



Inside this Issue

Message from the Chair	2
Reflections on a School Year Past....	3
Counselors and Guidance Leaders Teach and Learn at GERI Institute	4
Talking about Gifted Individuals Emotionality at DISCOVER!	5
Join Us in Louisville	6
Counseling Gifted Children with Severe Behavioral Dysfunction	7
Program Alert!	8

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MENTAL HEALTH MISDIAGNOSIS AMONG GIFTED CHILDREN

JEAN GOERSS, MD.

Gifted children are being labeled with inaccurate diagnoses all over the country because of the general lack of awareness of giftedness, its characteristics and the frequent mismatch between the child and their school environment. Psychologists in private practice and working in our schools, psychiatrists, school guidance counselors, pediatricians and others who work with children need to be more aware of the pitfalls in evaluating gifted children if we are to avoid damaging labeling, medication side effects, inappropriate counseling and inadequate intervention.

Most of the behavioral issues that bring these children to the attention of professionals arise out of their hypersensitivity to the environment, their hyper-intense reactions and their developmental asynchrony. Typical gifted behaviors mimic a number of serious mental conditions. They may be distractible in school, hyperactive generally, suffer from intense mood swings, demonstrate perfectionism and develop oppositional behavior. Misdiagnoses of ADD, ADHD, bipolar, obsessive-compulsive disorder and oppositional defiant disorder are among the most common misdiagnoses made based on these behaviors.

On the other hand, because of the stress of inappropriate school environments and frequent peer rejection, many of these children do suffer from depression and anxiety. Even if these are diagnosed correctly, the underlying stressors are often not recognized and treated by professionals who are not familiar with typical gifted children's issues.

The Counseling and Guidance Division of NAGC can be on the forefront of educating the professionals who encounter gifted children, thereby improving the care of gifted children nationally. Individuals at SENG (Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted) are ready and willing to speak about this issue. We need forums, such as national conferences, that will reach large numbers of these professionals. You can help spread the word by making colleagues aware of the book "Misdiagnosis and Dual Diagnoses in Gifted Children and Adults" published by Great Potential Press and SENG. If you can help us find appropriate state and national forums where we can educate more of your colleagues, please contact SENG or any of the authors of the book including myself, Jean Goerss MD at boveinstitute@cox.net.

Our New Look....

The newsletter of the Counseling & Guidance Division has a new format and name. It is now published primarily electronically, although those without email can receive mailed copies. We plan to bring you division news and articles addressing today's issues about the gifted in the counseling & guidance field. I look forward to submissions from division members who may be working

in areas of interest to our members. Send all communications regarding this newsletter to Katie_Craven@att.net. Your opinions on future content ideas, proposals for specific articles, and general feedback are all welcome.



Katie Craven, editor

Message from the Chair.....Jean Peterson

C & G Events at NAGC—Present and Future

NAGC has made some major changes in the convention program this year. C & G is therefore making a few as well, adjusting to the new convention format. By raising your awareness of these changes well ahead of time, I hope that that you will be able to arrange to attend our special sessions.

Work Session *The C & G work session, which typically occurs on Thursday evening, is scheduled for 2:00-5:00 this year. Be sure to put that in your calendar.* It is possible that, after energetically taking care of business for two hours, we will have heavy snacks available so that you will be ready for the Opening General Session from 5:00-6:30. I hope you will consider joining us for this session. The agenda will include opportunities to discuss and consider strategies related to a wide variety of topics:

- how the C & G website can help educators and parents meet needs of children who are gifted.
- C & G program directions for the future
- the potential for providing consultation services at NAGC
- the role/content of the C & G newsletter
- opportunities for leadership within the Division
- ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of both the work session and the business meeting at NAGC
- possibilities for mid-year contributions at DISCOVER and elsewhere
- the possibility of a counseling-the-gifted resource list on the C & G webpage

Business Meeting *The C & G business meeting is scheduled for Saturday, from 1:00-2:00.* We hope the work session allows us to be nicely organized with our business agenda so that we can comfortably deal with our agenda in just one hour. Plan to attend this meeting.

Networking Breakfast On Friday morning at NAGC, at 7:45, in place of the former first concurrent session of the day, a Networking Breakfast has been arranged in response to attendee feedback that additional opportunities to “just talk” informally about issues and concerns were needed. Various rooms may be arranged for discussion of pertinent topics, and it is possible that one of the topics will be quite related to our Division. Regardless, I encourage you to come and interact with educators, parents, and Division leaders about concerns related to the social and emotional development of children and adolescents who are gifted—or just to become acquainted.

Friday Division Events After the Awards Assembly and NAGC Business Meeting on Friday evening (5:45-7:15), a general reception for all divisions will offer heavy appetizers. This reception (7:30-8:15) is an opportunity for NAGC members to hear about various divisions.

After the reception (8:30-10:30), several Divisions will offer “events.” Since C & G is offering a pre-conference workshop on Wednesday, we will not have a special Division event on Friday night. However, given the effectiveness of the DISCOVER! small-group discussions, C & G might consider that format for the Friday evening event in the future.

Brief Consultation at NAGC C & G included in its 2004 program an opportunity for brief consultation with counselors and psychologists for teachers and parents concerned about social and emotional issues of gifted children and adolescents. This year that offering will not be in the program. However, if you think such an offering is appropriate and needed at the annual convention, let me know (jeanp@purdue.edu) or contact NAGC. C & G has offered either a support group or consultation in some form for the past three years.

C & G Pre-Conference Workshop: Teachers as ‘Counselors’

On Wednesday afternoon, November 9, at NAGC, Jean Peterson, Coordinator of School Counseling at Purdue University, and Meredith Greene, Consultant of Student Assessment and Evaluation, Annapolis Valley Regional School Board, Nova Scotia, Canada, will present a pre-conference workshop entitled “Teachers as ‘Counselors’: New Paradigm, New Skills. The description of this workshop is as follows:

As education for the gifted embraces the idea of affective curriculum, teachers are recognizing that, for both group and individual interaction, students gravitate toward teachers they trust when they need to talk. As allies, advocates, advisors, and listeners, teachers require particular skills and “posture,” in addition to information for explaining new programs and approaches to educators, parents, and students. Here, two professional counselors will respond to the shifting paradigm. After briefly contemplating social and emotional development as related to giftedness, they will acquaint participants with potential issues, professional limitations, ethical concerns, educator roles, and consultation guidelines, with hands-on skills-training comprising most of the workshop.

You are invited to attend this C&G-sponsored workshop.

Mid-Year Meeting At the four-day Gifted Education Resource Institute DISCOVER! event at Purdue in late June, three C & G officers were invited to be part of a group of six C & G leaders who presented sessions and were involved in formal and informal group discussions with conference participants. The presentations were thought-provoking, and the group discussions centered around concerns pertinent to the Division. Participants’ suggestions will drive a significant portion of the work session. Participation in DISCOVER! gave C & G leadership a chance to meet, mid-year, to consider Division concerns.

REFLECTIONS ON A SCHOOL YEAR PAST...

Edward R. Amend, Psy.D. — Practicing Clinical Psychologist, Lexington, KY

As I reflect upon the school year that ended not long ago, I think about my experiences with the teachers, students, and parents. I was delighted and truly grateful to have the opportunity to work so closely with so many both in the school setting and outside of it. I appreciate all that I have learned from each group throughout this year.

Although I have been working in and around the field of gifted education for over a decade now, I continue to be amazed at the uniqueness of gifted children. Despite the vast differences, however, there are also striking similarities. The “usuals” such as verbal ability, creative thinking, uneven development, and tendencies toward perfectionist thinking and behavior were often evident this year. I think I was most impressed, though, with the comfort level shown by the gifted children when they were surrounded by other gifted children. Risk-taking, both intellectual and emotional, was frequent in these situations. In contrast, these same children also described their reluctance to take risks in other situations—not for fear of failure, as is commonly thought, but for fear of negative peer reactions. When a bright child makes a mistake in a mixed ability classroom, some gifted children said, others might laugh or say things like, “See, you’re not so smart after all!” Students in primary grades through middle school made comments like that. These types of encounters continue to feed my belief that all gifted children deserve to spend some time each day with other gifted children.

I had the opportunity to work with many teachers this year and was impressed with the dedication of those who work with gifted children. Their willingness to learn and attempts to do things differently are admirable. However, I was also struck by the frustration of those same teachers who want to be creative and do things differently to meet the needs of all children, but feel (and in many ways are) constrained by the content-driven required testing and/or the pressures against creativity and innovation in teaching methods. Interesting, isn’t it, that we expect our children to learn, to be creative, and to thrive within a system that doesn’t always allow the adults to model the things we want?

In working with some teachers, however, it also became clear that many myths about gifted children continue to be seen as truths. Some teachers marveled at how lucky those who exclusively teach “the gifted” must be—because gifted children are such good students and so well behaved, they say. If students were grouped according to ability, with gifted students being placed together full time, they pondered, who would want to teach the other students? Besides, some further thought, having gifted children in mixed ability classrooms provides an opportunity for them to “model” good work habits and behavior. While I have no problem with a gifted child being a good role model, I do have a problem with that being used as the rationale for

them being in a mixed ability classroom. Gifted children deserve, as all children deserve, the right to learn something new every day. Unfortunately, this doesn’t always happen when teachers are forced to re-teach material that was not sufficiently grasped the previous time(s).



Don’t get me wrong, sometimes gifted children are good students and good role models—sometimes they relish those roles. However, there are some who are not good role models or students for a variety of reasons, ranging from environmental or socio-economic concerns and personality to organizational problems and clinical disorders. Being gifted doesn’t mean you are automatically a good student—in fact, being gifted is neither **necessary** nor **sufficient** to produce a good student. As Headmaster of Hogwarts, Professor Albus Dumbledore said in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (J.K. Rowling, p. 333), “It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities.”

The parents of gifted children have the job of making sure the choices of which Professor Dumbledore speaks—their choices as well as those of their children—are good ones. A difficult task indeed. Working with parents at primary through high school levels this year reinforced for me that parents of gifted children, often very bright themselves, tend to show some of those perfectionist tendencies seen in their children. As a result, they often find themselves doubting their choices or wondering about their ability to parent a child who may be smarter than they are (or at least one who tells them that he or she is). In those cases, it is important to remember that knowledge and wisdom are very different, and parents will always have the upper hand in the latter. Writer Stephen Potter (no relation to Harry) once said, “**Knowledge** is knowing how, **wisdom** is knowing whether.” A very good point, indeed.

In closing, let me again say that I admire the work that is being done by teachers and parents of gifted children as well as the gifted children themselves. If we can remember that we really do all want the same thing—all kids, including gifted kids, to learn and live healthy, happy, and productive lives—we can all work together to get there. It is often said that obstacles are what you see when you take your eyes off of the goal. Working together can help all keep an eye on the goal and get us there faster.

Counseling & Guidance Leaders Teach and Learn at GERI Institute

Jean Peterson, Ph.D. — Purdue University

For three intense days in late June, five members of the Counseling and Guidance Division of NAGC participated in the Purdue University Gifted Education Resource Institute's (GERI) DISCOVER! Institute in West Lafayette, Indiana. Marcia Gentry, who directed this first-annual summer conference focusing on several general areas of gifted education, invited members of the C & G leadership team not only to present sessions and engage in dialogue with each other and with participants, but also to participate in individual and small-group discussions with Institute participants.

Participating in the Counseling and Guidance strand of the Institute were C & G leaders Jean Peterson, Purdue University, chair of the Counseling and Guidance Division; Sal Mendaglio, University of Calgary, chair-elect; and Lori Flint, Ashland University, program co-chair. Additional C & G members also participated: Sue Jackson, director of the Daimon Institute for the Highly Gifted, White Rock, BC, Canada; Richard Cash, District Coordinator of Gifted and Talented Programs, Bloomington, MN; and Karen Ray, Purdue doctoral student in Counseling Psychology.

The three members of the C & G leadership team used the mid-year meeting as an opportunity to solicit feedback from educators regarding current Division activities and also suggestions for future programming. Two extended, energetic group discussions, one about counseling concerns of gifted children and adolescents and the other about general social and emotional concerns of gifted youth, addressed a variety of areas and were especially helpful to the Division, while also offering pertinent information and expertise to Institute participants.

Among many key points in the small-group discussions, led by the C & G leaders, were the following:

- Educators need to consider the whole person, not just academic achievement, when working with any child, no less when working with gifted students.
- Gifted children need to develop skills and vocabulary for articulating their often complex emotions and concerns.
- Educators should take a one-down (non-expert) posture with gifted students, when appropriate, being open to learning about them and from them.
- Educators and parents need to recognize that gifted individuals who seem “unemotional” may in fact have “shut down” early in their lives because they realized their thoughts did not resonate with others, or may process emotions rapidly and complexly with a “blank face.”
- Educators tend to measure potential by overt behavior, without recognizing the complex inner world and emotional-development potential of gifted youth.
- Education for the gifted should involve differentiated *response*, not just differentiated curriculum.
- If respect and listening are in place, and if adults affirm that emotions can be complex, gifted kids can perhaps accept their emotional complexity and feel comfortable.
- Academic curricula meet only *some* of the needs of gifted individuals. In addition, it is important to acknowledge other important ways of thinking besides critical thinking.
- Gifted students experience various universal aspects of development, but because of the qualitative differences in their *experience* of development, counselors need to be knowledgeable about these differences when working with them.
- Emotionally, gifted kids may be able to take things apart and identify the pieces, but not be able to synthesize disparate parts at their stage of development.
- It is important to recognize that educators and parents can't “fix” emotions; rather, emotions need to ebb and flow out during intensely emotional circumstances. Calm, poised adults can help them do that by comfortably and compassionately acknowledging and validating feelings.
- It is important not to “oververbalize” when interacting with gifted children, since, among several negatives, including becoming “just noise,” oververbalizing does not acknowledge or give voice to emotions.
- Staying severely depressed, since it is known and static, may be preferable to moving ahead developmentally for someone who fears the next stage.
- Educators need rudimentary listening skills, since they are in the front lines regarding recognizing, and often being initial responders to, students in distress.
- It is easier for gifted youth to acknowledge being depressed than being gay.
- Gifted youth who are gay are not easy for researchers to access, and therefore knowledge in this area is usually based on retrospective studies of gay adults.
- Gifted youth who are gay often find the gifted program to be a haven which respects differences.
- It is important to think in terms of “children *who are gifted*,” instead of “gifted children,” since those with high ability experience the universals of development, but have *differentiating characteristics*.

There may be other formal opportunities in the future for Counseling & Guidance Division consultants to interact at summer and other institutes with educators, counselors, administrators, and others.



Talking about Gifted Individuals' Emotionality at DISCOVER!

Sal Mendaglio, Ph.D. — University of Calgary



At the first annual DISCOVER! Conference, organized very well by Marcia Gentry, I had the opportunity to talk about a passion area of mine: emotionality of gifted individuals.

Whenever I speak on this subject, I find it necessary to provide a context for it. Specifically, I feel the need to communicate to my audience my conception of giftedness before proceeding to the heart of the matter.

In my view, the very core of giftedness is superior intellectual potential. Unlike others who have a multiple view of intelligence, my focus is general intelligence. Rather than multiple intelligences, I believe that there are multiple manifestations of intelligence. In addition, I have a neutral approach to giftedness. That is, superior intelligence may manifest itself in both socially acceptable, prized ways or in antisocial, malevolent ways. Giftedness by itself does not predispose an individual towards good deeds. There are examples of people who possess superior intellectual capacities but are hardly exemplars of goodness. The type of social environment gifted individuals experience influences how giftedness is manifested. Further, the environment influences whether giftedness is manifested at all. With these assumptions in mind, I define giftedness as follows: giftedness is superior intellectual potential with many possible manifestations that may or may not be socially acceptable.

My approach to emotionality and other dimensions of giftedness reflects my definition and the phrase "individual (child, adolescent, or adult) who is gifted". I believe that whatever I attribute to giftedness needs to be consistent with my definition. There is virtually no empirical evidence for the lists of characteristics we find in the literature. As a result, in my work with gifted individuals I do my utmost to be as logically consistent when it comes to traits of gifted persons. Using "child who is gifted" keeps in the forefront of my mind that, philosophically, gifted children have a great deal in common with all children. As a result, some of what we know from the study of emotion in the general population applies to gifted individuals as well. Of course, the fields of giftedness and gifted education are premised on the view that there are characteristics that differentiate gifted individuals from other individuals.

My model of the emotionality of gifted persons infuses certain affective characteristics of gifted individuals into a cognitive theory of emotions. In this theory, emotions are created by our interpretation of events, not by events themselves. A stimulus event is interpreted, and emotion is created. The event may be real or imaginary—an actual interaction with someone or a thought about some upcoming event. From this point of view, statements such as "You make me so happy, angry, or upset!" are incorrect.

The "interpretation" component of the model includes intelli-

gence and other cognitive process (e.g., memory) and other factors stemming from our experiences (e.g., prior experiences with stimulus events, our level of self-esteem, values, and expectations). Level of intelligence is a critical element in the interpretation process. It influences the amount of information we are aware of and the speed of processing it. With superior intellectual ability, we can pick up on details and nuances of a situation and process them very quickly. I believe that because of the central role that intelligence plays in the generation of emotions, many of us in the field have come to agree that "gifted persons feel more because they see more".

Based on my counseling experience, I have added two affective characteristics to the cognitive theory of emotion that have helped me understand gifted individuals' emotionality. Heightened multifaceted sensitivity (HMS) and heightened self-criticism (HSC) are two differentiating characteristics that appear in the literature that are defensible as affective characteristics in understanding emotionality. There are two reasons for this. First, both characteristics relate to "affective" in the psychological use of that term; that is, they relate to emotion. Unlike other affective characteristics, such as leadership, HMS and HSC have a close relation to emotion. Second, they are consistent with my conception of giftedness. In my approach, HMS is defined as heightened awareness of the behaviors, emotions, and thoughts of self and others. Awareness, a cognitive process, is at the core of this definition. With greater intelligence, I assume that individuals display greater awareness of themselves and their environments. Greater awareness is part and parcel of giftedness as superior intellectual potential. In keeping with my neutral approach, HMS does not mean that those who are gifted are by definition better people. They simply have greater awareness; what they do with that awareness determines its quality. Heightened self-criticism is conceptualized in a fashion similar to HMS. Many people engage in self-scrutiny and analysis with the likelihood of focusing on the negative rather than the positive aspects of self. With superior intelligence, such scrutiny is intensified. My interest in HMS and HSC is their contribution to the experience of emotion. Heightened sensitivity and heightened self-criticism are not emotions; they serve to intensify emotions created by gifted individuals' interpretation of events.

I hope that this gives readers a flavor for my presentation at DISCOVER! It is difficult to summarize the entire model in a brief article. I refer readers to my article in the *Journal for Secondary Gifted Education* special issue on counseling the gifted, guest edited by Jean Peterson, for a more detailed discussion [Mendaglio, S. (2003). Heightened multifaceted sensitivity of gifted students: Implications for counseling. *Journal of Secondary Gifted Education*, 14(2), 72 – 82].

Recommendations for Reading

Aderholt, M. (2002). *Perfectionism: What's Bad About Being Too Good?* Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

Delisle, J. & Galbraith, J. (2002). *When Gifted Kids Don't Have All the Answers: How to Meet Their Social and Emotional Needs.* Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

Kerr, B., & Cohn, S. (2001). *Smart Boys.* Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.

Neihart, M., Reis, S., Robinson, N., & Moon, S. (Eds.). (2001) *The Social and Emotional Development of Gifted Children: What Do We Know?* Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

Piirto, J. (2003). *Understanding Creativity.* Great Potential Press.

Pipher, M. (1994). *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Lives of Adolescent Girls.* New York: Ballantine.

We will include books and articles of potential interest to our members in each issue of the newsletter.

JOIN US IN LOUISVILLE NOV. 9TH-13TH *SETTING THE PACE*



A PERSPECTIVE FROM THE EDITOR, A PARENT AND COUNSELOR

I came to my first NAGC conference, as a parent looking for answers, almost seven years ago. I remember thinking that it was like “drinking water from a fire hose” — the amount of information was overwhelming, but exhilarating!

I wanted to learn how to help my two young sons, who were not being served by the local public school district. In the back of my mind was the disastrous outcome of a profoundly gifted boy who sat next to me in my high school math class. So, I got on the plane to Albuquerque, not knowing a single person in the field, to find some wisdom on meeting the needs of my sons.

As I read through the massive program book, with sessions on every aspect of serving the needs of the gifted, I regretted not being able to attend more than one session at a time! When making the difficult decisions on which sessions to choose, I found myself drawn to many of the topics in the Counseling & Guidance Division. Listening to the various speakers gave me hope and resolve... to advocate for my sons and find the best path to meet their needs.

Over the years, I learned about situational depression from Sue Jackson, radical acceleration from Miraca Gross, and countless other topics from the many presenters who shared their knowledge. The second year, I decided to attend the division business meeting, after then-Chair, Ed Amend, offered an open invitation at one of the sessions. Before I knew it, I was helping Jean Peterson and was elevated to Program Co-chair! After serving in that position for 4 years, I have accepted the responsibility to edit the division newsletter.

In the meantime, I went back to graduate school and received my second masters degree, in Educational Counseling. I am now in charge of college counseling for 3 secondary schools. While I counsel students of all ability levels, I use what I have learned at the national conferences almost daily. When parents learn that my children are gifted, they ask if I will share my experiences with their friends or neighbors, who are also trying to find answers to help their gifted children.

Now, seven years later, my sons are in high school, due to radical acceleration, and they are starting to plan for college. Both seem happy with the solutions we have found — perhaps not perfect solutions, but I am achieving my goal of helping my sons reach adulthood in a way that has meaning for them. I have tremendous gratitude for the work of NAGC and the Counseling & Guidance Division, in particular.

The world still has a long way to go to help children who are gifted, but NAGC is certainly setting the pace toward meeting the needs of the gifted. Attending the last six national conferences has made a significant difference in my life. The conference provides a valuable forum for the exchange of ideas among counselors, teachers, psychologists, parents, and other professionals. There is always something new to learn, always someone new to meet.



Counseling Gifted Children with Severe Behavioral Dysfunction

Cheryl Sawyer, Ed.D. — University of Houston, Clear Lake

Most gifted children are bright enough to perceive the difference between their demonstrated behaviors and those expected by standard societal norms. In order to maintain control in their lives, they creatively manipulate their environment, creating chaos. This does not mean the children are content with their situation. Many gifted children have no tolerance for their situation, cannot find the “correct path” and cannot fathom there is a feasible solution to this situation. Gifted must learn about their disturbance, uncover and confront blocks, and place issues in proper perspective. This requires the assistance of skilled professionals who understand the unique needs and perspectives of the gifted child and are strong enough to lead the child through the gray areas without yielding to the child’s manipulative behaviors. This article briefly introduces a system to help children focus on using their strengths to address their behavioral and emotional issues and live more successful lives through the use of counseling strategies based on the Theories of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1983) combined with a structured documentation/reward process.

Counseling Interventions The Theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1983) strongly implies that educators should provide opportunities for children to learn using their identified areas of strength. This implication can be extended in therapy. The therapist will probably be more successful in getting clients to uncover and confront emotional blocks, develop the ability to deal with their behaviors, and place issues in the proper perspective if the therapist uses approaches that utilize the children’s strengths. The counseling activities shown in the table below might be incorporated into counseling sessions in order to facilitate discussion and client release of emotion.

Intelligence	Activities
Linguistic	Journaling, group discussion, bibliotherapy, therapies using multi-media, sentence completion, re-writing story endings
Logical-mathematical	Timelines, charts that sequentially organize precipitating factors, examination of behavioral cause/effect, technical details of disorders
Spatial intelligence	Collage, clay/sculpture, body tracing
Musical Intelligence	Writing songs & music, listening and identifying music that expresses their feelings, rhythmic patterning & drumming
Bodily-kinesthetic	Dance, “Ropes” programs, 1:1 activity such as running, basketball
Naturalistic	Pet therapy, gardening, camping retreats
Interpersonal	Family “Ropes” participation, socio-drama, role-playing, sand tray
Intrapersonal	Biofeedback, breathing exercises, visual imaging

Behavioral Intervention Many students believe their behaviors are beyond their control and they are in hopeless situations. Dysfunctional gifted children are often trapped in a negative behavioral cycle that quickly becomes a downward spiral. Ineffective behaviors must be halted, new behaviors introduced, and a safety net established. Halting unacceptable behaviors requires the establishment of a process that provides structure and documentation of success while allowing the child the freedom to experiment with both acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. This process takes time, patience, tolerance, and sustained effort on the part of the child and the support system. A three-part documentation system can be used to visually credit the child for achieving objectives as well as chart progress.

Section 1 of this system documents time on task using appropriate social behaviors. The child’s workday should be divided into designated intervals, depending on the child’s age and abilities. When the child demonstrates appropriate behaviors within the interval, one point is awarded to the child. If the child demonstrates inappropriate behaviors during that interval, no point is awarded. Section 2 documents successful completion of a task as defined by a percentage of mastery. Section 1 documents how well a child stays on task, and Section 2 documents the quality of the work during that time segment. Section 3 documents prosocial behaviors and the progression of the child’s social/emotional development. Each time the child demonstrates a defined behavior as described on the documentation sheet, such as saying “please” or asking for help appropriately, a point is awarded. Sometimes practicing these behaviors is awkward in the beginning, and the child exhibits the appropriate behavior or expression only in order to earn points. However, continued reward and verbal acknowledgment from the support group serves to help these to become second nature to the child.

Documentation can provide gifted children with behavioral difficulties with concrete data regarding their ability to be successful. This system can help children work toward increasing their final score for each day so that they can challenge themselves to become more productive and self-reliant. They can confirm that they do have the capacity for appropriate behavior and self-control with the evidence provided by these documentation sheets.

During a three-year study conducted in both in-patient hospital and the school settings, participating counselors agreed that multi-modality counseling approach combined with daily documentation seemed to be far more effective in working with gifted students with severe behavioral dysfunction than the traditional “talking” approach to counseling. Counselors involved in this program indicated they strongly believed all counselors should receive training on addressing the needs of gifted children with severe behavioral dysfunction, modifying traditional counseling, and finding ways to create a supportive environment for working with gifted children with severe behavioral dysfunctions.

PROGRAM ALERT!

**NAGC National Conference
Wednesday Afternoon Special Session
2:00 pm - 4:45 pm**

COUNSELING & GUIDANCE DIVISION

Teachers as "Counselors": New Paradigm, New Skills

Jean Peterson

Meredith Greene

Purdue University

*University of Connecticut
& Bridgetown, NS, Canada*

As education for the gifted embraces the idea of affective curriculum, teachers are recognizing that, for both group and individual interaction, students gravitate toward teachers they trust when they need to talk. As allies, advocates, advisors, and listeners, teachers require particular skills and "posture," in addition to information for explaining new programs and approaches to educators, parents, and students. Here, two professional counselors will respond to the shifting paradigm. After briefly contemplating social and emotional development as related to giftedness, they will acquaint participants with potential issues, professional limitations, ethical concerns, educator roles, and consultation guidelines, with hands-on skills-training comprising most of the workshop.

Please join us on November 9th

Counseling & Guidance Division

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