

From the President

TAG would like to welcome three new Board members: Dr. Cecelia Boswell, Daria Danylchuk, and Daisy Thompson. Also reelected to the Board is Dr. Jennifer Jolly, who serves as the TAG Board's secretary. Dr. Cecilia Boswell, an educator with 38 years of experience, is an independent consultant and founder of Austin Creek Educational Systems and is past president of the Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented. Daria Danylchuk, who will be the Canadian representative on the TAG Board, is the coordinator of the University Transition Program, which is an early college entrance program funded by the Vancouver School Board, the University of British Columbia, and the Ministry of Education in Vancouver, British Columbia. Daisy Thompson is the director of Indian Education for the Albuquerque Public Schools, a school district that has an enrollment of approximately 6,000 American Indian and Alaska

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Growth in Achievement of Advanced Students

Council of Exceptional Children–The Association for the Gifted (CEC-TAG)



CEC-TAG urges Congress to hold schools accountable for growth of individual students who perform at the advanced, beyond “proficient” levels, when designing growth model accountability systems in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 as reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Background

The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, No

Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandates that states establish accountability plans. In meeting NCLB requirements, these plans have used a status model, which relies on a single year's assessment as an indicator of how many students are achieving proficiency on academic content standards. Status models tend to focus a school's attention and resources on those students who are *not* achieving proficiency rather than those who are *above* proficiency. In 2005, the U.S. Secretary of Education

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Board Members of The Association for the Gifted

Susan Johnsen, President

Cheryll Adams

Cecelia Boswell

Tracy L. Cross

Daria Danylchuk

Ken Dickson

Elaine Dumas

Monique Felder

Jennifer L. Jolly

Diane Montgomery

Julia Link Roberts

Jennifer Robins

Karen Rollins

Sneha Shah-Coltrane

Del Siegle

Gloria Taradash

Daisy Thompson

From the President, continued

Native students that represent more than 115 tribes. Dr. Jennifer Jolly is an assistant professor of elementary and gifted education at Louisiana State University and editor-in-chief of *Parenting for High Potential*, a National Association for Gifted Children publication. Congratulations to all of our new and continuing Board members!

In collaboration with Prufrock Press, TAG will be producing a series of books, "Practical Solutions for Underserved Gifted Students," which will be published over the next couple of years. These books are included in the series:

1. Effective Practices With Underserved Gifted Students (Author: Cheryll Adams)
2. Underachievement (Author: Del Siegle)
3. Collaborating With Parents and Educators (Authors: Julia Roberts and Jennifer Jolly)
4. Characteristics of Diverse Students (Authors: Monique Felder, Diane Montgomery, and Gloria Taradash)
5. Model Programs for Underserved Gifted Students (Author: Sneha Shah-Coltrane)
6. Including Gifted Students in Response to Intervention (Authors: Cheryll Adams, Mary Ruth Coleman, and Susan Johnsen)
7. Curriculum for Underserved Gifted Students (Kimberly Chandler and Tamra Stambaugh)

We hope that the books in this series will help educators in developing each

student's talents and gifts and empower them to create environments that nurture diversity.

We have posted TAG's position papers on "Response to Intervention" and "Growth Models" on our website (<http://www.cectag.org>). These position papers are also supported by the National Association for Gifted Children. Please feel free to download a copy to share with others. A copy of the growth models position paper is included in this newsletter.

In addition, a new column is making its debut in this issue of the newsletter. The Parent Corner will contain information for parents of gifted students. Please feel free to share the column with any parent who may be interested in the various topics that will be covered each issue of the newsletter and encourage them to become a TAG member. In this column, Board member Gloria Taradash interviewed a parent of two gifted boys to learn how she succeeded in helping her boys excel.

Recently, the Council for Exceptional Children accepted TAG's evidence-based proposal on within-class grouping. Led by Diane Montgomery, the TAG Board will examine the research literature on within-class grouping from kindergarten to secondary schools, all of its various forms, and its effects on gifted students, particularly those from diverse backgrounds. We anticipate that the results will be relevant to educators of the gifted who differentiate in homogeneous and

mixed-age settings within public and private school settings.

Do mark your calendars for the annual TAG symposium, "Meeting the Needs of Gifted Students Within an RtI Framework," which will be held at CEC's annual convention on Wednesday, April 21, from 9:00–3:30 at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel in Nashville, TN. The symposium will address these questions: What RtI Models are effective with students with gifts and talents? How are students who are gifted and talented identified—particularly those who have disabilities? How might activities be differentiated at each of the tiers? How might educators collaborate in developing services for students with disabilities and those with gifts and talents? Presenters with practical backgrounds in this area will include these state directors, administrators, and university researchers: Sherry Abernathy, Lois Baldwin, Mary Ruth Coleman, Sneha Shah-Coltrane, Claire Hughes, Susan Johnsen, Chrystyna Mursky, Stuart Omdal, Daphne Pereles, and Karen Rollins.

The TAG Board hopes to see you not only at TAG's symposium but also at CEC's 2010 Convention and Expo from April 21–24 at the Gaylord Opryland in Nashville. TAG will have its annual meeting and social on Thursday afternoon, April 22, so do save those dates!

Susan Johnsen, President
Susan_Johnsen@baylor.edu

PARENT CORNER

BY GLORIA TARADASH

The *Albuquerque Journal* newspaper is running a series entitled "The Education Achievement Gap." Mrs. Gloria Ramirez was featured with her two gifted sons, Dennis and Kevin Paiz-Ramirez, now 23 and 21 (Schoellkopf, A. [2010, January 2]. Mom's persistence helps sons excel. *Albuquerque Journal*, pp. A1, A4).

The newspaper article introduced Mrs. Ramirez as a single mom, of low income, who grew up in El Salvador. She was the guiding hand for two sons who went on to become valedictorians of their respective graduating class. I spoke with Mrs. Ramirez to gain her insight into supporting her boys through gifted service in the public school system.

At what age did you realize your children were different and had different learning needs?

Both boys were walking and talking at 9 months of age. In restaurants people would comment because they could use a knife and fork at a very early age. Because we always worked together at the house I knew they were definitely a little bit advanced from the other kids. But I was not aware of "gifted." We read a lot and the boys asked a lot of questions. If I didn't know we would go and find out together. They loved the library.

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What was your experience with the IEP process?

Dennis was referred by his classroom teacher and then tested. I was called in for an IEP [Individual Educational Plan] meeting that I attended with just the kids and me facing the school staff of five or six. At that meeting they explained my rights, that he would be in the gifted program one hour per day, and what the benefits of the program would be. I left feeling like my son now would get what he needed.

For instance, in class when the teacher was talking, Dennis would be drawing or writing. When I tried to get him to pay attention he would say, "I know Mom, I can hear it." I expressed my concern at an IEP meeting. The staff had been learning about different learning styles and the teacher said that Dennis could be in another area doing something and when she had a question Dennis always had the answer.

In elementary school, in the regular classroom when they finished their work they were given something else to do. By middle school, it was a bigger school and not just one teacher with the kids. I don't know if it was that the teachers did not have the information about my children or they did not care to read it. I would meet with the teachers and tell them Dennis was sitting doing nothing when he should have other work. That was in his IEP. The teacher responded that she didn't know anything about an IEP. Most of their teachers had no idea about the way the gifted learn. I had to educate the teachers as to why my boys had an IEP.

What was your experience with Kevin and gifted service?

Kevin started talking before he was 9 months old. He had so much to say that sometimes he would not articulate carefully. It seemed his mind would run ahead of his mouth. When he started school, because of his speech problems, they referred him to speech therapy. Schools label kids and it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. So we read at the house all of the time. In kindergarten he used the term "demented clown." I asked how did he know such words and he said, "I just know." The kindergarteners were learning the alphabet when my son was already reading. By second grade, Kevin was reading on a fifth-grade level but the teachers could not see beyond his special education label. Eventually the teacher came to see that he was advanced and he was tested and placed in the gifted program. In his gifted class, at least one hour a day he had the opportunity to write, to read, and to interact with others on the same level. And they were treated differently. The teacher of the gifted expected each one to achieve at a high level.

Did your interactions with the school change in middle school?

I regularly volunteered at school and got to know the teachers' methods and the way they worked with the kids. Dennis and Kevin had a wonderful first-grade teacher that I chose. At first they would not allow me to pick a teacher but I did not give up. I had to explain how this teacher's way of teaching fit my son's way of learning. By eighth grade, Dennis had taken the highest math course offered in middle school. The school offered the choice of being an office aide or taking the high school algebra class sitting in front of a monitor. Dennis and I rejected both offers as unacceptable. I stood fast and demanded the rights presented in the IEP. Dennis was bussed to the high school for math every day.

I was just an ESL mom fighting the school system. I always say parents have to be involved. You have to respectfully let people know what you know and think, because if you don't say it, nobody will.

Discuss the rewards of parental persistence and support.

When Kevin was 5 years old, he fell in love with marine animals so I gave him a book and he began to learn everything he could, especially about whales. When he was in third grade, the fifth-grade teacher asked him to come in and teach her class about whales. Kevin told people he was going to grow up and be a marine biologist but he was never taken seriously. He was Spanish, ESL, living in the desert. Dennis was laughed at because he wanted to be a computer scientist and make video games and he could not even afford a computer. The boys remember being ridiculed for their aspirations. But it wasn't something that made them stop. Besides being valedictorians, both boys won the Gates Millennium Scholarship, which is a merit scholarship given to outstanding students of low-income and students of color. Dennis graduated magna cum laude from the University of New Mexico and received a master's degree summa cum laude in learning, design, and technology from Stanford University. Currently he is in the first year of a doctoral program in education psychology at the University of Wisconsin. Kevin attends Loyola-Marymount University in Los Angeles, where he is studying marine biology and theology.

Mrs. Ramirez encourages parents to advocate for their gifted children and not be afraid because parents are not asking for anything that their child is not supposed to have.

Growth in Achievement of Advanced Students, continued

announced the federal growth model pilot program as an alternative method that states could use for purposes of meeting adequate yearly progress (AYP). In contrast to status models, growth models are developed to track individual student performance over time. The development of the growth model pilot program was heralded by educators and policymakers as a means by which the academic achievement growth of students at both ends of the achievement spectrum could be measured. These pilot programs have not lived up to this promise. The current structure of the growth model pilot programs expands the ability of a state to count students as proficient in determining AYP if they are *on target* toward proficiency but does not address those students who are above the target. This focus has left advanced students in general education classrooms unchallenged, which has often resulted in underachievement and even dropping out of school, particularly for those students from lower income backgrounds.

Position Statement

The Association for the Gifted (TAG) believes that growth models should replace status models so that all students' progress can be measured over time. Further, CEC-TAG believes that ongoing assessment is necessary in planning instruction for individual students. While schools should examine a wide range of group differences to determine if students are receiving opportunities to learn such as socioeconomic status, gender, race or ethnicity, disability, or English language status, this position paper pertains to students who perform at the advanced level and the necessity for growth models that take their educational needs into account.

Issues

Several issues with growth models have been identified by the Council for Exceptional Children—The Association for the Gifted as affecting advanced students. These include:

1. States are under pressure to be sure that students meet minimal standards of proficiency and show adequate yearly progress. Given this pressure, schools are more likely to attend to

those students just below proficient and to ignore students above proficient.

2. Current state achievement tests do not have enough difficult items to adequately measure advanced students' growth. Growth models will not be effective for advanced students if existing measures are used.
3. Current growth models compare students' prior achievement to a minimum standard. This leads to teaching to the test with a focus on students below the proficient level. In addition, with the current emphasis on reading and mathematics, other subject areas do not receive the instructional emphasis that they should.
4. Advanced children from lower income backgrounds who are in the top academic quartiles are particularly vulnerable to assessments that measure only minimum levels of proficiency: only 56% maintain their status as high achievers in reading by fifth grade; 25% fall out of the top academic quartile in math in high school; and 8% drop out of high school.

Recommendations

Therefore, CEC-TAG recommends that growth model systems consider advanced students by including these characteristics:

- Growth models need to reflect growth beyond proficiency. Defining growth as beyond "proficiency" takes into account students who score higher than a minimal level of proficient and focus the school's attention on all students. In this way, advanced students are challenged and less likely to underachieve, particularly those from lower income background who tend to lose ground during their K–12 years when compared to other advanced students. For example, states might consider tracking students who are scoring higher than proficient in one year to determine if this level is being attained from one year to the next.
- State assessments should be able to measure beyond minimum skills. Schools need to measure above-grade-level achievement in order to docu-

Invite a Colleague to Join TAG!

Membership Application

To: CEC
1110 N. Glebe Rd., Ste. 300
Arlington, VA 22201-5704

TAG Dues:

U.S./Canada: Regular: \$25;
Student: \$10
Overseas: \$55

_____ **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: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State/Province: _____

Zip/Postal Code: _____

Country: _____

Phone: _____

* 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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Growth in Achievement of Advanced Students, continued

ment advanced student growth. Since advanced students get all or nearly all of the items correct, more difficult, above-grade-level items need to be included in state assessments.

- Models need to expand their focus to take into consideration teacher and program effects on all students' performance and determine how best to instruct students who are advanced in a variety of domains (i.e., the arts, sciences, etc.). Collaborations between universities and school systems might examine effective evidence-based practices that could be nationally disseminated.
- The term growth model should be clearly defined as measurement of academic success on the basis of how much student achievement improves

and should be based on individual student gains. Growth models always need to be designed in a way that encourages mastery of grade-level content and fosters growth above grade level. In its simplest form a student's previous scores are used to create predicted scores for a given year. The difference between the actual score and predicted score is their growth score.

Summary

CEC-TAG is committed to an assessment system that measures individual growth beyond proficiency levels. This growth model system would not only enhance the opportunities for more students to learn beyond minimum levels

but also focus needed resources in the design of assessments that show above-level performance.

References

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- Elementary and Secondary Education Act. (2001). *Subpart 4—State accountability for adequate yearly progress*. Retrieved from <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg92.html>
- Wyner, J. S., Bridgeland, J. M., & Diulio, J. J., Jr. (2007). *Achievement trap: How America is failing millions of high-achieving students from lower-income families*. Retrieved from <http://www.jkcf.org/news-knowledge>

Save the Date!
CEC Convention & Expo
April 21-24, 2010; Nashville, TN

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

TAG is now on Facebook!
Become a group member
of The Association for
the Gifted and network
with other TAG members
in the online community.
Do a search for "The
Association for the Gifted"
and join the group today!

SAVE THE DATE! TAG Symposium April 21, 2010 9-3:30

Meeting the Needs of Gifted Students Within an RtI Framework

As a field, all educators need to be aware of school practices that affect students who are gifted and talented. One of these practices is Response to Intervention. What RTI models are effective with students with gifts and talents? How are students who are gifted and talented identified—particularly those who have disabilities? How might activities be differentiated at each of the tiers? How might educators collaborate in developing services for students with disabilities and those with gifts and talents? This symposium will examine these questions from a variety of perspectives. Issues regarding identification, classroom practices, implementation, policy, and challenges will be addressed by a panel of experts during the morning. Participants will then have an opportunity to work in small groups to address the issues raised by the morning speakers and identify specific strategies that will be helpful in meeting the needs of students with gifts and talents within an RTI framework.

Upcoming Webinars on RTI

If you are looking for high-quality professional development on Response to Intervention (RTI), you may be interested in signing up for one of the following webinars sponsored by the National Association for Gifted Children and The Association for the Gifted. Held on Wednesdays this spring, WOW (Webinars on Wednesdays) offer sessions led by leading professionals in the field. For more information, please visit <http://www.nagc.org/wow.aspx>.

January 27, 2010—7 pm Eastern

Overview of RTI for Gifted Education (Part 1 of a 3-part series)

Mary Ruth Coleman, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Susan Johnsen, Baylor University, Waco, TX

The origins of RTI will be briefly reviewed and the applications for gifted education will be explored. The discussion will focus on: early intervention to support strengths; screening, assessment, and progress monitoring; use of Standard protocols; and collaborative problem-solving approaches with parental involvement. A joint NAGC/TAG position paper on RTI will be presented. This session sets the foundation for the remaining sessions in the three-part series.

February 24, 2010—7 pm Eastern

Gifted Models That Fit Within an RTI Framework (Part 2 of a 3-part series)

Mary Ruth Coleman, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Sneha Shah-Coltrane, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Raleigh, NC; Joe Renzulli, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT; George Betts, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, CO

We will examine how three models for gifted education fit within an RTI approach. U-STARS~PLUS, a nurturing program for children in grades K-3; the Schoolwide Enrichment Program; and the Autonomous Learner Model will be briefly presented. Focus of the discussion will be how these approaches could be used within the RTI framework.

March 24, 2010—7 pm Eastern

Getting Started at the State and District Levels With RTI

(Part 3 of a 3-part series)

Mary Ruth Coleman, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Lauri Kirsch, Hillsborough County Public Schools, Tampa, FL; Elizabeth Shaunessy, University of South Florida, Tampa

We will look at implementing RTI for gifted education at the state and district levels. Speakers will provide a more hands-on view of RTI.

