

# CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS

Newsletter of the Conceptual Foundations Network of the National Association for Gifted Children

Volume 18 Number 2

Fall 2010

## Making the Connections



Upon beginning the new school year my mother, a fourth grade teacher, called her mother, a retired librarian and reading specialist, for advice. My grandmother said that the best advice came from HER mother who had taught in a one room school house. She said, “What it all comes down to in the end is the relationship between you and child. Know them and let them know you. You cannot reach them if you do not know them.”

This emphasis on the creation of personal relationships as an essential element of making a difference in the life of child (and the importance of personal relationships in making a difference in life in general) is a theme that has arose in the newsletter this fall. Our Chair, Robert Schultz stresses this in his message to membership. Really *knowing* the child also seems to be thrust of Response to Intervention (RTI) as discussed by Stephen Schroth and Jason Helfer. The tributes to Alexinia Baldwin provided by Sylvia Rimm, Joe Renzulli, Dorothy Sisk, Sally Reis, Alice Sage-Pulver, Wilma Vialle, and Carlita Baldwin eloquently emphasize the important of personal relationships and friendships.

As a network, let us continue to foster the relationships and friendships that make us strong.

~Erin Morris Miller, Editor

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS CHAIR



**Robert Schultz, PhD**

In this edition of the newsletter, you gain a bit of awareness and respect for the profound work of our newest Legacy Series Honoree—Alexinia Baldwin. It is my distinct pleasure as Network Chair to “kick off” this focus on Dr. Baldwin’s illustrious and far-reaching career.

I encourage you to explore the compendium of work that Dr. Baldwin has amassed; and find the connecting points between your beliefs and practices and work that Alexinia has contributed to our field. Rest assured there will be at least three (3) intersections someplace along your reflections.

And, speaking of connections and intersections, please invite colleagues, students and interested others to become members of our Conceptual Foundations Network. The strength and resolve we share needs to be enhanced by new voices and invigorating ideas. Make it a point to share this newsletter and invite a colleague to join in our extended conversation. If each of us can enlist one new member, our ranks swell two-fold!

I’m looking forward to seeing and meeting you in Atlanta. Make it a point to introduce yourself—if we haven’t met yet—or to rekindle a connection. It is these opportunities to network and find others of “like mind and spirit” that invigorate us all.





## *Tribute to Alexinia Baldwin Mother, Pioneer, Leader, Mentor and Friend*

### **The Legacy of a Trailblazer**

Many years ago at one of my first Board meetings for the National Association for Gifted Children, Alexinia Baldwin sat next to me. She shared a photo of her then teenage daughter and thus we began a long friendship that was reinforced each year by our meetings at NAGC's national conferences. As our friendship grew, so did my admiration for Alex's pioneering contributions to the field of educating gifted children. I feel honored to be invited to share my appreciation for Alex's talents and accomplishments with my colleagues at NAGC.

#### *The Seed of Alex's Engagement in Education of Gifted Children*

I knew, before I ever asked, that I would find that the seed of Alex's lifelong commitment to gifted education would have been planted in her childhood. I also knew for certain that Alex had been a gifted child. Indeed, by age 7, she was the pianist for her Sunday School. Through personal experience she learned that talent and diligence in one area, like the arts, often generalizes to accomplishment in other academic areas. In her segregated but supportive early school environment, Alex excelled academically and by age 11 she attended high school. Needless to say, her very young age placed her among a special category of students. Her musical talent (in addition to piano, she was the first chair trumpet player) provided her with like-minded friends. As a young enrollee at Tuskegee University, her musical involvement also served to reinforce her self confidence. Alex's successful experiences, as a younger than typical student, add to the continual research findings that show dramatically accelerated gifted children typically thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. She became a successful teacher of music and physical education by the age of 19, when

most students her age were only graduating high school. In Alex's first job, she applied well what she had learned from her life experience. Alex encouraged talented musicians and observed that her students' special talents generalized to identifying and fostering their academic giftedness.

#### *The Many Firsts of a True Pioneer and Creative Leader*

Alexinia Baldwin taught the *first* class for gifted black students in Birmingham, Alabama, when segregation was still in place in the South. She then challenged segregation by refusing to move from a train terminal waiting room in Birmingham. After being proudly jailed for her courageous protest, she prevailed in the trial of Baldwin vs. the City of Birmingham.

Alex designed the *first* courses in gifted education at the State University of New York at Albany. She also organized and presided over the *first* association for gifted children in that state. Alex was the *first* doctoral student in Joseph Renzulli's graduate program specializing in minority students. Although Alex has written many papers and books, a personal favorite, from the perspective of my own career interest in gifted underachievement is, "Many Faces of Giftedness: Lifting the Masks" (Wadsworth Publishing, 1999). As President of Altrusa International, she has spread to a broader world organization the *first* messages about the important needs for educating gifted minority children. Were it not for her presidency, these messages would not have been shared.

#### *An Exemplary Successful Woman and Role Model*

My daughters and I studied the lives of more than 1,000 successful women for our books "See Jane

Win” and “How Jane Won.” I can thus ascertain by comparison to our research findings that Alex’s life is exemplary as a role model for young gifted girls and women. Her creativity, enthusiasm, resilience, and passionate drive to make a positive difference have permitted her to make major pioneering contributions to the field of gifted education. Her work has surely improved the education and lives of thousands of gifted children. Despite retirement from her academic position at the University of Connecticut, she continues to contribute youthfully, energetically, enthusiastically, and intelligently by speaking, writing, and serving the international gifted education community.

Thanks Alexinia, for your extraordinary contributions to our world and thank you, too, for our friendship.

**Sylvia Rimm**  
**Family Achievement Clinic**

## A Legacy of Leadership

I have known and worked with Alexinia Baldwin for more than forty years, and I can say without reservation that she is one of the true pioneers and scholars in the field of education for the gifted and talented. In the early 1960s during the time of segregated schools Alexinia started the first gifted program in an all black school in Alabama. In a reunion that Alex organized for many of the young people who participated in that program, it was enlightening to learn about the remarkable levels of accomplishment of her former students. Person after person commented on the extraordinary impact that Alex had on the lives of young people who otherwise had little access to advanced learning opportunities. Alex’s vision and determination started these young people on trajectories for highly creative and productive careers and brought to the attention of the gifted and general education communities the previously overlooked topic of talent potential in minority groups.

Alex was a “Superstar” in her doctoral work at the University of Connecticut and was responsible for starting the first program in education for the gifted and talented at the State University of New York at Albany, often times referred to as the Harvard on the Hudson. While at SUNY – Albany Alex also took the lead in establishing the first organization for gifted and talented education in the state of New York.

It was our good fortune to lure Alexinia back to the University of Connecticut in the late 1980s, where she served as chairman of the department of Curriculum and Instruction for many years. Under Alex’s leadership the department attracted many well-known scholars and it grew in both size and diversity. Her work as a department chair also brought to everyone’s attention her remarkable capacity for leadership as well as the scholarship for which she had already gained a national and international reputation.

The item that is most frequently noted among Alexinia’s many contributions to the research and development literature in gifted education is the widely used Baldwin Identification Matrix “BIM.” Although many people began talking about the need for using multiple criteria in the idea of gifted and talented students, Alex provided a comprehensive and systematic approach for gathering, analyzing, and making sense about the various types of criteria that have been developed to examine a broadened conception of giftedness. This work has led to an international reputation and resulted in many nations adopting the BIM as a tool for processing multiple types of identification information.

No reflection on the many accomplishments of Alexinia Baldwin would be complete without mentioning her many fine personal characteristics. She has been a thoughtful advisor and friend to colleagues and the many graduate students that she has mentored throughout her career. She has eagerly and willingly served on numerous committees and boards of professional associations, and in so doing has brought not only her expertise but her wonderful capacity for getting people to cooperate, compromise, and work together toward a common goal. She has been my colleague and dear friend for many years, always willing to take the time to provide me with advice and assistance. She has never hesitated to respond to requests for assistance from students, colleagues, parents, or scholars from abroad seeking advice about the development of gifted programs in their countries.

One additional contribution that has been of personal satisfaction to me was the opportunity to watch Alex raise and develop an intelligent and creative daughter, and to guide that daughter to our graduate program in gifted education at the University of Connecticut. I was pleased to be the advisor of this new young Baldwin scholar, and I know that Carlita Baldwin will continue the tradition started by her mother – a tradition that has brought to the attention of the gifted education community our need to

examine the potentials and opportunities of young students from culturally diverse backgrounds. When I said that Alex is one of the true pioneers in our field, we should all recognize that she was the first person to open up the field to serving minority gifted students, and the many contributions she has made to this area and to mentoring young scholars who have followed in her footsteps certainly is my best definition of a pioneer.

**Joseph S. Renzulli**  
University of Connecticut

## A Legacy of Giving

Alexinia Baldwin has the gift of giving whether it is with the students she taught early on in her career, inspiring them to be all that they could be; with teachers of the gifted to become sensitized to the gifts of diverse students; with fellow colleagues in the World Council for Gifted and Talented as a tireless and vocal delegate to conferences in Australia, Canada, England, Germany, Israel, and Turkey in seeking creative responses to gifted programs worldwide; with fellow board members as president of The Association for Gifted (TAG) representing a vital voice in exceptional child advocacy; with her fellow members of Altrusa where she has served as international president twice, Alex stands tall for educational excellence in life-long efforts.

Alex demonstrates perseverance, risk-taking, discipline, continuous self assessment and mountains and mountains of hard work which have taken her to the top of the ladder in education. She was talking about the equity issue in gifted education, long before others, developing her Baldwin Identification Matrix, and she has been a vocal champion of its cause throughout her career. Dr. Baldwin's ability to make complicated concepts exciting, as well as easy to understand has led her to be invited to address local, national, and international organizations where she speaks to parents, educators and administrators. Her compassion is typified with her close unwavering friendships, going with me in the middle of the night to check on my son, and when I lost my home in Hurricane Ike, with everything I owned, books, clothes, pets etc. Alex was the first one to respond with "sweats" and a lovely dressy outfit to let me know she cared. She exemplifies the power of one in her educational and personal life, and I am honored to be her colleague and friend.

**Dorothy Sisk**  
Lamar University

## A Legacy of Mentorship

I have known, admired, and respected Alexinia Baldwin for over three decades. Her professional accomplishments are well known but a few deserve a mention here. Alexinia has been a professor and a department chair in Curriculum and Instruction. Alex is the author of the Baldwin Identification Matrix, and is the author many chapters, articles and books related students who are from culturally diverse groups. Alex also served our field as President of the Association for Gifted (TAG) and she was a Delegate to the World Council for Gifted and Talented, and an NAGC board member.

I served on several committees with Alexinia and was always touched by her grace and ability to work with so diverse individuals. Alex is a wonderful friend, mother, and colleague. She has an infectious laugh and her contributions are many. One of my favorite memories of Alex was at a reunion of her former gifted and talented students from decades ago that was organized at an NAGC conference. So many of these talented men and women told me what an impact Alex had on their lives and the confidence and sense of pride they had experienced when they were identified and given service in a gifted and talented program. It was clear to all of us who attended this very special session what Alexinia had meant to these young men and women. She is a caring and loving teacher who, they explained, held them to high standards and kept them working as young gifted students.

Alexinia Baldwin moved to the northeastern part of the country from the south, leaving behind her family and job to pursue a doctoral program related to gifted children and gifted education. She brought her young child with her and took a chance on a then unknown professor (Joe Renzulli) and a relatively unknown graduate program and worked extremely hard to complete her degree. She became a very popular professor in New York before she returned to her alma mater to lead the curriculum and instruction department. She has devoted her professional life to the needs of under-identified and underserved groups of gifted students. Her professional accomplishments have been many. As a distinguished scholar of NAGC and winner of the Distinguished Alumni Award from the Neag School of Education, she has been recognized for her many accomplishments. These accomplishments mean a great deal. But, as for me, I will never forget the night though at NAGC when a group of her former students from decades

earlier told her what she had meant to them and how she and her mentorship of them changed their lives. That is perhaps her most lasting and consequential legacy!

**Sally Reis**  
University of Connecticut

## A Legacy of Friendship

Forty years ago, at the State University of New York at Albany, a teacher came into my life. That teacher was Alexinia Baldwin; and my affiliation with her inspired me to become the best teacher I could be. Further, she's remained a cherished, lifelong friend.

As a graduate student in her classroom, I experienced first-hand Alex's electrifying energy. During those early years, we left Albany and traveled to England for study and on-site visits to innovative, creative Open Education programs. Under Alex's astute direction and leadership, I completed my Master's. She then opened her home to me when I attended the University of Connecticut to satisfy requirements for a 6th year degree in Professional Education. Admittedly, this wasn't always easy. However, my resolve was strengthened whenever I remembered Alex's courage and perseverance in the early 1960s, when she began her own professional journey. A black woman in segregated Alabama, she left home, traveled north, and quietly defied all who would impose limits on her success or threaten her dignity. She remains a stalwart defender of those who need advocacy.

Throughout my thirty-five year teaching career, Alex's voice was in my head - when I called magic circles to effect a humane and just environment in the classroom; as I developed curricula for gifted students or mentored their teachers; or when I drove home after an exhausting day, still certain being a teacher was the only job I'd ever want.

Leading by instruction and example, Alexinia opened my mind to the unique gifts each of us has. Today, when I hear or read the current educational mantra, "No Child Left Behind", I think of Alex. She has a personal take on this: "Every child matters. Every child offers something special to the world." Then, she offers, "A good teacher helps the student discover what this is and what to do with it." Teaching as science and art - Alexinia has always seamlessly blended the two.

In that SUNY classroom forty years ago, I knew I was seeing something - somebody - rare; and I remain sure of this today. Everlasting are the gifts Alexinia offers - love of teaching, love of learning, lifelong friendship.

Thank you for all of these, my friend and mentor.

**Alice Sage-Pulver**  
Burnt Hills, NY 12027

It is with great pleasure that I pen this testimonial to Professor Alexinia Baldwin who has had a profound impact on my career and, whom I am proud to call a friend. From the first Baldwin article I read back in the eighties, I have been a fan of her work. I was interested in issues of social justice and giftedness and her work was so influential in this corner of the field of giftedness research. She is incredibly generous with her time and many of our initial conversations were around my doctoral students' work. I promise that I will stop asking her to write references for my promotion applications now. I attribute much of my success in getting to full professor to Alexinia and appreciate her patience in responding to such requests. I fondly remember, in particular, the time we spent in each other's homes. A room in my house is still known as Alexinia's room and I warn current guests to ensure that my cat has not climbed into the wardrobe! And, she generously allowed me to invade her space for an extended sabbatical stay in 1997.

She introduced me to different culinary treats, Starbucks mochas (with cream), and Nordstrom while I uncovered a local vineyard that became one of Alexinia's favorite Connecticut haunts. I like to think I have a lasting legacy in her Connecticut home as I helped her paint her basement in some downtime from our work on *The Many Faces of Giftedness*. And I think she may have forgiven me by now for burning her kettle when my multi-tasking went astray and I boiled it dry! I have valued the time spent collaborating with Alexinia and still draw on the lessons learned from her example. She is a passionate, insightful and inspirational educator who has touched so many people's lives. Even in retirement, she continues to read, write, and present cutting-edge work in the field. Her legacy is one that will continue to shine in gifted education.

**Wilma Vialle**  
University of Wollongong, Australia

## The Lasting Legacy

How does one succinctly quantify and qualify the many achievements and spirit of a scholar, researcher, educator and leader as great as my mother? The answer is: not easily. Given this challenge, allow me to attempt to share just a little in the hopes that I convey the magnitude of the legacy of the woman whom the NAGC community has chosen to honor this year!

Dr. Alexinia Young Baldwin, or “Docky Doo,” as I call her, is humble, spiritual, loving, gentle, funny and kind. She is always optimistic and always teaching, counseling, and fostering environments for the young and young-at-heart to realize their potentialities. Now on her third career (retirement doesn’t mean inactivity), she continues to fight for equal rights, equal access to services and quality educational opportunities for all peoples. Her tireless efforts have paved the way for future women and minorities to enter into the field of educational scholarship and service to humanity.

My mother is the greatest thing since PBJ’s with chips on the side! She can fix anything, build anything, teach anyone, love everyone and do it in high heels and with a smile on her face. Many people think that she is the epitome of femininity and grace, and she is—but she is also a tomboy that loves to play, run, dance, skate, ski, and sail. She can sing until you yell bravo, and if you’re fortunate to see her beautifully manicured hands on the piano or organ keys, you will know that there is a God. And yet, these are not her greatest feats—she is first, and foremost a woman who loves God, family, and humanity. And second, she is an intellectual among intellectuals and a giant in gifted and talented research. Her motto is: “if each one would teach one, then each one would reach one.”

She taught me that I could be anything I wanted to be and that I’d better be all that I should be-- she supported my many artistic, educational, social and sometimes fruitless pursuits and loved me unconditionally! Around age 5, I learned that I would have to share my Mommy with the world. And I learned that I would be a much better person because of it. She opened her home and heart to every child that needed mentoring, counseling, loving and feeding. I cannot tell you how many times that world leaders, mail carriers, secretaries, deans, doctors, homeless people, lawyers, teachers, clerics, politicians, millionaires, counselors, trash collectors, cleaning personnel and church members have told me

how much they appreciate how Docky Doo makes them feel! That’s why her Baldwin Matrix works so well. It is designed to help with all—without cultural bias, because that is the type of person she is. She has been sought after by heads of states globally, but always manages to find time for my many “just-need-to-bounce-this-off-on-you-Mom-and-I-am-aware-that-it-is-3am-but-I-need-you-now-buddy-check” moments.

Professor Emeritus Alexinia Baldwin is a prodigy, with a tremendous thirst for knowledge. The consummate overachiever, she could never be satisfied with mediocrity, complacency, apathy or injustice. She pushed me to think beyond my wildest imagination, seek knowledge wherever it may be found and put my words into positive, pro-social action, such that others might reach their dreams. My mother ensured that I had all of my needs and “a few of my wants.” She made sure that I lacked ‘no good thing,’ but reminded me that ‘to whom much is given, much is required.’

She has enthusiastically supported all of my career and educational pursuits—to the point of extreme sacrifice, but that’s what superior, socially-conscious, mothers do. While in the U. S. Air Force, I looked forward to the frequent care packages filled with Alexinia-baked goodies, designer “you have to have good quality, girl” shoes, and the much-needed scent of her cologne on the box. If you’ve never had a good, comforting, warm, good-smelling, nurturing, cuddle from my mom—you are missing something in life! Just the scent of her cologne would bring sweet tears to my eyes and floods of memories of her singing me lullaby’s, kneeling with me in prayer, putting cute stars on my homework, sewing my 4-H project at 2am because I forgot, baking 20 dozen Girl Scout brownies because I procrastinated, being present and vocal at every play, recital, event, concert, service, award and achievement that I had. And when one is sick in bed, there is no one better to nurse you back to health than Docky Doo.

I cannot imagine where she got the energy, patience, open-mindedness, savvy and sanity to provide the optimal environment in which to be nurtured and cultivated! It is humbling and awe-inspiring to be the daughter of such a woman and stand on such broad shoulders. She is my mother, mentor, cheerleader, best girlfriend and inspiration—but most of all, she is my hero. My only regret is that not everyone has a mother like mine. For if they had, this world would be a much better place.

**Carlita Soo-yun Baldwin**

## Interview with Dr. Alexinia Baldwin

By: Joy L. Davis, Ed.D.

*Also Published in Fall 2010 issue 'Mosaic'  
Newsletter of the NAGC  
Special Populations Network  
Drs. Margarita Bianco & Joy L. Davis, Co-editors*

*Dr Baldwin, many years ago-I remember reading your article, 'Undiscovered Diamonds'. It was the first one I read that clearly and honestly dealt with the issue of underrepresentation of minorities in the arena of gifted education. What were the influences of your early life on your chosen career path?*

There was a mixture of influences. I grew up in a segregated community in Birmingham, Alabama; however, it was one that was encouraging. My parents and my church played an important role in supporting my gifts at an early age. At seven, I was the pianist for the Sunday school. This meant that I was always present and protected in the strong environment of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church.

I entered high school at age eleven and found myself very much out of synch with students in my classes. As a member of the school band and success as a first chair trumpet player, I found acceptance as a 'nerd'. This asynchrony of age followed me through college as I was younger and more inexperienced than my peers. Studying at Tuskegee University influenced my thinking about what talent existed in all races and how that ability could be enhanced through proper opportunities. The wide range of students from other countries at Tuskegee also gave me a global view of the world.

I took my first job in the segregated south as a 19 year old music and physical education teacher. Early on, I discovered that my students demonstrated behaviors and special talents that appeared to be a reflection of my own experiences. They showed that encouragement in the music and leadership areas could support their success in their other academic areas.

As I moved from music and PE to becoming a teacher of core subjects in grades 6, 7 and 8, I had more opportunities to see sparks of special ability in some of my students. When I provided outside help

for those advanced students, the results were promising. Providing extra support and attention to my students along the way led to my selection as the teacher of the first class for black gifted students in this southern town.

To find students, I developed a process to use existing test data on core subjects, the Otis Lennon School Ability test scores, the results of the Slosson Intelligence Test, along with recommendations from teachers. The result was the selection of 26 out 100 4th grade students for this program.

This was an exciting and inspirational time for me and really set the course for my future in this field. By the way, I always refer to this field as 'Education of the Gifted' instead of Gifted Education. These black students who were gifted needed an education that was appropriate for them. This class was a special challenge and a great part of the response to the civil rights movement that had challenged the status quo situation of the time.

I was also a part of that challenge on a more personal level in that as a young woman, I refused to move from a train terminal waiting room in Birmingham, Alabama. My refusal caused me to be put into jail, subsequently a trial was held. My case--*Baldwin vs the City of Birmingham* was won. As a result, the regional court decision eliminated segregation in train or bus station waiting rooms nationally. So you see, on a personal and professional level, there were many influences that directed my life's path and career choice.

*Who are some of the scholars who influenced your career?*

There are many scholars who influenced my thinking in the field and gave me inspiration to follow my assumptions about giftedness among black students. An opportunity to study with Joseph Renzulli opened the doors for the progression of my work. I was Dr. Renzulli's first doctoral student in the field of Education of the gifted. He has continued to be my supporter and sounding board throughout my career. Others who inspired me early in my career and later became my colleagues, friends and supporters are Dorothy Sisk, Paul Torrance, Irving Sato, Abe Tannenbaum, Harry Passow, Marvin Gold, Sylvia Rimm, Donald Treffinger, Sandy Kaplan, and many others too numerous to list.

*You have held many positions of leadership in gifted education. Which were the most important to you and during which periods do you think your*

*voice had the most impact?*

As a faculty member at The State University of New York at Albany, (SUNY-Albany) I designed the first courses on education of the gifted and became the source of information in this area. With the support of the New York State Department and several Title IV directors around the state, I organized the first all state organization for the gifted and served as its first president. AGATE has now been in existence for over 30 years and presents a Teacher of the Year Award in my name annually.

At SUNY-Albany, I became the director of an international teacher exchange program and had the opportunity to meet colleagues in the field throughout Europe and to become a delegate to the World Council for the Gifted. Later, as President of The Association of the Gifted (TAG) I had the opportunity to work with Joyce Van-Tassel-Baska and that was an excellent opportunity to collaborate with another leader in the field. It was during this time that the Journal for the Education of the Gifted was established. Later positions on the NAGC Board also gave further opportunity to express my ideas.

*What has enabled your longevity in the field? In other words, how have you been able to 'hang in there'?*

I have a strong commitment to the field and have been able to extend the concept of giftedness as something that exists in all cultures. The development of the Baldwin Identification Matrix (BIM) encapsulated the ideas that I had regarding education of the gifted. The development and dissemination of the Matrix had a great influence in the field in school district's efforts to find minority gifted students nationwide. It also brought much controversy, but the basic concept is one that is being considered today as really important. I suppose I was a bit before my time.

Aside from this philosophical assumption, I have had the opportunity to express these assumptions in educational venues other than the basic organizations with education of the gifted as its emphasis. This broadened perspective has kept me continuing to search for answers. I see my work as a way of helping others raise their level of interest and consciousness about the need to teach all children to develop their potential to the fullest.

For some years, I was the point person for information on the best way to identify and meet the

needs of gifted students of minority cultures. Later Mary Frasier and I became the two most 'sought out' professionals in the field for answers to these concerns. This really kept us on our toes until happily, new advocates started to emerge. Additionally, but certainly not by any means least, my colleagues in the field continue to be magnets for new insights and friendships within all of my "outside of GT" organizations and, most of all the time flies when you are doing something you love.

*Talk a bit about your cooperative work with scholars in Australia. How might that contribute to the movement in gifted education in America towards equity and access?*

My contacts in Australia began with Dr. Brian Start who was developing the CHIP (Children of High Intellectual Potential) Foundation for the gifted. I was invited to be a research fellow during the summer at the University of Melbourne and at that time had an opportunity to work with Dr. Start and Dr. Miraca Gross. Pursuant to this, a graduate student at the University of Wollongong who was interested in giftedness in diverse students contacted Dr. Gross who suggested that the student get in touch with me.

The Australian student suggested that I be asked to do a workshop for students at the University of Wollongong and I was invited to do so. As a result of this contact, I decided to spend my sabbatical leave with Dr. Wilma Vialle where the concept of our co-edited book "The Many Faces of Giftedness: Lifting the Masks" began.

Research by Dr. Gross, Dr. Vialle, (Australian Professors) and other scholars who have travelled for extended times to Australia have certainly shaped the thinking of those of us who have worked with this issue in both countries. A continuing dialogue is important because the resources and governmental concern for Education of the gifted are different from that of the USA.

*What are some of the attitudes that create barriers for diverse gifted students and how do you respond to them?*

A lack of understanding about the many ways giftedness can be portrayed and a lack of pre-service and in-service training in teacher education are primary barriers to addressing the needs of diverse gifted students. My response to these barriers has been to recommend approaches to changing attitudes during workshops and through my publications. The use of multiple criteria has been one way to change

the dynamics of identification processes and continued use of models like the Baldwin Identification Matrix are instrumental in changing these attitudes.

I always emphasize that children have varying degrees of abilities, but don't always get opportunities to develop their gifts. Using the metaphor of a cup-(comparing their depth of giftedness potential to a cup)—some children have larger cups through heredity than others but never get a chance to fill this cup thus their scores on various tests do not show their abilities, whereas another individual who has a smaller cup and has had extensive opportunities will be able to score higher on an achievement test. Circumstances and environment are important variables to be considered in finding the student who has the highest potential.

*What advice do you have for emerging scholars in the field of gifted education?*

I would advise emerging scholars to:

- Extend yourselves to other fields by extending your scholarship within the general area of education.
- Broaden research areas in identification by reaching beyond traditional venues to identify gifted children
- Don't put more time in attaining leadership positions than in developing personal credibility. In time-leadership positions will come.
- Establish yourself as a serious scholar and advocate for gifted children everywhere.
- Continue the dialogue through writing significant articles and pursuing areas that have not been challenged. Give attention to the details of legislation that will affect the field. Become an advocate and supporter of colleagues not competitors.
- Be prepared to continue teaching about the needs of the gifted regardless to the type of educational program in which you find yourself, and finally,
- Don't isolate yourselves from theorist that are not necessarily engaged in working with diverse students but frame your positions to refute, inform or to learn from those in other fields.

Through my work and leadership in International Associations outside of the field of education, I have caused many people to see our field as an important one. It has made a difference. I've broadened their knowledge base and they have inspired and supported my efforts in many ways

**The contributions of Dr. Alexinia Baldwin's visionary work to our field have been monumental. Her personal insights and life-long commitment provides a legacy and model to be exemplified for generations to come. Dr. Baldwin crossed boundaries into the field of gifted education and then opened the minds of colleagues and students within other fields and around the world to the inherent potential in students of all cultures and our mutual responsibility to develop that potential. We applaud her work and are fortunate to continuously benefit from her contributions as an active scholar and advocate for special populations of gifted learners.**



*We shall not cease from  
exploration and the end of all  
our exploring will be to arrive  
where we started...and know  
the place for the first time.*

*~T. S. Eliot*

## Response to Intervention: Implications for Gifted Education

Stephen T. Schroth & Jason A. Helfer  
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The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA), passed in 2004, is a federal law that regulates how states, public agencies, and local education authorities provide special education, early intervention, and other related services to children with disabilities, including those with special needs and those struggling in school. One of the aspects of IDEA that has created confusion, caused consternation, and concerned educators, is a United States Department of Education decision that a portion of a school district's special education expenditures can be used for Response to Intervention (RTI) programs. RTI seeks to provide early, proven assistance to students who are struggling in school. While RTI has a certain appeal to those interested in gifted education because it is based upon the principles of differentiated instruction and focus on identification, its implementation in schools has led some to suggest it is merely an attempt by school districts to delay providing special education services to deserving students. While RTI at first blush might appear to be a great thing for gifted learners, it has proven less than optimal to date because of school leaders' disinterest in differentiating for highly able learners.

### Background

Understanding RTI requires understanding IDEA. IDEA specifically defines disability as the following:

- Mental retardation;
- Hearing impairments, including deafness;
- Speech or language impairments;
- Visual impairments, including blindness;
- Serious emotional disturbances;
- Orthopedic impairments;
- Autism;
- Traumatic brain injury;
- Specific learning disabilities; or
- Other health impairments (Bender & Shores, 2007).

Proponents of RTI maintain that many children who were traditionally identified with specific learning

disabilities did not actually have such problems, but instead had been denied proper instruction (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; Marston, 2005). Providing students with specialized, differentiated instruction before beginning the special education referral process would, in theory, reduce this number substantially. (Batsche et al., 2006; Otaiba & Rivera, 2006). RTI supports the design and implementation of a variety of research-based instructional interventions, the effectiveness of which are measured through frequent and recurring assessments of a student's progress (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2002; Vaughan & Fuchs, 2003). Students who do not demonstrate a response to effective interventions are more likely to have biologically-based learning disabilities (Bender & Shores, 2007). Students who demonstrate a lack of success to RTI often require special education services (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2005; 2006).

RTI differs from the discrepancy model, which has traditionally been used to identify students who are eligible for special education services (Vellutino, Scanlon, Small, & Fanuele, 2006). The discrepancy model examines the difference between ability as measured by a child's scores on both subsets of an intelligence quotient (IQ) test such as the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-IV) and an evaluation of achievement as indicated by the student's grades, teacher evaluations, and achievement test scores such as the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT) (Bender & Shores, 2007; Yssekdyke, 2005). Traditionally, the discrepancy model has been used to identify children for special education services (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; Marston, 2005).

The discrepancy model has received criticism insofar that it does not provide many avenues for early intervention (Bender & Shores, 2007; Otaiba & Rivera, 2006). RTI, however, has also received its share of criticism. RTI, for example, has often led to delays in the identification of students for special education services (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2002). RTI also requires a tremendous amount of training for general education teachers, many of whom lack the ability to adequately provide interventions to struggling students (Bender & Shores, 2007; Marston, 2005). Additionally, the screening of all students RTI envisions often reveals the lack of financial resources available to many schools (Bender & Shores, 2007; Vellutino, Scanlon, Small, & Fanuele, 2006). While RTI mandates the screening of all students, little is done for those who are performing at or above grade level, including gifted students (Bender & Shores, 2007).

Schools implementing an RTI approach often use a three-tier process to ensure struggling students' academic growth. Tier I focuses upon a core curriculum provided in the regular classroom setting (Bender & Shores, 2007; Vaughan & Fuchs, 2003). This instruction should be differentiated to student needs and frequently assessed so that student progress, or lack thereof, is documented (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; Marston, 2005). Tier II involves supplemental interventions that take place either in or out of the regular education classroom setting for those students whose assessment data demonstrate that they are struggling (Bender & Shores, 2007; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). These Tier II interventions are carefully monitored so that teachers and administrators can determine whether or not students are successful (Bender & Shores, 2007; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). Finally, Tier III involves special education services being provided to students who continue to struggle in individual or small group settings (Marston, 2005; Otaiba & Rivera, 2006). Special education materials and instructional strategies are used to supplement and support services received during Tiers I and II (Bender & Shores, 2007; Marston, 2005). Fidelity of implementation is carefully monitored by teachers and administrators for all three tiers (Bender & Shores, 2007).

#### *Issues Raised Concerning Gifted Students*

RTI has many aspects that are similar to some of the fundamental tenets of gifted education. RTI's focus upon a strong core curriculum in reading reiterates the importance of such a foundation for gifted learners (Bender & Shores, 2007; Tomlinson, Kaplan, Renzulli, Purcell, Leppien, Burns, Strickland & Imbeau, 2008). Similarly, RTI's emphasis upon differentiated instruction reflects a practice long adhered to by those who work with gifted children (Bender & Shores, 2007; Tomlinson, 1999; Tomlinson, 2001; Tomlinson, 2003). Despite this, many schools that implement RTI opt to ignore gifted learners (Montana Office of Public Instruction, 2009). Although certain schools and school districts have provided for interventions for students who achieve above grade level, most do not (Montana Office of Public Instruction, 2009). Such action is wrong, and ignores opportunities to provide appropriate instruction for *all* learners, including gifted children (Callahan, 2001; Callahan & Kauffman, 1982).

The RTI process should assist *all* learners. Even so, almost all research about, advocacy for, and the allocation of resources regarding RTI within public

schools concentrates upon children who may require special services that fall outside gifted education identification, practice, and ongoing support. If it the case that most states do not require services for gifted children through the IEP process, then it stands to reason that the RTI process should be utilized in order to identify and meet the needs of the gifted child. This is especially important when one considers that much of the funding for RTI (and Title I) is utilized by schools serving children who live in poverty. Gifted children who may live in such environments are often underserved and could benefit from the RTI process. If children are not identified by traditional methods in school systems that lack adequate gifted education programs, then the RTI process may be the only means through which the child will receive some form of service. Further, a school system that is receiving public tax dollars to meet the needs of *all* children has a moral obligation to ensure that these services are available and utilized for all students.

RTI has provided a wealth of assessment data to teachers and administrators, particularly about students who are struggling, but also regarding those children who are excelling in school. This data could be used to revitalize and reinvigorate gifted education programs. Unfortunately, much of it has gone unused, as school districts, teachers, and administrators have chosen to focus almost solely on children at risk. Until and unless parents and policy makers demand this information be used to differentiate all children's instruction, gifted students will continue to be ignored.

#### *Conclusion*

The central tenants of the RTI practice should assist school teachers and administrators in serving children who may be missed or unidentified due to the expectation of differentiation that is built into RTI. Even if teachers and administrators do not believe in traditional methods of gifted identification or serving gifted children, RTI can provide legitimate and *funded* avenues through which gifted children may receive instruction that assists them in developing their interests and talents. While assessments of all children are now being done, little or nothing is done with this data for gifted children. This must change.

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***Interested in Learning More  
about RTI?***

***Join  
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Southern  
Friday 12<sup>th</sup> at 2:30 PM***

***Or***

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Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> at 10:40 AM***

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***The NAGC Conceptual Foundations Legacy Series  
Continues***

# **An Afternoon with Alexinia Baldwin**

**Videotaping for the Next Offering in the *Portraits in Gifted Education: The Legacy Series***

Presented in Cooperation with the NAGC Special Populations Network

The Conceptual Foundations Network, in concert with NAGC, and this year, with support from Special Populations, continues its dedication to videotaping notable gifted advocates, researchers, and leaders in order to preserve their legacy for future generations. Through a variety of techniques and questions, we are showcasing the lives of these outstanding individuals, providing insights into their theories, and reflecting on their unique contributions in the field of gifted education. In this way, CF and NAGC can best honor its “Institutional Memory”.

For our fourth annual videotaping, you are invited to join us and engage in an afternoon with Alexinia Baldwin, celebrated professor and teacher, scholar, theorist, and advocate in the field of gifted education. We are privileged to be honoring this humanitarian and trailblazer, and know you will want to participate in this enlightening event (audience questions are planned).

Please Note: Attendance is open by invite and to all NAGC Convention Attendees. Inquiries should be addressed to Abbey Cash at [acash@berk.com](mailto:acash@berk.com)

## **Please Join Us**

Friday, November 12  
4:00 pm – 5:30 pm  
Georgia World Congress Center,  
Building C, Level Three, Georgia Ballroom

*“The truth is in the dialogue”*  
(attributed to Plato)

<b>NAGC 2010 Conceptual Foundations General Session Offerings</b>		
<b>Friday November 12<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Still Gifted? The Lives of Underserved Adults</b>	
	Kim Berman	7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. C205
	<b>Genetic Studies of Genius: A Century of Questions from Lewis Terman</b>	
	Kristofor Wiley	7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. C106
	<b>A new vision of gifted education</b>	
	Matthew McBee and Michael Matthews	7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. C202
	<b>Connectivism as Emerging Theory and Practice for Gifted Students in the 21st Century</b>	
	Bill Keilty	10:40 a.m. - 11:40 a.m. C205
	<b>Hong Kong Chinese Parents' Conceptions of Giftedness</b>	
	Echo Wu	11:55 a.m. - 12:40 p.m. C202
	<b>Advanced Development: A New Perspective on Adult Giftedness</b>	
	Nancy Miller, Linda Silverman, and Michael Piechowski	1:15 p.m. - 2:15 p.m. C203
	<b>What neuroscience tells us about intelligence, cognitive styles and creativity, and its implication for education</b>	
	Melinda Meszaros	1:15 p.m. - 2:15 p.m. C305
	<b>Contemporary models of giftedness and what they should look like</b>	
	Janet Davidson	1:15 p.m. - 2:15 p.m. C204
	<b>Response to Intervention and Gifted and Talented Education: A conceptual comparison and critique</b>	
	Laurence Coleman and Thomas Southern	2:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. Georgia Ballroom 1
	<b>Barbies and Bionicles</b>	
	Erin Miller	2:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. C205
<b>Intelligences Outside the Normal Curve: Characteristics of People Who Have Made a Difference</b>		
Joseph Renzulli	2:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. C308	
<b>Promoting the Dream: Secondary Gifted Adolescents in a Global Community</b>		
Felicia Dixon	2:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. C207	
<b>Philosophical Sense and the Gifted</b>		
Robert Schultz	2:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. C204	
<b>Finding John Galt: People, Politics, and Practice in Gifted Education</b>		
Elizabeth Romey	4:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. C205	

NAGC 2010 Conceptual Foundations General Session Offerings			
Saturday November 13 <sup>th</sup>	<b>The Changing Face of Gifted Education in Georgia</b>		
	Annette Eger, Althea Bolton, Sonya Porcher, and Debbie Burnett	10:40 a.m. - 11:40 a.m.	C105
	<b>Pyramids of Intervention or Peak Experiences? The Concept of RtI in a Talent Development Model</b>		
	Sally Krisel and Celita Allen	10:40 a.m. - 11:40 a.m.	Atlanta Ballroom G
	<b>Trends and Issues in Research on Gifted Education: 1998-2009</b>		
	David Dai	1:15 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.	Atlanta Ballroom G
	<b>Gifted Education Goes Hollywood: A Film-Lovers Guide to Our Field's Future</b>		
	James Delisle	1:15 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.	C207
	<b>What contributes to talent development in eminent women?</b>		
	Leonie Kronborg	3:45 p.m. - 4:45 p.m.	C211
<b>A Tipping Point for Talent?</b>			
Reva Friedman-Nimz	3:45 p.m. - 4:45 p.m.	C205	
NAGC 2010 Conceptual Foundations General Session Offerings			
Sunday November 14 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Looking Back forty-four years: Did it Make a Difference?</b>		
	Alexinia Baldwin	7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.	C205
	<b>Dogmatism and Gifted Education: How Shortsighted, Narrow-Minded Thinking Can Warp and Stunt High Ability</b>		
Don Ambrose, Diane Montgomery, LeoNora Cohen, and Jean Peterson	8:45 a.m. - 9:45 a.m.	C205	

<b>NAGC 2010 Conceptual Foundations Poster Session Offerings</b>			
<b>Friday November 12<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>The Multiple Definitions of Multipotentiality: Is It Common or Nonexistent, and Does It Even Matter?</b>		
	Jaclyn Chancey	7:30 - 8:30 a.m.	Northside Foyer
	<b>They Know It When They See It: Or Do They? Educator Perceptions of Giftedness</b>		
	Stephen Schroth, Daniel Gonshorek, and Jordan Lanfair	10:40 - 11:40 a.m.	Northside Foyer
	<b>Toward Flow in the Classroom: The Affective Aim of Differentiation</b>		
	Amanda Latz	1:15 - 2:15 p.m.	Northside Foyer
<b>Saturday November 13<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Gifted Education Clarified Through Visual Explanations</b>		
	Ginny Burney and Kristie Speirs Neumeister	4:30 - 5:30 p.m.	Northside Foyer
	<b>Drawing as an Alternative Identification Strategy for Gifted Children: Using the DAP-IQ</b>		
	Edward Caropreso	7:30 - 8:30 a.m.	Northside Foyer
	<b>The Power of Negative Thinking</b>		
	Terence Friedrichs	10:40 - 11:40 a.m.	Northside Foyer
	<b>Marginalization of the Gifted: The Dark Side to Intelligence</b>		
Sue Savage Sakashita and Paul Shepherd	1:15 - 2:15 p.m.	Northside Foyer	
<b>Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development in the Context of Early Advancement</b>			
Clifton Wigtil	3:45 - 4:45 p.m.	Northside Foyer	

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Conceptual Foundations is the newsletter of the  
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of the  
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