

Puerto Rico's Journey With Gifted Children

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

A fundamental service the Association of Parents of Gifted Children is offering free workshops on different topics related to gifted students at public and private schools or organizations of a diverse nature. Moreover, some workshops are offered in coordination with a children's foundation that facilitates contacts between various resources and schools to hold workshops regarding the gifted education.

The Board of the Association has had the opportunity to visit centers in the United States that have different

services modalities. This helps us to see a broad picture of all of the possibilities available to emulate in Puerto Rico or inform the families in our country about the options available in case they consider moving to the U.S.. In fact, there have been families that upon receiving the information we provided about the programs available for gifted students in the U.S. have decided to move and we have assisted them in this process.

Another area of guidance is Puerto Rico's universities. As part of our job with private or public schools, the Association has collaborated to establish the first master's degree program in the field of gifted education and also to de-

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Meet the Candidates for Member at Large

Monique T. Felder, Ph.D., is the elementary program supervisor for the Division of Accelerated and Enriched Instruction with Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). Under direction, Dr. Felder supervises MCPS' elementary (K-5) Gifted and Talented programs, including screening, re-screening, and identification and programming for gifted; the PADI program, which recognizes early potential in young students in schools with diverse populations (i.e., Title 1 schools); the Gifted and Talented, Learning Disabled (GT/LD; twice-exceptional) program; the Highly Gifted Centers; and the Primary Magnet Program at Takoma Park Elementary School. She also serves on the Gifted and Talented Advisory Committee for the Maryland State Department of Education, as well as the Title 1 G/T and the Accelerated and Enriched Instruction Advisory Committees for MCPS. Her vision as a TAG-CEC board member is to support the Council for Exceptional Children's efforts toward "ensuring students with disabilities and/or gifts and talents

from diverse cultures receive high-quality educational services" through research, education, and outreach to policy makers and legislators.

Sneha Shah-Coltrane is currently the Co-Director of Project U-STARS ~ PLUS (Using Science, Talents and Abilities to Recognize Students ~ Promoting Learning in Under-served Students), a Javits Gifted and Talented Program at the FPG Child Development Institute of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In January 2009, she will become the North Carolina State Consultant for Academically/Intellectually Gifted. She works in all aspects of her professional life to better cultivate, recognize, and serve gifted students in the classroom, especially those students historically overlooked in this population. Ms. Shah-Coltrane has worked on these issues as an elementary classroom teacher, a researcher, a professional developer, and as a leader in professional organizations, including NAGC. She currently is an interim member of the CEC-TAG Board of Directors.

From the President ...

The TAG Board would like to welcome two new members to the TAG Board: Debbie Clelland and Sneha Shah-Coltrane. Debbie Clelland, who is a sessional instructor and doctoral student in educational psychology at Simon Fraser University and a past facilitator for gifted students, will be serving in the Canadian position, which was vacated by Lannie Kanovsky when she assumed more administrative duties at Simon Fraser. Sneha Shah-Coltrane, who is the co-director of U-STARS ~ PLUS at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, will be serving in a member-at-large position, which was vacated by Kristie Speirs-Neumeister when she became a mother of twins. We are sad that Lannie and Kristie needed to vacate their positions but are pleased to have two outstanding new members! Be sure to vote for new TAG Board members who will begin their term in January 2009 (see the ballot in this newsletter).

TAG Board members presented at the Multicultural Summit on Gifted Education in Columbus, OH, on October 10. Sponsored by the Ohio Department of Education and the Dublin City Schools, TAG presentations addressed identification, underrepresentation of diverse students in gifted programs, underachievement and suicide, personality types, curriculum modifications using the arts, creating nurturing classroom environments, and developing meaningful partnerships to coordinators of gifted programs in Ohio. The TAG Board wants to offer a special thank you to Dr. Mary Rizza and her colleagues who organized the event.

At its fall meeting in Ohio, the TAG Board reviewed and completed the final revisions of *Diversity and Developing Gifts and Talents: A National Action Plan*. This new monograph will be distributed at the annual meeting of the Council for Exceptional Children in Seattle, WA, in April. Gloria Taradash provided the leadership for this important new publication that will guide many of the Board's actions in the critical areas of preparing school personnel, ensuring equitable

learning outcomes, finding giftedness, and including diversity in research.

The TAG Board also approved two position paper drafts addressing "Response to Intervention" and "Growth Models." These two papers are currently being reviewed by the Council for Exceptional Children staff members who are involved with policy and advocacy and the Legislative Committee of the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC). Watch for these position papers in upcoming issues of this newsletter.

TAG also is collaborating with NAGC on several new standards initiatives. One of these is the revision of the existing *program standards*. The current standards address areas important to practitioners who are serving gifted and talented students in K-12 settings: program design, program administration and management, social-emotional guidance and counseling, student identification, curriculum and instruction, professional development, and program evaluation. Another initiative will be looking at *advanced standards for teachers in gifted education* who are interested in pursuing more advanced study beyond the initial standards level and *core standards in gifted education* for general education standards. Future columns will examine these standards in more detail as they develop.

Cheryll Adams, Sneha Shah-Coltrane, and Mary Ruth Coleman have been planning a special preconference session for CEC's annual conference, "Evidence-Based Practices for Culturally Responsive Gifted Education." During the morning, participants will review culturally responsive, evidence-based practices related to identification, programming, curriculum, social/emotional needs, families, and policies for gifted education. During the afternoon, participants will learn about an effective model, U-STARS ~ PLUS, that puts theory into practice. Be sure to mark your calendars for this exciting preconference event!

Susan Johnsen, President
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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!

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fine new areas of study in the Exceptional Children course. Furthermore, we have met with the Vice President of the (public) System of the University of Puerto Rico to consider alternatives to create study programs or areas of concentrations or emphasis to further prepare teachers in this field.

This semester we've started the intense task of establishing and offering a course to certify professionals through the Continuing Education Division and Professional Studies of the University of Puerto Rico and our Association. The participants take the course over a year and obtain 40 contact hours for certification. During the first semester, diverse topics are covered, such as identification, family aspects, social and emotional skills development, curriculum models, instructional alternatives, creativity, and administrative aspects. During the second semester, the participants design and develop projects to implement and evaluate at their schools.

Another task that the Association has been immersed in is to serve as support in research that is underway in Puerto Rico. This is of great value because of the limited research related to this field in our country. We

have collaborated with researchers or projects as part of courses or requirements for completing graduate studies. This results in increasing different audiences' knowledge about the gifted population.

Our Web site (<http://prgifted.org>) has impacted many families in Puerto Rico and other parts of the world. They find information, including documents that are a good resource for those that are starting in this field, whether as a parent or a professional. Furthermore, the site contains links to other important sources of information. A very valuable resource is the forum through which parents and professionals communicate and share their needs and alternatives.

APreNDo has actively participated in promoting public awareness by means of written radio and television communications. This has been a means to guide the public in general about the existence of our gifted children and the need for adequate attention. In this way, other families, professionals, and agency representatives have been identified and have communicated with us to start and continue the "journey."

We expect this article to motivate other parent support groups to unite

and advance the cause regarding the raising and education of intellectually gifted children and youth. At the same time, it serves as a way of acknowledging the achievements that we have had in Puerto Rico even though we still have a long way to go. We hope that, through this article, we motivate other sectors that are interested to contribute and collaborate with our work in Puerto Rico. For additional information, you may visit our Web page (<http://prgifted.org>) or send a message via e-mail to prgifted@yahoo.com.

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
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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.