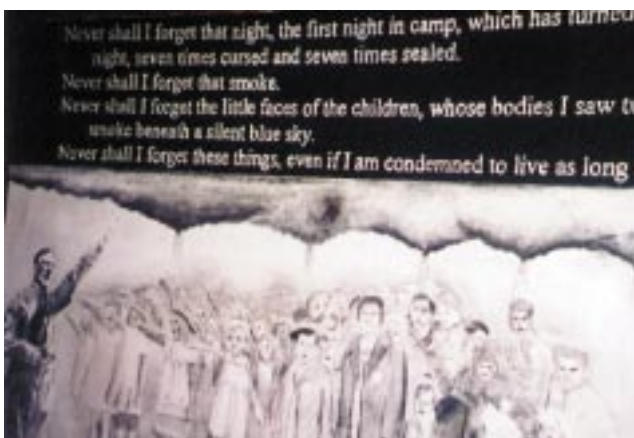
Ron stays away from the war with its blitzkriegs and air strikes to focus on society's viewpoint. His class examines how a modern industrial society let a group such as the Nazis come to power and how they let the Holocaust happen. They define what happened starting with Hitler's family background and psychological factors. They talk about hate. They talk about the modern world — then he lets the students "take the course and go with it," he explains. Part of the course is a mock-trial wherein students assume Hitler did not commit suicide in the bunker, so they put him on trial with charges of crimes against humanity or whatever other charges they wish. In the eight years he's done this, six out of eight juries have found him guilty. Two acquitted Hitler. Two acquitted Hitler? But how can that be? Ron explains that it isn't as easy to convict him as one might think: "Very few documents indicate Hitler. His journal in the bunker argues that he is surrounded by subordinates who deceived him. The defense put up plausible deniability. This always leads us to the OJ trial." The mock trial is only one of a wide variety of techniques Ron incorporates into the class.

One of the more visible techniques is the mural. Each year students participate in this problem-solving exercise that produces a haunting, visual reminder of their lessons learned. He presents the campers with canvas, wood to make the frame, a variety of charcoal or paint, and hundreds of 11x13 black and white photographs of the Holocaust. Then it's up to them. He explains, "The neat thing about it is there's one rule: each and everyone must participate in it to some degree—whether it's the idea stage, the artistic stage or the building. My TA and I even par-

ticipate, too, to show them living proof that you don't have to be artistically talented to participate." The kids build the frame and stretch the canvas. Then they must utilize their problem solving skills as they plan the art itself. And every year is different. Typically, students plan and then create. Ron argued, "You must allow different kids to use different methods. Every kid gets mad at each other trying to argue their ideas and shooting down the others. I just don't let them give up." In 1998, the students began with one thought about one small part of the canvas. They composed that area then the ideas came for the rest. This past summer, though, was a challenge. Instead of the usual several students with artistic ability, there was only one self-proclaimed artist. And the idea was not easily rendered. "After one and half weeks into it, they'd gotten no where. I even told them they didn't have to do a mural this year. Finally I put them into a room by themselves, and they eventually came up with their idea to base it on *Night*. I remembered what J.F.K. did during the Cuban Missile Crisis; people acted differently when he was in the room. So in order to avoid thermonuclear war, he left the room and let the others work it out. I figured if it worked for him then it might work for me." And it did indeed work for Ron and his class.

One of his most memorable murals was created by his class that included visiting Russian students. This one was the first done in charcoal, and Ron feels "the very first one where we started to reach high level artistic ability." At first, the Russian students had a very difficult time in class due to the language barriers. But once they started the mural, "they could understand that canvas." Ron feels that the difference was an emotional one. They had come from a country that lost well over 25 million people in that war. Every single family had lost loved ones, usually many loved ones. So when it came time for the Nuremberg Trials, "these boys wanted revenge." Ron believes that "they came with such a different insight. We were able to tie it all in." The front page *Courier-Journal* article and photo spoke well of this emotional tie.

"Like with any project, frustration comes with it," Ron admits. "But the kids are always so proud of it. It's the highlight of the banquet, and they go to stand by it. The last day, they bring their parents up. They bring other parents up. I remember the Russians wanted to keep it!" But Ron has other plans. He's been corresponding with the National Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. They have indicated they would be very interested in putting the surviving six murals on display (two were lost in the hail storm last year.) Perhaps the national display could help others "study" in such a way so that such events would not be repeated. As the 1999 Bowling Green City Teacher of the Year emphasizes, they shall not forget.



# Center Traveler Earns Fulbright Memorial Teacher Scholarship

On November 14, veteran elementary school teacher Brenda Adams will leave Bowling Green, KY, for a three-week sojourn to Japan as part of the Fulbright program. She and two hundred other teachers have been selected as part of a cultural exchange with Japan wherein cultural as well as educational sights will be visited and later incorporated into their teaching. And how does Brenda feel about this? "I am going with 200 people, and I don't know a soul. But it doesn't bother me a bit! Thanks to Dick and Julia Roberts!"

What did the Roberts have to do with this? They introduced a rather travel-shy Brenda to world travel through the trips they host during spring break and the summer. Almost twenty years ago, the Drs. Roberts began a travel/study tour. At that time, Brenda was a SCATS and VAMPY summer counselor and was tempted to go. But, "I was leery," she argued. "I had never seen the U.S. I thought, when I see the U.S., then I'll go to Europe with them." Well, through the years, she saw the U.S. Then a trip to Italy was planned through The Center; "but I knew nothing about art, so I backed out." Then a China opportunity was presented: "No, not the Orient for my first time out of the country." Finally a trip was planned that she couldn't resist: France – "Boy, did I want to see Paris." So she did. Then she traveled to London and Italy and — she plans on going to just about anywhere else they're going.

One of the best parts about traveling is the company. She explains: "I love being with the kids; I'm very comfortable around them. I even act like a kid. Julia's kids are really special. I've met some really nice adults, too, and made really good friends.

In fact, I just visited my roommate in Italy last weekend in Louisville!" She is also highly complimentary of Dr. Dick Roberts as an unofficial tour guide: "On our London trip, Dick knew all about the history, the wars, kings and queens. He's like a walking encyclopedia. He fascinates me." In fact, she thinks that trips with The Center are the only way to travel: "If you ever have the opportunity to travel with The Center, it's a wonderful way to go. I can't imagine booking with a travel agency and getting anything like I've gotten with the gifted kids. You get to do things you never get to do!"

One such example was a private meeting with the U.S. Ambassador to the Vatican during last summer's Italy trip. A fellow traveler in the group arranged the visit. Ambassador Lindsey Boggs, television journalist Cokie Roberts' mother, entertained the entire group in her home. Best about the visit according to Brenda were the guards. The Ambassador had two Italian guards outside her home, armed with machine guns. Brenda explains, "I knew my kids (her students) would think it's really cool to have my picture made with machine guns. They thought it was awesome. And the other teachers in my school commented 'only Brenda would do something like that!'"

Thinking of her students during her travels is not unusual for Brenda. In fact, she takes many pictures and buys several souvenirs to use in her classroom of first and second graders. "I use my travels a lot in my teaching: map skills, a multi-cultural unit, anything. The kids are always pleased to know that I've seen things in real life." This seems remarkable given the socio-economic range of her students. She teaches students from all over, many of them refu-



gees: Croatia, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Serbia, etc. Many of her students haven't even been to the mall – but they relate to her travels. And soon, they'll go to Japan with her – at least in part: "I will bring Japan back to teach my little ones everything they want to know." And oftentimes, what they want to know is "can you take me there?" So she takes them there to see the sights, learn the culture, meet the people – all without ever leaving her classroom.

So now she views world travel, including her trip to Japan, as "a piece of cake!" She explains, "I know all about international flights, language differences, etc. This is what I'm meant to do, meant to be. Dick and Julia led me to all these experiences." Oh, and about the art comment earlier – that's all changed. Since her trips to Europe, she's learned that she really enjoys art – and that she knows about it, too!

# teachers



## *The Gifted Brain Workshop*

THE TITLE ALONE HAS AN OMINOUS SOUND TO IT: The Gifted Brain Workshop. But the subject explored abounds with mystery: what do we really know about the brain, and what strategies incorporating this information can be utilized to provide richer experiences for the gifted learner. Dr. Barbara Clark, California State University, solved these mysteries on October 23. Her presentation entitled “The Gifted Brain: A User’s Guide to Teaching” focused on the necessity of integrating brain functioning into the teaching process.

As President of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children, Dr. Clark has extraordinary expertise in the field. In fact her book *Growing Up Gifted, fifth edition*, is used nationwide in college classrooms. Dr. Julia Roberts requires the text in her endorsement classes for those teachers wishing to become specialists in gifted education. Dr. Clark’s visit was prompted by the endorsement classes; Dr. Roberts simply opened up the lecture to interested educators.

Approximately seventy people attended the full day workshop at Western’s Institute for Economic Develop-

ment. Dr. Clark stressed to these teachers the critical role environment plays as a support for learning. Equally important is the fact that the brain changes both in structure and function based on environment and stimulation. She also outlined the steps needed to optimize learning: creation of the responsive learning environment, integration of the intellectual processes, differentiation of the curriculum, and on-going assessment of the learning and teaching. Bringing the learning activities in the classroom closer to the way the brain processes information and making use of all the brain’s support systems in the learning process are important for all learners—and essential for those learners we called gifted.

One principal in attendance, Rossie Kingery of South Green Elementary in Glasgow, took Dr. Clark’s message seriously: “Dr. Clark translated ‘the latest’ that is known about how the brain learns into real-world, practical strategies that will provide the optimal learning environment not only for the gifted, but for ALL students. As a building principal, I am assisting my school in exploring how students learn best and how we can facilitate optimal learning experiences. As a result of the Saturday seminar, I was able to share with my faculty exciting and powerful in-depth, research-backed information and hands-on strategies immediately.”

Dr. Clark’s workshop is one example of The Center for Gifted Studies providing opportunities for professional development.

## *Advanced Placement Workshops: Where Teachers Learn to Teach*

THEY CAME HERE FROM AS FAR AWAY AS GERMANY and Ecuador to learn. To learn what? To learn how to teach the most motivated and able high school students better. Two hundred and eighty teachers from seventeen states and three countries attended Advanced Placement Workshops this summer. Twelve AP Workshops for beginning teachers prepared them to teach an AP class for the first time, and four AP Workshops for experienced teachers helped them to update and refine their skills. And learning they did!



Photo by Sheryl A. Hagan



Photo by Sheryl A. Hagan

"Wow! Fantastic!" commented Ruth Hendricks of St. Petersburg, FL, about the beginning Studio Art Workshop. Having only taught separate classes to prepare a portfolio before, Ruth realized how invaluable a class AP Studio Art could be to a student: "This workshop helped me to focus and learn more about what's expected for an AP portfolio. And I found that the standards are higher than for colleges!" The AP Studio Art Workshop, taught by Maggie Davis of Smyrna, GA, establishes the goals and objectives of the Studio Art AP course. The instructor also includes many hands-on training ideas as teachers evaluate real AP students' artwork; curriculum and evaluation are staples for any of the AP Workshops. Ruth certainly appreciated the teacher's expertise: "she's a power teacher – she talks about her life, how she's done things her way, and how she's been successful."

Another fan of Studio Art is Brenda Johnson who currently teaches in the Inter-American Academy in Guayaquil, Ecuador. She traveled here from Ecuador "to learn how to establish an AP Studio Art class" in her school. She found herself "stimulated and motivated by the instructor ... who presented a very beneficial AP program." Having taught over twenty years in the US, Ecuador, and the United Arab Emirates, Brenda is ready for "the challenge and hard work to implement this program into the 1999-2000 class schedule."

Studio Art was just one of sixteen workshops offered. In order for teachers to challenge and stimulate AP students, assistance is needed for curriculum, technique and program development. For sixteen years, The Center, in conjunction with The College Board's Southern Regional Office, has offered such guidance through the Advanced Placement Workshops.

### *Vertical Teams – A Tool for Better Teaching*

SINCE 1996, THE CENTER FOR GIFTED STUDIES HAS collaborated with The College Board's Southern Regional Office to offer vertical team training. The goal behind the teams is simple: to assist teachers in the vertical articulation of the curriculum to help more students reach world-class standards. We have provided Vertical Team Training in English, math, and social studies. Currently, we offer math and English. Schools send entire teams, composed of middle and high school teachers, to train using this approach. Not only does it promote better performance on Advanced Placement exams, but it also strengthens the entire curriculum. This past summer a math team from Hart County found that to be true.

Hart County sent a three-member team to the Math-

Photo by Sheryl A. Hagan



ematics Vertical Team Institute. Pat Puckett, a Hart County High School Algebra teacher, found it “very beneficial.” Their district had already worked together as a county outlining objectives and outcome goals. They needed the next step. The Institute provided that step: “our vertical team will put together a list of activities for each grade level. Then we’ll get teachers from the fourth grade on up to bring specific activities that meet our bullets.” Gail Melloan from LeGrande Elementary concurred: “We’ll come back as a county (that’s five elementary schools and one high school) with activities that progressively hit each grade level through advancement on particular skills.” Pat elaborated: “The things I do at the eighth grade, the calculus teachers can expand on. I’ll gain insight as to where the seventh graders really are.”

Gail realized that the greatest benefit would be “more consistency across the curriculum.” She explained: “Everything will mesh together. Meaning will be added for teachers doing the objectives. It was very worthwhile.” And Pat believed there to be benefit for all teachers, not just math teachers: “The vertical team notebook could float in all departments. Anybody interested in putting more math into his or her curriculum could use this great help. Science activities could be adapted for example.”

The possibilities are limitless. Whenever people work together for a common goal, anything is possible. The Vertical Team Institutes help people define that goal.

## AP Professional Development Available Through KET

IF ATTENDING THE ADVANCED PLACEMENT INSTITUTE isn’t feasible for some reason, a valuable alternative exists. KET, in conjunction with The Center, developed and produced a video series: *Teaching AP Courses*. Four separate seminars (focusing on English, U.S. History, Biology, and Calculus) discuss issues pertinent to teaching AP classes in each area. In each video, host Dr. Julia Roberts along with two teachers/presenters cover such areas as the skills needed to be a successful AP teacher, identification and recruitment of students for the classes, grading policies, content focus, structure of the exam, preparation of students for the exam, and benefits of such a class for students, teachers, and schools. Even such particulars as block scheduling, textbook recommendation and labs are analyzed.

The Kentucky Department of Education approves these 90-minute videos and accompanying Teacher’s Packets for Professional Development Training. Knowledgeable, well-trained, and experienced AP teachers lead each seminar:

- English – Anne Padilla, Bowling Green High School, and Jon Frederick, The Kentucky Department of Education
- U.S. History – Nancy Bradshaw, Owensboro High School, and Michael Fogos, Lafayette High School



Photo by Sheryl A. Hagan

- Biology – Lana Hays, Simon Kenton High School, and Dr. Linda Walker, Warren Central High School
- Calculus – Ann Booth, Lincoln County High School, and Elaine Salvo, Assumption High School

In fact, all teachers/presenters except Lana Hays trained at Advanced Placement Institutes hosted by The Center.

These seminars provide an invaluable resource for AP teachers. They are available for purchase through KET. For information, contact KET at 800-945-9167 or [tapes@ket.org](mailto:tapes@ket.org) or view the web page at [www.ket.org](http://www.ket.org).

## Lessons Learned

IT’S OFTEN SAID THAT WE GET MORE THAN WE bargained for. Now this usually has a negative connotation, but at times it can be positive: maybe there were unexpected pleasures along the way, perhaps the process wasn’t as taxing as we first thought, or maybe surprising lessons were learned. This was definitely the case for Alma Perez, one of four visiting educators from Mexico City this past summer. She certainly got more than she bargained for.

While completing her dissertation on women’s entrepreneurship, Alma currently teaches collegiate business courses at the Instituto Tecnológico Y De Estudios Superiores De Monterrey. She eventually plans on helping female small business owners in Mexico – a rare population. So when the Mexican government developed CAST (Certificate in the Advanced Study of Teachers) as a means of pulling experienced professional people into the teaching arena, she immediately became interested. The purpose of CAST is to prepare these professionals to teach. In addition to working full time, people seeking CAST must attend night school and eventually spend time abroad in order to meet the bilingual and bicultural focus. As they

share knowledge, learn different teaching styles and gain experience with kids from other countries, these new educators blend professional experience with teaching technique. Alma realized the invaluable nature of the program given her goals in life. It seemed a perfect match.

CAST led her to Western Kentucky University along with three other professionals for five weeks this summer. She came with the understanding that she would conduct a leadership course for college-age students – her specialty area. And she did this, but it wasn't quite what she bargained for. She and Western's own Gene Crume team-taught the seminar-style course – but only to five students. Due to some technicalities, the class offering was announced too late to draw more than five. Alma was indeed "surprised." But then the unexpected happened. She realized the challenge involved in teaching in English – a language she's only spoken a few years: "It's hard to have all the words you could use. Maybe five is good since it's my first time." Instead of focusing on what didn't happen, she centered on what did since "everything is happening because of something." She was happy with the results and the personal attention such a small class allowed, and she was pleased with the support she and her co-teacher gave each other. Gene Crume shared her sentiments: "I learned a great deal from her teaching. She has wonderful leadership insights and a theological perspective.... I sincerely hope that we as a campus community have more opportunities like this. You continually learn from teaching courses with international visiting professors that we are all very similar but different as well. However, the common ground comes very easily." Perhaps she was able to view this unexpected challenge in such a positive light because of her experience that happened just before this – an experience she certainly didn't bargain for.

When the team of educators came, the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Barbara Burch teamed them with The Center for Gifted Studies. Knowing that a myriad of opportunities availed themselves

through The Center, Dr. Julia Roberts agreed. In addition to their observing the vertical teams and Advanced Placement workshops, she arranged for them to have primary experience with the American students through our SCATS program. What better way for English-speaking Americans to learn Spanish than by native speakers – and what better way for Mexican teachers to learn cultural differences in teaching than by teaching? But that was more than Alma bargained for. She fully expected to teach on the collegiate level – she had no experience and even less desire to teach this age group: "I felt like a guinea pig – I was not ready to teach Spanish." She was even more surprised to learn that The Center didn't have a set curriculum for her to teach (SCATS relies on the expertise and creativity of the instructor – a set curriculum stifles the individuality in this case.) Expecting the worst, she started the course.

But her expectations weren't met: "it was amazing! The very best experience I've had teaching!" And through this teaching, she learned many things about herself and people. She realized that "we're all the same. There are no real differences between people in different countries. Sometimes things are different – religion, gender, fields of study – but we're all the same – same needs, same feelings, fears, everything." In addition, she learned something remarkable about herself: "I didn't know that I would like to work with kids!" She tackled this "great challenge" head on. Instead of giving up or refusing, she did the opposite: "I thought about CAST, what I learned about different learning styles. I remembered my own experience learning English. Then I decided I wanted to make it fun for them. We sang, repeated, danced, and played in class." And the children loved the class and her. Their finale of doing the La Bamba at the talent show confirmed the class itself – the learning and the fun.

One other thing Alma didn't bargain for was the emotion involved. She had the "preconception that American students were different. They didn't want to be taught with any kind of affection – no touching, no hugging. The Mexicans kiss, hug, and are very touchy. Then the kids started doing it (showing affection) to me. I was surprised. And happy." By the second week, she "didn't want to say goodbye."

In spite of the humid weather, the lack of public transportation that forced her to wait hours for taxis, the living conditions of one man and three women in an apartment, squabbles over a lone computer and the absence of her husband for over a month, Alma was happy. Conquering a challenge does that for you. And she believed the kids felt the same: "I like to see their eyes. They showed me they were happy – they were shining. I knew I was doing okay." Yes, sometimes we get more than we bargained for.



Photo by Sheryl A. Hagan

# Jan Lanham, Teacher of Gifted Students, Earns Prestigious Award

Jan Lanham knew what she would become at an early age. "I was destined to be a teacher," she says. "My only question ... revolved around what to teach."

She credits her single-mindedness of purpose to the influences of a childhood surrounded by crepe paper rain forests, boxes of laminated magazine pictures, and collections of "treasures" for use in art projects. "It was the sheer pleasure derived from that intellectual journey of discovery, wrapped within the cozy patchwork of parents, grandparents, and other loved ones involved in education at various levels," she explains.

Last May, Jan was one of ten outstanding Kentucky teachers presented an Ashland Inc. Teacher Achievement Award at the capitol in Frankfort. Officiating at the ceremony were Governor Paul Patton, Ashland Inc. Chairman and CEO Paul W. Chellgren, Kentucky Education Association President Judith Gambill, and Chief State School Officer Dr. Wilmer Cody.

Jan teaches fine arts courses, including music and art, at Glasscock Elementary in Lebanon, KY. Yet, she began her career in inner-city schools, teaching disadvantaged students. "I pursued graduate work to strengthen my ability to meet their needs, including psychology and special education courses," she notes. "Using newspapers, music, classroom cooking, puppetry, dramatics, letter-writing campaigns, 'Pizza with Mrs. Lanham,' and any other available strategy, I sought to strengthen the confidence levels and motivations of students who had literally driven their former teacher from the classroom." As evidenced by her continued correspondence with those former students – now adults and living in other states – Jan's efforts paid off.

Even as she grows and learns as a teacher, the basic tenets of Jan's classroom have not changed: "Maintaining high standards of expectation at an invigorating pace, while shoring up those students who need more time or another approach, enables

students to progress rapidly through the excitement and wonder of the worlds around them."

Jan equates individual accountability with caring. "I care whether students learn. I care how well the students learn. I care what students will be able to do with what they learn," she explains. "And that individual accountability is reflected in student writing, opportunities for students to demonstrate learning through a variety of means, and myriad connections between and among information and skills."

Jan earned her bachelor's and master's degrees and Rank 1 certification at Western Kentucky University. She was recently admitted to the University of Louisville/Western Kentucky University joint doctoral program in educational leadership. She has served as a member of both the National and Kentucky Writing Project programs. Jan is a Kentucky Writing Grant recipient, which provided training and support for 50 teachers in writing processes, applications, and strategies. She also was a primary provider of teacher development for this project. She took part in the Space Orientation for Teachers and the Capitol Area Space programs, which allowed her to work with teachers nationwide on science curriculum development and to gain hands-on experience through travel to the Space Center in Huntsville, AL.

Her participation in the Kentucky Association for Gifted Education (board of directors, past president); National Association for Gifted Children; Council for Exceptional Children; Music Educators National Conference; Kentucky Music Educators Association; National Association for Art Education; Kentucky Education Association; Marion County Education Association (past president); Kentucky Association for Art Education; Phi Delta Kappa; Kentucky Gifted and Talented Advisory Council and others provided invaluable professional growth opportunities, according to Jan.



Past recognition includes being named Marion County Teacher of the Year in 1986 and Marion County Educator of the Year in 1993. She also received the KAGE Distinguished Service Award in 1988. Jan volunteers her personal time and experience toward a wide variety of performing arts and other school and community enrichment initiatives.

Her links to The Center are a source of pride and honor for us. She has a long history with us. In fact, she has taught in every student program we offer. From Super Saturdays classes to her VAMPY Revolutions: A Study in Conflict class, Jan entertains, challenges, and expands the minds of young people. And her SCATS classes of Lest We Forget – Holocaust and Advanced Drawing are favorites for students. In addition to teaching for The Center, she has presented at almost every occasion we've needed a presenter – whether it be Beginning Teachers Workshops or the Shakertown Symposiums. She has even traveled with The Center – to both Russia and China. Jan has proven herself to be an indispensable resource, an exceptional teacher, and an inspiration.

Dr. Julia Roberts sums her up well: "I don't know anyone closer to being a Renaissance woman than Jan Lanham."



# parents



## *TIP: What's in it for My Child?*

YOUR GIFTED AND TALENTED CHILD MAY WELL BE approached her seventh grade year about taking a college entrance test. Why take the ACT or SAT as a seventh grader? Because it may open the door to a wide variety of opportunities. Through the Duke Talent Identification Program (TIP), academically talented seventh graders can be identified. Research shows that these tests are good indicators in determining the verbal, mathematical, and general reasoning abilities of very bright seventh graders. And once ability is determined, challenge and opportunity are necessary.

The first opportunity is recognition. In cooperation with the Kentucky Department of Education and The Center for Gifted Studies, Duke's TIP held a recognition ceremony in May here at Western to honor 750 Kentucky students who scored in the upper three percent on the national norms for those tests. Mr. Jim Wiseman, Vice President for Public Affairs for The Motor Manufacturing of North America, Toyota, keynoted the ceremony. Students scoring at the level of the top five percent of college-bound seniors were invited to the Grand Ceremony at Duke University. This year, 42 Kentucky students were invited.



Photo by Sheryl A. Hagan

And once recognized, opportunities abound. Most of these are inherent in TIP's goals:

- to identify and serve academically talented young people;
- to inform students about their abilities and academic options;
- to work with local schools and parents to address the unique educational needs of talented students;
- to sponsor challenging educational programs;
- to conduct research on the nature of academic talent;
- to provide information resources for students, parents, and educators.

Whether these opportunities are summer residential programs, pre-collegiate programs, or independent learning programs, TIP can help. This is where The Center comes into play.

Not only have we hosted the Kentucky State Recognition Ceremony since 1983, but we also conducted the first cooperative residential program with TIP: VAMPY. Here at The Center, we house hundreds of resources for the gifted student, parents of gifted and teachers of gifted. We have access to program information across the nation. And, of course, we offer programs ourselves.

Why should your child participate in our programs? We asked the same thing to recent VAMPY campers' parents. Here's what they had to say:

"Would our daughter be the same person had she not attended SCATS and VAMPY? Possibly, but VAMPY has reinforced her commitment to learning and being her own person. Before VAMPY, she was more concerned with fitting in with the peer group, and not alienating other kids with her preoccupation with math, science, and physics! Now she revels in her 'nerdiness' and has made many wonderful high-achieving friends."

"Our dilemma as our son returns from VAMPY to a public school in south Georgia is that he is not challenged. School is of no interest to him. There is very little stimulation. In contrast, the quality of VAMPY instruction coupled with the adults' ability to instill in

the student the encouragement to be successful and help him become confident and comfortable in his abilities are the greatest strengths of VAMPY.”

“VAMPY helped my son open up and learn how to fit in with others – and that he is not alone, that there are others like him. He felt important living in a college environment. He learned that learning can be fun and not stressful.”

“My son has enjoyed his VAMPY experience so much that he is already looking forward to returning each summer, even as a Resident Assistant following his freshman year in college. It is heartwarming to experience his enthusiasm for the program. Good, good work.”

Don't hesitate then when your son or daughter comes home talking to you about college entrance tests. Knowledge is power; if your child needs that extra challenge and stimulation that gifted children do, Duke's Talent Identification Program is a step in realizing that.

## When Does Stress Become Distress?

IN TODAY'S WORLD OF POWER LUNCHES, FOURTEEN-hour workdays, and mobile work via cell phones and laptops, stress is inevitable. Some argue that a certain amount of stress is healthy – it serves as a motivator. But research shows that stress can be dangerous. In *The Stress of Life*, H. Selye discovered that chemicals released in the brain when stress-induced can actually shut down the brain and even cause irreparable damage to it. So in stressful situations, the brain “freezes” thus clouding decision-making. Stress can indeed have long-term ill effects.

So as the parent of a typical gifted and talented child, you've seen that stress – and the harm that accompanies it – first hand in your offspring. What can you do?

Realize first that stress for this type of person is typical. Most gifted and talented individuals are highly involved in their activities. Often, after a full day of school, a gifted and talented youngster may very well go from one activity to the next to the next. And according to Dr. Ed Amend, the Director of Gifted and Talented Services at New South Psychological Resources in Winchester, KY, this is necessary, for this type of person needs varied experiences: “But when those activities begin to interfere with getting things done or sleep, that indicates too much stress.” He emphasizes that stress can come from anywhere because “their minds are so active.” For example,

Look for Dr. Ed Amend's newest book this January: *You Know You're the Parent of a Gifted Child When....* This humorous book is geared toward parents with little experience of the gifted and talented. It's full of valuable suggestions and ideas.

## More Federal Funding a Strong Possibility

Right now federal legislation is before Congress that would provide grant money to states to support gifted and talented programs and services. H.R.637, introduced by Representative Elton Gallegly (CA-23) has now become a component of H.R.2, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. That bill, in conjunction with S.505, introduced by Senator Charles Grassley (IA), have sixty-eight co-sponsors. According to Dr. Julia Roberts who chairs the Legislative Committee for The National Association for Gifted Children, Kentucky co-sponsors include Senator Jim Bunning, Senator Mitch McConnell, Representative Ron Lewis, Representative Ken Lucas, Representative Ed Whitfield, and Representative Hal Rogers. (Other co-sponsor names are available on our web site or [www.nagc.org](http://www.nagc.org).) In order for the needs of gifted students to be met, funding is critical.

adults may very well be concerned with the problems of the world, but those issues drift in and out as we carry on our daily lives. Not so with the gifted and talented. They could easily stay awake all night focusing on a possible solution for the strife in Indonesia. As parents, we must help.

Dr. Amend argues that “the most pronounced characteristic of too much stress is a change in the child.” For example, certain personality traits may become more pronounced. A nervous child may become more nervous, a sad child more so, and so on. Likewise perfectionism, a common trait for the gifted and talented, may become exaggerated: “a child who usually frets over writing a paper may become paralyzed with stress so that nothing is accomplished.” Another indicator of too much stress is health problems. Look for more aches and pains, more anxiety, even depression. All of these behavioral signs indicate problems.

Once you realize that such a problem does exist, it is critical that you act immediately. In fact, if you can determine a problem through communication rather than those behavioral signs, your child is so much the better. The key, according to Dr. Amend, is to “keep the lines of communication open so that you can be aware of stresses. Then slow down, take stock of what's important. Re-vamp.” As a guide, the parent can help make new plans and strategies to alleviate the stresses. The child must be able to express himself or herself. Dr. Amend suggests talking and journal writing as possible releases. Don't overlook the possibility of counseling if the problems continue. As the parent, you must help your child in order to avoid real harm.

READING SUGGESTION: A valuable resource in this area is Earl Hipp's book *Fighting Invisible Tigers: A Stress Management Guide for Teens*. Although this work focuses on teens, it can easily be adapted for younger ages.



Photo by Sheryl A. Hagan

### *Rodney Cohen: Realizing the Vision*

AS WE STRIVE DAILY TOWARD OUR VISION, WE ARE delighted to have a partner in our journey. Rodney Cohen, as Director of Development for the College of Educational and Behavioral Sciences, dedicates his time raising the funds needed for world-class opportunities and education in the College. This means that he works closely with Dr. Julia Roberts in securing The Center's future.

Rodney has a rich history in development. Having worked in that area at both Vanderbilt and Notre Dame, he knows what is needed to help a university realize its potential. His fundraising expertise had an early beginning in his undergraduate years at Clark College in Atlanta when he worked in the development office there. Couple that knowledge and expertise with a personal allegiance (he earned his Master's here in 1995 and worked in the WKU Alumni Association), The Center has a strong ally indeed.

"The University, through financial gifts and increased endowments, is moving forward in its development efforts to remain competitive, both regionally and nationally," Rodney explains.

We have no doubt that with Rodney traveling with us, our vision will be reached. We look forward to providing more scholarships, more programs, more opportunities for the gifted and talented youth, their parents, and their teachers.

## *donations*

These gracious and generous people help us help you. We thank them.

- Brenda Adams  
*Bowling Green, KY*
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- Jerry and Beverly Shea  
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# *friends*

*friends interested in helping us reach our vision through financial development should contact us*

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# Spotlight: Heather Kessler

"I believe children are really very eager to learn if presented with material in a fun and interesting way. If you can first capture their interest, then the possibilities are endless for how they may go about a subject. I believe the most interesting material can be boring to children if not presented in the right way, and I believe some of the most dull material can be very exciting depending on what you do with it." So explains the Director of The Center's Super Saturdays, Heather Kessler. Her philosophy forms one of the cornerstones of this program geared toward high ability elementary school children. The classes emphasize a hands-on approach to learning in an environment in which creative and critical thinking are encouraged. And 1999 will make Heather's third year in coordinating teachers, school districts, the university, and the students themselves to ensure a challenging, successful experience for all.

Heather has quite a long history with The Center: "My first experience with The Center was during the summer of 1990 when I was a residential counselor for SCATS. I enjoyed this so much that I came back as a counselor for both SCATS and the VAMPY program the following summer." Since that time she earned both an undergraduate degree and a Master's in Elementary Education. She taught first grade for a year in Laurel County, then moved to Bowling Green. Here, she devoted five years to the Warren County system as a primary teacher and a fourth grade teacher. She also earned her endorsement in Gifted Education through Western. And she has taught for The Center as well; she worked with high ability students in the Primary Academy (the Super Saturdays forerunner) for two years. Realizing her gift in teaching, Dr. Julia Roberts arranged for Heather to take active part in the educational videos produced and sold by

*"The Center is invaluable both to WKU and to the surrounding area with the opportunities it provides for students of all ages, teachers, and parents. Without The Center, these students would not have the opportunity to participate in programs, which in many cases provide them with a life-changing experience and the chance to be with peers who share some of the same interests."*

~ Heather Kessler

The Center. She has even collaborated with other teachers to produce a book of units based on the Curry/Samara model available through The Center. She correlates the experiences: "My teaching has been most positively affected by my experience with The Center. My experience in the Primary Academy and working with curriculum development in the form of unit writing went hand-in-hand with what I needed to be doing in my classroom." Because of this vast experience with the gifted and talented and her many strengths as a teacher and curriculum developer, she was a natural choice to take over as Director of Super Saturdays in 1997.

From director to teacher, graduate student to counselor, Heather, indeed, has many links to The Center. But there is one connection that stands out from all the rest: "One of my most interesting stories about The Center is how it actually served as a matchmaker! My second year as a residential counselor in the summer programs proved to be more than just a way to make some extra money. During that summer it just so happened that one of the academic counselors and I started a friendship that soon turned into an engagement that soon turned into a wedding. That is how I met my husband, Dr. Bruce Kessler, who now teaches in the Math Department at Western and also works with The Center at times.



Since then, we have one wonderful son, Todd, and another on the way in December." Having taken a leave of absence from the Warren County system, Heather now fills her time all too well with Todd, the soon-to-be baby brother, the directorship of Super Saturdays, and the testing of students as part of the Primary Grant.

Heather is an invaluable asset to The Center and to gifted and talented children. Whether she is teaching, testing, or presenting at the Council for Exceptional Children's national conference in Washington, she is positively impacting gifted and talented children, their parents, and their teachers.

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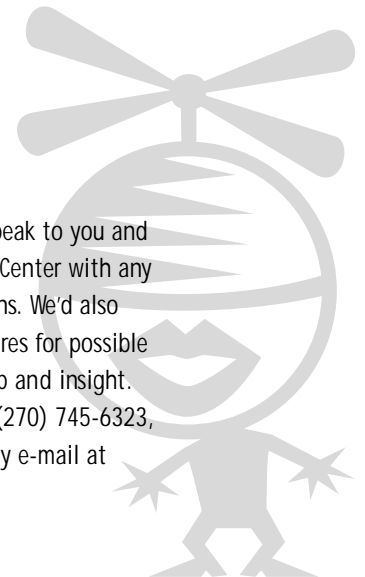
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## *the calendar of events*

December 2 - 3, 1999	Leadership IV Institute, WKU South Campus
January 29, February 5, 12, 19, 26, 2000	Super Saturdays
March 31 - April 9, 2000	Spring Break in London
June 18 - 30, 2000	The Summer Camp for Academically Talented Middle School Students (SCATS), WKU
June 25 - 30, 2000	The Advanced Placement Institute, WKU
July 2 - 22, 2000	The Summer Program for Verbally and Mathematically Precocious Youth (VAMPY), WKU
July 17 - 21, 2000	The English Vertical Team Institute, WKU
July 17 - 21, 2000	The Mathematics Vertical Team Institute, WKU

## *Ideas Needed for The Challenge*

We want *The Challenge* to speak to you and for you. Please contact The Center with any ideas, articles, or suggestions. We'd also appreciate your prized pictures for possible inclusion. We want your help and insight. You can reach us by phone (270) 745-6323, by fax (270) 745-6279, or by e-mail at [gifted.studies@wku.edu](mailto:gifted.studies@wku.edu).



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