E. Paul Torrance was a monumental figure in the field of creativity. Certainly, no one has done more for the cause of creativity in understanding its substance and application in this country and abroad than “the father of creativity.” With over 50 years of educational research on the creative process, including his revelatory longitudinal studies and groundbreaking Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking, E. Paul Torrance left the world with a much richer definition of the creative process and a global vision for how it could be harnessed to transform peoples’ lives. His pioneer work examined correlations between intelligence and creativity, provided the means to measure creativity in concrete ways, and revealed methods for unlocking the potential within all learners to apply their ingenuity, imagination, and inventiveness.

With over 1,800 publications and presentations, Torrance’s influence was vast in its scope and remains great today. His approach to creative thinking and problem-solving, evident, for example, in the Future Problem Solving Program International, continues to be used as a means to tap the creative potential of individuals in all sectors of society throughout the world.

At every stage of his life, Paul exhibited persistence and a high energy level. He worked 18-hour days for most of his career. His hundreds of books, articles, and presentations, in addition to his normal duties as a professor, reflected not only amazing organizational ability, but a high level of energy.

Paul became comfortable as a minority of one. He displayed great courage in questioning the status quo in education and psychology. His foray into the field of creativity was single-minded. Some of his findings challenged the ideas of traditional scholars and educators. From Georgia farm boy to world renowned scholar, E. Paul Torrance made an indelible mark and significant contribution to our understanding of creativity, problem solving, and intelligence.¹

From the front cover:
The Great Smoky Mountains
Edward Freeman
Chicago, Illinois
Honoring the fundamental contribution of Torrance and keeping his legacy alive for future generations is a burning duty for those who have been inspired and influenced by his work. For example, the International Torrance Legacy Creativity Awards reflect and heighten the commitment of this extraordinary pioneer. Torrance stated that creativity is the highest form of mental functioning, and award submissions have proven his assertion. The legacy awards began in 2009 as a collaborative effort between Joan Franklin Smutny of the Center for Gifted and Midwest Torrance Center and John D. Kauffman of Scholastic Testing Service to offer students from all over the world the opportunity to apply the central concepts and ideas of E. Paul Torrance to their own creative work.

The first Torrance Award category offered was Creative Writing. During the past six years since its inception, hundreds of children from many countries—including Singapore, Turkey, India, Australia, Bahrain, Poland, and the U.S.—have submitted their poems and short stories. In subsequent years, Visual Arts and Musical Composition were added—and, in 2014, Inventions joined the annual awards competition. Each year, the response from children and young people, ages 8 to 18, has grown as more teachers encourage their students to submit their most imaginative work. The Midwest Torrance Center publishes a magazine each year containing the winning submissions in all four award categories. The impact of the award becomes a heartening sign for teachers and parents that, despite pressures of standardized testing, a narrowing curriculum in many schools, and less time or freedom for creativity or the arts in the classroom, creativity is alive and well.

Invitation to Parents and Teachers

Everyone between the ages of 8 to 18 can send their creative work to the annual International Torrance Legacy Creativity Awards competition. Hundreds of students from all over the world have shared their extraordinary talents by submitting original poetry or short stories, photos of two- or three-dimensional visual arts, music compositions for solo or any combination of instruments or voice, and inventions for arts and leisure, science and engineering, and toys and games dimensions.

Annual themes act as catalysts to stimulate the imagination and provide a supportive structure for students to extend their learning through creative production of original pieces of creative writing, art, music composition, and/or inventions. The 2015 themes include: Beyond Boundaries or Transcending Limits; Courageous Endeavor; A Huge Step Forward; Finding, Discovering, or Uncovering Solutions; Choosing a Brighter Tomorrow; and Building Anew.

Experiences inspired by the Torrance Legacy Awards offer remarkable catalysts for both parents and educators to grow in their understanding of creativity and to incorporate more creative activities and projects in their homes and classrooms. Students discover that the kind of thinking and creating demanded by the award categories offers rich individual learning experiences. Parents and teachers—the strongest advocates for the expression of their children’s talents—provide the climate and encouragement to support the growth of creativity.

As Torrance proved throughout his life, significant creative growth occurs within a supportive climate of environment, resources, catalysts, questions, and explorations. The imagination takes hold, and new ways of thinking emerge.

Author’s Note

Joan Franklin Smutny is the Director of the Center for Gifted and Midwest Torrance Center for Creativity. Each year, she welcomes thousands of bright, talented children and young people in grades PreK–12 to her year-round programs. Joan has authored, co-authored, and edited many articles and over 21 books on gifted education for teachers and parents, including Parenting Gifted Children: The Authoritative Guide from the National Association for Gifted Children (2011). In 1996, Joan received the NAGC Distinguished Service Award for her contributions to the field of gifted education. In 2012, she received the E. Paul Torrance Award in Creativity, given by NAGC.

Endnotes


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2015 International Torrance Legacy Creativity Awards Sponsors

| Future Problem Solving Program International, Melbourne, FL |
| Great Plains Center for Gifted Studies, Emporia State University, Kansas |
| Midwest Torrance Center for Creativity/The Center for Gifted, Glenview, IL |
| National Association for Gifted Children—Creativity Network, Washington, DC |
| Torrance Center for Creativity and Talent Development, University of Georgia |