INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE IN GIFTED EDUCATION

The history of gifted education is rich with events and people who have influenced the field for centuries. Plato advocated identifying the gifted and providing specialized education in metaphysics, science, philosophy, and military leadership (Colangelo & Davis, 1997; Davis & Rimm, 1989). During the reign of China’s Tang Dynasty (circa 618 B.C.), child prodigies were delivered to the imperial court where their gifts were nurtured and developed (Colangelo & Davis; Davis & Rimm). Throughout the Renaissance, those who exhibited creative talent in art, architecture, and literature were supported by both the government and private patronage (Colangelo & Davis; Davis & Rimm; Hansen & Hoover, 1994).

In the United States, educational options for the gifted and talented had inauspicious beginnings. Although eventually compulsory schooling became available to all children, availability of secondary and postsecondary education was initially based upon not only academic prowess, but also the ability to pay for such services (Colangelo & Davis, 1997; Davis & Rimm, 1989; Newland, 1976). As the 20th century loomed in the distance, more provisions were made for the education of the gifted and talented in the U.S. In 1868, the St. Louis Public Schools established a promotion plan for bright students to complete six years of school in only four years (Piirto, 1999). Other flexible promotion plans were also initiated: Woburn, MA, in 1884; Elizabeth, NJ, in 1886; Cambridge, MA, in 1891 (Colangelo & Davis; Piirto).

The 20th century also had many hallmarks in gifted education. Beginning in 1901, the first private school for the gifted was established for children in grades 7–9 in Worcester, MA, and Baltimore, MD, followed in 1902 (Piirto, 1999). In 1918, the Louisville Public Schools in
Kentucky placed children with intelligence quotients ranging from 120 to 180 into the same classrooms (Piirto). According to Colangelo and Davis (1997), by 1920, approximately two-thirds of all major U.S. cities had some type of educational programming for gifted students.

Professionals and parents formed interest groups, such as the 1947 establishment of the American Association for the Gifted. In 1953, the National Association for the Gifted was founded. The Association for the Gifted began in 1959 under the umbrella of The Council for Exceptional Children.

In 1957, Sputnik gave impetus to the need for more advanced content in mathematics and science and helped fuel the National Defense Education Act in 1958 (Piirto, 1999). In 1972, The Marland Report was issued to Congress noting the deteriorating state of gifted and talented education (Delisle, 1999; Piirto). The report raised public awareness regarding the needs of the gifted and talented.

Johnsen (1999), editor of Gifted Child Today, asked members of the editorial board and columnists to submit manuscripts focusing on the identification of significant events in gifted education for the last volume of the 20th century. In the analysis of the articles by the coauthors of this paper there were many common threads. The majority of the authors offered Sputnik and the change of teaching practices as two of the most important events, closely followed by the concept of multifaceted intelligence and the positive effects of advocacy groups. In addition, the studies of genius and creativity, the Civil Rights Movement and its impact on the issue of equality and access, and the publication of the Marland Report (1972) were highlighted as the next most important historic happenings. The next group of events included the measurement of intelligence, school reform, the understanding of brain functioning and learning, and federal legislation. Mentioned less frequently were the growth in technology and media and the publication of the document National Excellence: A Case for Developing America’s Talent (U.S. Department of Education, 1993). Some mention was given to the Industrial Revolution, establishment of the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented, and the development of the residential schools for the gifted. The Richardson study, the changing roles of women, closing one room schools, and the World Wars were cited, but by only a few.

As could be expected, many persons in gifted education were noted with specific events, although that was not in the charge given by Johnsen (1999). Many were past and current university professors, psychologists, educators, government officials, and advocates.

Because the directive to the authors was to select 10 events and not specific people, the current study was conducted to determine those individuals who have impacted our field. Who are the persons who have influenced the history of gifted education? What are their accomplishments that have shaped our field? This study was conducted to identify the most influential persons in gifted education and their accomplishments.

**Methodology**
A letter explaining the purpose of the research and a survey form were forwarded to all the directors of graduate degree programs in the United States (Parker, 1999). Each director was queried to determine the five most influential persons in gifted education and their major contributions to the field. The directors were asked to list their five choices in random order. The response mode was open-ended and the directors were given two weeks to respond using a self-addressed, stamped envelope. At the end of the two weeks, a second request letter for participation was forwarded.

There are 92 graduate programs and centers for gifted and talented education in the United States listed in the NAGC 1999-2000 Directory of Graduate Degree Programs and Services in Gifted and Talented Education (Parker, 1999). Ninety-one surveys were mailed excluding one of the authors of this article. One graduate program listed in the directory no longer exists and was excluded. Fifty-seven surveys were returned yielding a 63% response rate. The results from 10 of the remaining 57 surveys were discounted due to incomplete information. The data from the 47 complete responses are presented in alphabetical order in Table 1.

**Discussion**

The influences listed for each person identified in Table 1 are synthesized from those most frequently offered by the survey respondents. The influences listed are not intended to represent all of their contributions in the field, but those cited by the respondents.

When examining the responses of those surveyed, certain categories emerged. The largest contingency of those cited were noted for their influences in area of curriculum development, followed closely by those who have contributed to a better understanding of the emotional and social needs of these children and youths. Next, the respondents mentioned those who influenced federal initiatives, as well as those who have researched and provided a better understanding of culturally diverse groups within the gifted population. Influencers were also noted in the areas of the study of intelligence; the expansion of information relating to gifted females; and the offering of new definitions for giftedness. Respondents not only offered influential persons who have developed instructional models, but also those who have enhanced the understanding of creativity. The accomplishments of those dedicated to national and international organizations and those who have worked toward identification and programming of underachieving gifted students were also stated. Additionally, several persons were noted who have furthered the concepts of early identification and programming for preschool children; promoted a better understanding of the highly gifted and prodigies; emphasized the importance of leadership training for youth; underscored the necessity of program evaluation; and provided an analysis of the knowledge base of gifted education.

**Conclusion**

According to directors of graduate degree programs, the field continues to be influenced by persons from the areas of psychology, college and university professors, government officials, and professionals in education. The question now becomes who will influence the field in the future? How can each of us at the local, state, national, and international levels contribute to
maximizing the abilities of gifted youth in this century? GCT

References


Table 1 Survey Results Regarding the Most Influential Persons in Gifted Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Influence(s) on the Field of Gifted Education</th>
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<tr>
<td>George Betts</td>
<td>Constructed a model for teaching gifted and talented students that has as a component the students' affective development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Benjamin Bloom</td>
<td>Devised a taxonomy delineating levels of thinking integral to educational objectives and studied talent development across diversified groups</td>
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James Borland        Worked with identification and programming for economically disadvantaged gifted students
Bill Bradley         Secured the first passage of the Javits Gifted and Talented Education Act as a Senator from New York
Jerome Bruner        Developed the concept of a spiral curriculum
Carolyn Callahan    Researched gifted curriculum and program evaluation
Barbara Clark        Wrote in the field including an introductory textbook and contributed to international and national gifted organizations
Nick Colangelo      Advanced the understanding of the affective development of gifted children, developed a center, created an annual rural symposium
M. Csikszentmihalyi Worked on creativity including problem finding and problem solving, researched the finding and acceptance of self
Kazimierz Dabrowski Developed a theory leading to the understanding of the emotional aspects of giftedness including personal intensities and excitabilities
James Delisle       Wrote on the social and emotional aspects of giftedness
John Feldhusen      Developed program models at both the elementary and secondary levels for teaching gifted students, researched in the domain of leadership, and worked within the area of creativity
David Feldman       Researched in childhood prodigies
Donna Ford          Extended awareness of cultural diversity in the gifted population
Mary Frasier        Organized a movement for the identification of atypical gifted learners
James Gallagher     Wrote extensively in the field including works on political advocacy and policy development regarding gifted education
Francis Galton     Initiated scientific study of intelligence and genius
Howard Gardner      Developed a model expanding the concept of intelligence into several domains
Gae Golembiewski    Trained minority graduate students in gifted
education to become mentors and role models in
the community
John Gowan       Was an early pioneer in the field of gifted
education and strong influence in NAGC
J. P. Guilford   Employed factor analysis to help explain the
multidimensional nature of intelligence
Leta Hollingworth Was an early influence on the research
pertaining to the highly gifted,
social/emotional aspects of giftedness, and
gifted females
Sandra Kaplan    Developed a model for curriculum
differentiation; member of the National State
Leadership Training Institute on the Gifted
Barbara Kerr     Wrote and researched issues concerning gifted
females
Barb MacGonagil  Was catalyst for state curriculum revisions
C. June Maker    Worked with program and teaching models in
gifted education effectively synthesizing
previous work in the field and developed a
schema for applying curriculum models in gifted
education
Sidney Marland   Authored the Marland Report presented to the US
Congress which expanded the definition of
giftedness to include six specific dimensions
Ruth Martinson   Was an early pioneer and assisted with the
formulation of the Marland Report
Mary Meeker      Operationalized and gave practical classroom
applications for J. P. Guilford's work
Sidney Parnes    Developed a model for creative problem solving
with application to many fields of human
endeavor
Harry Passow     Promoted and articulated the needs of gifted
individuals; curriculum development; and early
work with talent development with disadvantaged
populations
Sally Reis       Advocated for gifted females; extended
enrichment practices
Joseph Renzulli  Conceptualized a definition, designed informal
assessment instruments and alternate forms of
enrichment programming in gifted education, and
expanded the research base in the field
Sylvia Rimm Researched the area of the gifted underachievement and social/emotional aspects of giftedness
Halbert Robinson Pioneered work with preschool aged gifted children; implemented a university early entrance program in the United States
Nancy Robinson Researched the areas of radical acceleration and social/emotional issues of the gifted
Anna Marie Roeper Founded a school for gifted students; advocated for affective education to address the social/emotional needs of the gifted
Bruce Shore Initiated a comprehensive critical analysis of the knowledge base on the gifted
Linda Silverman Advocated for the social/emotional needs of the gifted; advanced the contributions of Leta Hollingworth; researched the areas of the highly gifted and asynchronous development
Dorothy Sisk Directed federal Office of Gifted and Talented; worked with the World Council for the Gifted and Talented
Joan Smutny Author of several books focusing on disadvantaged and underserved populations of gifted
Julian Stanley Designed, implemented, and evaluated a model for student talent identification programs; implemented the diagnostic-prescriptive approach for teaching through radical acceleration
Robert Sternberg Developed a definition of intelligence incorporating a component of practical knowledge
Rena Subotnik Researched and wrote in the areas of talent development and female achievement
Abraham Tannenbaum Explored the theoretical foundations of giftedness; developed a model of psychosocial giftedness
Lewis Terman Conducted influential longitudinal study of the gifted; pioneered work on the standardization of an intelligence test in the United States
Carol Ann Tomlinson Developed strategies for the gifted student in mixed ability settings in the regular classroom
E. Paul Torrance Developed instrumentation and studied creativity and its processes; developed the basis for a future problem solving program
Joyce Van Tassel-Baska Developed, implemented, and evaluated appropriate differentiated curricula for gifted students
Virgil Ward Developed a comprehensive, theoretical model for qualitatively differentiating curriculum for gifted learners
James Webb Wrote on the topic of social/emotional aspects of giftedness
Joanne Whitmore Researched the characteristics, causes, and interventions specific to gifted underachievers
Paul Witty Developed a definition of giftedness

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End Notes
The specific responsibilities of the enrichment specialist in SEM programs have been described in Schools for Talent Development (Renzulli, 1994).
Covering more material faster is a quantitative rather than qualitative difference in learning. Rapid coverage of larger amounts of material certainly has value and should be an option in special programs, but the pedagogy and the role of the learner generally are the same as in regular education.

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