

From the President ...

The TAG Board has been busy since our last meeting in April. Gloria Taradash has assumed leadership in revising *Diversity and Developing Gifts and Talents: A National Action Plan*, which was published in 2001. The new monograph will provide guidance to professionals in gifted education in advocating and *taking action* on behalf of children and youth from diverse backgrounds in these critical areas: preparing school personnel, ensuring equitable learning outcomes, finding giftedness, and including diversity in research. This monograph should appear on TAG's Web site (<http://www.cectag.org>) soon.

As mentioned in the previous newsletter, four TAG committees are working on white papers regarding policy, highly qualified effective teachers, response to intervention, and growth models. One of the white papers generating the most interest among other professional groups in gifted education is response to intervention (RtI). Although CEC's position paper includes children who are twice-exceptional and encourages schools to provide these learners with "access to a challenging and accelerated curriculum, while also addressing the unique needs of their ability" (CEC's Position on Response to Intervention, October, 2007), school districts tend to focus only on those students who are failing to respond to the universal core program. Some challenges that have been identified by the RtI work group include the lack of a coherent model, the lack of resources for the general education classroom (e.g., curriculum and staff members who are trained in both gifted and special education), different goals for learning disability and gifted education models, limited data on success of RtI, and grouping for gifted and/or special education services. The white paper hopes to address these challenges and identify some ways of systematizing interventions for diverse populations, bridging assessments for special education and gifted students, and incorporating a diagnostic-prescriptive approach to interventions. The white papers will be included in future newsletters for your review.

On October 10, 2008, the TAG Board will be presenting at the "Multicultural Summit on Gifted Education," which is cosponsored by the Ohio Department of Education and Dublin City Schools. The event will focus on multicultural issues and provide information about upcoming grant opportunities available to school districts with regard to identifying underserved populations of students. Dr. Mary Rizza, who organized the event, is on the TAG Board and on the staff of the Ohio Department of Education. If you live in Ohio, we hope to see you there!

Susan Johnsen, President
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Puerto Rico's Journey With Gifted Children

Ana Miró
Héctor Rivera

Note: This is the first in a two-part series that highlights the work of a parent organization in Puerto Rico that advocates for gifted education and gifted children.

The Association of Parents of Gifted Children (in Spanish, APreNDo) is the only organization in Puerto Rico that addresses the intellectually gifted population. The organization was founded in 2001 when a group of concerned parents joined to share in this common interest. This was motivated by the number of children who obtained test results that qualified them as gifted that Dr. Sanchez Caso, a clinical psychologist, saw in his office. Initially there were meetings every 2 weeks on the northeast part of the island. We started with five families committed to educating ourselves about gifted children through group dynamics and support groups. Also, with the assistance of the psychologist, we sought solutions to the problems that the families confronted with their children. When the founding families went individually to the Puerto Rico Department of Education (DE), they each concluded that the education agency knew absolutely nothing about intellectually gifted students. Since then, the group has organized and met with other parents throughout the island, communicating a message of awareness so that parents can educate themselves on this topic.

In 2002, the organization was duly incorporated as a nonprofit entity under the laws of the Puerto Rico State Department. That same year, we initiated a system of monthly meetings in different towns throughout the four corners of the island to reach as many families as possible. This has continued

through the present day. In these monthly meetings, we discuss different topics relevant to gifted children. We open the discussion to the questions and needs of the families, and they are informed about past and future activities. This is a great opportunity for the families to share their experiences and learn from each other. Every month new families attend our meetings for the first time in addition to the regular attendees. To date, we have worked with more than 600 families. The children attend the meetings also, and we plan activities to match their interests, such as workshops in sketching, storytelling, games, sign language, computers, and medical emergencies, as well as field trips to places of interest in Puerto Rico, such as the butterfly museum, the Science Park, libraries, and workshops with ecologists, environmentalists, firefighters, and geologists, among others. To spread the word about these meetings, we issue press releases, have a Web site (<http://www.prgifted.org>), and advertise through different agencies and by other means. Due to a lack of services in Puerto Rico, the public and private organizations do not know how to help or guide the families that face difficulties and need help regarding educational alternatives for their gifted children, and this organization is there to fill the gap.

For various years, APreNDo members have offered a variety of presentations that focus on

gifted education and gifted children in diverse forums for professional development, including conferences held by the College Board, the Puerto Rico Association for Early Childhood Education (in Spanish, APENET), a National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) chapter, the Private School Association, the Division of the Community Schools of Pfizer Pharmaceutical, and the Puerto Rico Department of Education's mathematics program. This has served as an excellent way to promote knowledge to the general community about the intellectually gifted population. We also spread the word by participating in the activities of other organizations related to special education such as the Puerto Rico chapter of the Autism Society of America, other agencies centered on autism, and the Puerto Rico chapter of the Council for Exceptional Children.

Another task of APreNDo has been to request and hold meetings with legislators of the different political parties in Puerto Rico so they pay adequate attention to our gifted children. In fact, various legislators participated in our second congress. The organization has submitted bills to different legislators that were developed by our members. In spite of divisions and disagreements among the different legislators, we succeeded in having both legislative bodies unanimously

Puerto Rico, continued on p. 2

How to Join TAG

Membership in The Association for the Gifted (TAG) is the best way to boost your own professional skills and become a more informed practitioner. Membership is open to any member of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and you must be a member of CEC to join TAG.

Joining either group is simple. You will find applications on the CEC Web site (<http://www.cec.sped.org>), or you may clip and return the application on p. 2 of this newsletter. Share the newsletter with a friend or colleague and encourage that person to join this wonderful organization!

Save the Date!

CEC's 2009 Convention & Expo

April 1-4, 2009

Seattle, Washington

Make plans to attend CEC's annual convention in Seattle.

The conference offers sessions focusing on the most up-to-date information on evidence-based strategies for working with gifted students, as well as the opportunity to learn from and network with peers from around the world.

Registration opens October 15, 2008. Visit <http://www.cec.sped.org> for more information.

Puerto Rico, continued from p. 1

approve the two projects we submitted. The projects proposed modifying the 5-year-old age requirement for entering kindergarten, taking into consideration the evaluations and recommendations by professionals (PC 2238) and the preparation of educators who can identify and educate gifted students (PC 1020). Both proposals, however, were vetoed by the governor.

Also, we have held meetings with key figures of our country such as the Secretary of the Puerto Rico Department of Education, the Director of the Office for the Family at the governor's mansion, the Secretary of the Department of Family Services, and the Administrator of the Early Childhood Care and Integral Development Administration. In these cases, the connection has been directed mainly to the training of personnel. With the Puerto Rico Department of Education, the meetings have focused on the creation of public policy and the possible creation of certification for teachers in the area of gifted education, as well as support for a school for gifted children. The mayor of the town of Manati has demonstrated interest in

such a school in his municipality, and he's visited schools in the United States to acquaint himself with the successful models. He has gone through various negotiations, one of which was with the Secretary of the Puerto Rico Department of Education, to coordinate the provision of resources to make the school possible. There have been some minor inconveniences with the acquisition of the property that have made the process difficult. However, the Association has served as a link to share up-to-date information to all those involved and to communicate with parents who have shown interest due to the lack of services for their children.

To be continued in the Fall 2008 Update.

Ana Miró, Ed.D., is a professor of special education and curriculum at the University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras Campus. She is also vice president of APreNDo and mother of an 11-year-old girl. She has been a teacher in the public and private system in Puerto Rico and the United States. She can be reached at anamiro97@yahoo.com. **Héctor Rivera** is president of APreNDo. He is an advocate of advanced education for all gifted children. He has presented at several conferences throughout the island and has been a valuable resource in spreading the word about the needs and services for gifted children in Puerto Rico.

Membership Application

To: CEC
1110 N. Glebe Road, Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201-5704

TAG Dues

US/Canada: Regular \$25-Student \$10
Overseas: Air Mail \$50-Surface \$35

CEC and TAG Dues. I want to start enjoying the many benefits of membership in CEC and TAG. I am enclosing both CEC and TAG dues.*

TAG Dues Only. I am currently a member of CEC and my CEC ID # is _____. I am enclosing TAG dues only (see prices above).

Name: _____

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* Please call (888) 232-7733 (toll free) or (703) 620-3660 for information on current CEC dues. Join online at <http://www.cec.sped.org>.

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The TAG newsletter is a quarterly publication. If you have news or upcoming events you'd like to share with other TAG members or have a brief article you'd like to have featured in the newsletter, please contact Jennifer Robins at jenniferrobins@mac.com.

tag

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