



Talented Identification:

What's in It for You and Your Child?

By Renee Bacher

Last summer, while many kids her age worked summer jobs or went on teen tours, Rachel Glade, 17, analyzed galaxy formation, black holes, and quasars.

Did she have a good time? According to her mother, Debbie Glade, nobody attending this particular summer program was there to necessarily have a good time. However, Rachel did get a lot out of the experience. She and about 30 other high school students did lab work at an observatory in the back woods of North Carolina and listened to lectures from university professors on topics including astrobiology, global warming, and careers in Earth and atmospheric science, among other things. Between lectures, the students (who hailed from all over the world) canoed down the French Broad River and hiked through the scenic Pisgah National Forest. “The program was much more intense and focused than high school,” said Debbie Glade. “But she really loved it. And she was exhausted when she got home.”

Rachel found this opportunity through a talent development program. Students are identified for talent development programs located across the country, most often based on standardized scores taken as early as in

third grade in some cases. Programs provide a host of resources including (but not limited to) recognition of participation in their program, links to gifted education resources and research-based reference books, and parent support groups. Identified students have the opportunity to take the SAT or ACT as seventh graders. Taking a test such as the SAT, designed for students at least 2 years above a child's current grade level, can help families in several ways. For example, Duke TIP's “Results Summary” identifies how advanced a student is in comparison to his or her peers and provides suggestions for academic development based on performance. Some parents say the experience of taking the SAT at an early age can make a student more comfortable with taking it in high school. Other parents report that it places too much pressure on their children to score high, and creates unnecessary stress.

There are many programs nationwide that offer an array of academic opportunities for enrichment (see pg. 26). These range from exclusive academic summer programs to year-long programs, weekend programs, and online courses.

The program Rachel Glade attended included studying at the PARI Observatory, once a high-security satellite tracking station for NASA nestled in a national forest where students had access to high-tech equipment, to a marine biology program in Beaufort, NC, where students designed and implemented a research project and presented their findings during a symposium at the end of the program. A sampling of offerings from talent development programs across the country included accelerated content areas, creative writing, Ancient Greece, and Shakespearean plays.

Summer programs like these offer a glimpse into what students will have the opportunity to study in college and they allow children who enjoy being academically challenged to spend time with kindred spirits over the summer; however, the programs can be financially out of reach for many parents. The program Rachel Glade attended cost \$3,300 for 2 weeks, and included room, board, and all educational programming. Airfare was not included, and her mother said that not only were the accommodations very basic, but the food (provided by a local hospital), was so bad that she sent her daughter microwavable meals. Although need-based financial aid is available, there are no merit scholarships, as everyone who attends has an excellent academic record. Weekend and online programs can offer more affordable options.

Parents looking for advice on a career path for their child won't necessarily find it through summer programs like these, but the SAT does flag the areas in which a child may excel in college, and later in his or her chosen career. And the summer programs themselves can help kids weed out what they enjoy more intellectually, from what they enjoy less. Debbie Glade says the program solidified her daughter's interest in Earth science. "She loved learning about astronomy and using the advanced equipment," Debbie says, "but now she knows for sure she wants to be a geophysicist. As she put it, "PARI confirmed that I need to be a scientist who can physically touch things. I cannot do that with stars and planets."

Author's Note

Renee Bacher, M.F.A., received her degree from the writing program at Columbia University. Her articles have appeared in *The New York Times Magazine*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Parents*, *Parenting*, and *Working Mother*, among other publications. She has written teachers' guides to books published by HarperCollins and curricula for management training workshops. Bacher's three children attended an elementary school program in Baton Rouge, LA, for the gifted and talented.

*Contact information and descriptions for other programs is available in the online NAGC Resource Directory at <http://www.nagc.org>.

The following programs offer Summer Institutes (and in some cases year-long programs, weekend programs, and online courses) for students who demonstrate high potential in the classroom or on standardized tests. Testing requirements and locations vary:

Duke Talent Identification Program (TIP)

<http://www.tip.duke.edu>

Northwestern University's Midwest Academic Talent Search

<http://www.ctd.northwestern.edu>

The Wisconsin Center for Academically Talented Youth

<http://www.WCATY.org>

Johns Hopkins University's Center for Talented Youth

<http://www.CTY.jhu.edu>

Carnegie Mellon Institute for Talented Elementary and Secondary Students

<http://www.cmu.edu/cmities>

University of Iowa's Belin-Blank Exceptional Student Talent Search

<http://www.education.uiowa.edu/belinblank/TalentSearch>

UC Irvine's Academic Talent Search

<http://www.giftedstudents.uci.edu>

Cal-State Sacramento Academic Talent Search

<http://edweb.csus.edu/projects/ATS>

Purdue University's Gifted Education Resource Institute

<http://www.geri.soe.purdue.edu>

Southern Methodist University's Gifted Students Institute

<http://smu.edu/education/gsi>

University of Southern Mississippi's The Frances A. Karnes Center for Gifted Studies

<http://www.usm.edu/gifted>

University of Washington's The Halbert and Nancy Robinson Center for Young Scholars

<http://depts.washington.edu/cscy>

Vanderbilt University Programs for Talented Youth

<http://pty.vanderbilt.edu>

Western Kentucky University's The Center for Gifted Studies

<http://www.wku.edu/Dept/Support/AcadAffairs/Gifted/cmismadesimple>