



MIDDLE MATTERS

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Letter from the Co-Chair Susannah Richards

Happy Spring Middle Grades Network Members,

As you may know, NAGC has changed the names of the Divisions to Networks. Fourteen (14) NAGC Networks exist to explore special issues and concerns related to the primary emphasis of that Network within the NAGC. In addition to building a special community for its subset of NAGC members, each Network supports the mission, purposes, and goals of NAGC through its activities. Networks also provide valuable input to the NAGC national convention each year by recommending proposals and topics for their own dedicated strand. The fourteen networks are Arts, Computers and Technology, Conceptual Foundations, Counseling and Guidance, Creativity, Curriculum Studies, Early Childhood, Global Awareness, Middle Grades, Parents and Community, Professional Development, Research and Evaluation, Special Populations, and Special Schools and Programs. You may now join any three Networks for \$25. Visit the NAGC website (www.nagc.org) for more information and to check out the Middle Grades and other Networks.



The 2008 National Convention in Tampa has been planned and the Middle Grades Network will have a wide variety of offerings including over two-dozen sessions targeting middle grade educators. Dr. Sylvia Rimm will kick off our Wednesday, October 29 Pre-conference Academy, Understanding and Assessing Gifted Students in the Middle Grades with an update on the latest research on gifted students in the middle grades. The focus then shifts to the ever-present issues of assessment including pre-assessment tools and techniques, connecting student products to learning styles, assessments to use during learning, standards and standardized assessments, and the need for continuing to identify emerging giftedness and talent throughout adolescence.

Letter from the Co-Chair continued...

Diane Heacox, Julie Martinek, and Susan Rakow will guide participants in developing practical solutions to assessment issues for their own middle schools and classrooms. Resource lists will be distributed to help participants continue to revise and apply the work begun in this session.

For those of you who attended last year's Pre-Conference Academy on The Parallel Curriculum Model, several sessions (some facilitated by our Academy presenters from last year) during the convention will help continue your work on understanding and applying PCM.

As the Middle Grades Network continues to evolve into a community that offers resources and supports to meet the needs of middle level gifted students, we need your help. Consider getting involved with the Network by attending a Network meeting at the convention, submitting an article to Middle Matters, the Middle Grades Newsletter (send articles to the editor-Jan Hersh at jan_hersh@comcast.net) submitting a conference presentation proposal for 2009 or volunteering to help with other activities sponsored by the Middle Grades Network. Also, be sure to vote in the upcoming election for a new Middle Grades Network Chair.

Thanks to all of you who have been loyal Middle Grades Division members and to those of you who have recently joined the Middle Grades Network. As I get ready to transition out of my role as Middle Grades Co-Chair, I want to thank Susan Rakow for being my co-chair and helping to develop the relationship with the National Middle School Association as well as working on professional development opportunities and Jan Hersh for taking the lead and producing a terrific newsletter that is useful and fun. I also want to thank the many proposal reviewers and previous convention presenters who have shared their knowledge and passion for working with middle grade students. Check out the summer opportunities for kids in this issue and also those listed on the NAGC website.

For those of you looking for wonderful summer reading and listening check out *The Mysterious Benedict Society* and *The Mysterious Benedict Society and the Perilous Journey* (Little, Brown) by Trenton Lee Stewart or maybe you want to explore your special talents like the characters in Ingrid Law's new book, *Savvy* (Penguin), or maybe find that quirky part of yourself like Zoe in *A Crooked Kind of Perfect* (Harcourt).

Have a super summer full of great expectations and explorations. We hope to see you at the National Convention in Tampa, October 30-November 2, 2008. Registration is now open.

Susannah Richards

Johns Hopkins University – Center for Talented Youth: Educating Exceptional Students and Employing Exceptional Staff (thanks to Vince Bonina, Asst. Coordinator, Summer Academic Programs for this contribu- tion)

The Students

The summer programs offered by the Center for Talented Youth (CTY) provide eligible students the opportunity to study at a pace and level appropriate to their exceptional academic abilities. Though the focus is on rigorous academics and learning, the tremendous social experience that CTY provides students is an integral part of the program. The opportunity for students of outstanding academic ability to learn and socialize with their true intellectual peers is one of the keys to the success of CTY's summer programs, where lasting friendships often develop.



Summer programs are offered at residential or day sites in more than 25 locations on the east and west coasts of the United States, as well as four international locations. Students take only one course per three-week session and study that discipline intensively over five to seven class hours, five days per week. A wide range of courses in mathematics, sciences, writing and the humanities are available, and all courses emphasize the development of critical thinking and independent learning. Class size averages 12 – 18 students.

Outside class, students have the opportunity to engage in recreational activities and socialize with others who share their high academic abilities and love of learning. Students in both day and residential programs are supervised by CTY staff at all times.

Students who qualify for academic programs with SCAT scores may attend programs during the summer from second through sixth grade. Students completing seventh grade and above must take the SAT or ACT and achieve a certain qualifying score for their grade to be eligible for seventh grade and above summer programs. This year the summer programs run from June 29 – July 18 and July 20 – August 8. Our application deadline for the 2008 summer programs has passed, however student may still apply to the program (a late fee will be assessed). In addition, testing requirements by grade may be found on our website.

For more information about the summer programs for students please visit: <http://www.cty.jhu.edu/summer>.

The Staff

CTY instructors come from around the world. They include public and private school teachers, college professors, working professionals, and graduate students, who have in common a passion for their discipline and a commitment to academic excellence. Classes are small– 12 to 18 students –and each instructor has an assistant, typically an undergraduate or graduate student who shares the instructor's love of the subject and enthusiasm for teaching. Lab science courses include a generous budget for supplies.

CTY also has a dedicated administrative staff at each site. Drawn from public and private school teachers and administrators, higher education professionals, and school counseling specialists, the leadership team at each CTY site experiences the joys and challenges of creating a safe and supportive community, while building effective operations, fostering teamwork, and inspiring excellence. Each role offers superb professional development experiences for individuals with a variety of career aspirations.

Additionally, we also have opportunities for outstanding college students. Many college students find the position of teaching assistant or resident assistant an excellent opportunity to gain more experience working with motivated and academically talented students.

CTY is currently still interviewing staff to work at our summer programs. If you or a colleague is interested in joining the CTY community this summer, please visit us at: <http://www.cty.jhu.edu/summer/employment>.



SUMMER GT PROGRAMS SAMPLER

A sampling of programs in multiple states

For more information and for newly updated state-by-state programs, go to:

www.hoagiesgifted.org/summer.htm

[Academic Study Associates \(ASA\)](#) England, Spain, France, Italy, Costa Rica, UC Berkeley (CA), UMASS Amherst (MA), Columbia University (NY), and Tufts University (MA) (Grades 9-12, PG)

[Adventure Treks](#) California, Oregon, Washington, Montana, Alaska, Canadian Rockies (ages 13-18)

[Camp Invention](#) 46+ states (grade 1 to 6)

[Center for Talent Development \(CTD\)](#) Northwestern University IL, OH (grade pre-K to 12)

[Center for Talented Youth \(CTY\)](#) Johns Hopkins University CA, HI, MA, MD, NY, PA, RI, VA (grade 2 to age 17)

[Cybercamps](#) college campuses in 16 states and D.C. (ages 7 to 18)

[Digital Media Academy](#) CA, TX (high school)

[Governor's Schools](#) various states (high school)

[Great Books Summer Program](#) Stanford University CA, Amherst College MA, College of William & Mary VA (middle and high school)

[iD Tech Camps](#) 23 states and Spain (age 7 to 17)

[IEA Apprenticeship Program](#) (grade 9 to 11)

[Junior Statesmen of America](#) CA, CT, DC, IL, NJ (grade 10 to 12) DC location is highly recommended, due to interaction with politicians and advocates

[National Computer Camp](#) CT, GA, OH, PA (age 8 to 18)

[National Youth Science Camp](#) 2 students from each state are chosen, held in Bartow, WV (summer after grade 12)

[Pipe Organ Encounter](#) FL, MA, OH, OK, VA, WA (age 13 to 18)

[School of Cinema and Performing Arts \(SOCAPA\)](#) New York City, Hollywood and the Berkshires, MA (age 11 - 18 and adult)

[Science Training Programs](#) science, mathematics, and engineering enrichment programs available throughout the United States; focus on high school students, but covers other grades also (grades 9 through 12)

[Sea World Adventure Camps](#) CA, FL, TX (grade 4 to 12)

[Summer Institute for the Gifted](#) CA, CT, GA, MA, MI, NJ, NY, PA, TX (grade 4 to 12) and PA, CT, NJ, and NY (K-6)

[Summer Science Program](#) CA, NM (ages 15-18, high school juniors or exceptional sophomores)

[Talent Identification Program \(TIP\)](#) Duke University, Durham NC, KS (grade 7 to 12)

[Village Harmony Summer Camp](#) MA, VT, overseas (teens and adults)

[Williwaw Adventures](#) ME and Pacific Northwest (age 13 to 18)

[Free Summer Programs for Talented Teens](#) national and regional residential summer academic programs available at no cost to qualified participants

Summer Programs, Challenge and Shelter

by Sylvia Rimm, Ph.D.

Summer programs for the gifted offer students new opportunities for learning beyond what they're offered in most middle schools. Accelerated and enriched courses can invite students to explore interests to which they've never been exposed. They can move at a faster pace and work either independently or collaboratively with other students from differing environments and varied cultural and economic backgrounds. For some, these programs also give students opportunities to live away from home for the first time. They learn to share space and experiences with intellectual and social peers, thus enlarging their view of their world from beyond the narrow perspective of their local communities.

Social Advantages

Beyond the typical challenging experiences, there are latent advantages to attending summer programs for gifted students. Research for my book *Growing Up Too Fast: The Rimm Report On the Secret World of America's Middle Schoolers*, (Rimm, 2005), illuminated the pressures gifted children feel, even beyond what most of us know. Among the over 5,000 middle grade students surveyed, the pressures to be popular, both with the opposite sex and with those of the same gender, was the top worry for students. By third grade, 15% of the students worried a lot about popularity with opposite sexed peers, and that percentage increased every year. In focus groups with students in gifted programs (Rimm, 2006), students shared with me their fears about earning grades that were too high and working at their best. They worried that popular kids would not only reject them, but would cause other friends to spurn them as well. They expressed apprehension of being socially isolated based on their giftedness. Involvement in sports, fashionable clothes, and makeup were often mediators for their fears of isolation, but many talked about not feeling like they could continue to enjoy learning because of social pressures.

In addition to challenge, summer programs provide a special and selectively safe environment. Most students attend because they want to learn. While students may continue to feel some pressure to be accepted by their peers, being gifted no longer causes them a disadvantage because all participants have been identified as gifted. The label that may have caused them some discomfort in their middle schools invites them to belong during their summer program. They feel more like they can be themselves and have no need to pretend that they're not as intelligent as they know they are. That safe environment can actually help them to feel comfortably normal, despite their talents. Summer gifted programs can dramatically enhance social confidence.

Intellectual Humility

Another great advantage of summer programs is that they can teach intellectual humility. While students enrolled in programs may be accustomed to considering themselves the best and the brightest in their middle schools at home, they will meet many gifted students who also enjoyed similar academic status in their own schools. Gifted students are often unaccustomed to feelings of intellectual competition and insecurity. They are likely to feel both exhilarated and distressed as they meet so many other extraordinary peers. Their exhilaration stems from the excitement of learning and thinking together. Their anxiety emerges from the worry that others seem so much more capable than they feel. The environments of gifted summer programs are typically structured to be non-competitive. Despite the collaborative structure, students will often feel the competition, but can adjust to those feelings in a supportive, specifically non-competitive environment. This atmosphere becomes an excellent readiness experience for the years ahead when students attend highly competitive high schools or colleges.

As early adolescents begin their search for their identities, summer programs for the gifted play an important role in their explorations. Although they'll experience both joy and some discomfort in a challenging new environment, the joy will encourage both their social self-confidence and their love of learning, and their discomfort will facilitate the resilience needed in the years ahead.

References

- Rimm, S. (2005). *Growing up too fast: The Rimm report on the secret world of America's middle schoolers*. Emmaus, PA: Rodale.
- Rimm, S.B. (2006, Spring). *Growing up too fast – and gifted*. *Parenting for High Potential Magazine*. National Association for Gifted Children. pp. 6-11.

Summer Camps Offer Learning and Fun

The Center for Gifted Studies at Western Kentucky University has offered summer programming for twenty-five summers. Camps bring students to the campus from many states and several countries to learn in a variety of subject areas and to have fun with young people who share their interests. The summer of 2008 is right around the corner with two programs – SCATS and VAMPY.

The Summer Camp for Academically Talented Middle School Students (SCATS) will begin June 10 and conclude June 22. Approximately 200 young people who will have completed 6th, 7th, or 8th grade this year will spend two weeks on campus, living in Schneider Hall, the home of the Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science. Each SCATS participant will take four classes each weekday. Classes range from chemistry to politics, ceramics to music, and from leadership to Chinese. In all, thirty different class choices are available for young people to study. Outside of class, a wide range of supervised activities fill the summer days.

The Summer Program for Verbally and Mathematically Precocious Youth (VAMPY) brings 7th through 10th graders to WKU for three weeks – June 22 to July 12. VAMPY began 25 summers ago as the Duke University Talent Identification Program's first cooperative program. Each summer approximately 200 young people come from throughout the country and from abroad to spend time learning together both inside the classroom and in other activities in the evenings and during the weekends. VAMPY young people choose one class, and devote their six hours of class time each day to their chosen content area. Classes for 2008 include Chemistry, Forensic Chemistry, Genetics, Geology and Oceanography, Humanities, Mathematics, Nazi Germany and the Holocaust, Physics, Spectra, Revolutions, and Writing.

Why would young people choose to spend two weeks at SCATS or three weeks at VAMPY during their summer? Better still, why would I choose to spend five weeks of my summers with middle and high school students who come to residential programs offered by The Center for Gifted Studies. The answers are numerous. One reason is the camaraderie that the young people establish. They find a peer group. After Barbara Kingsolver's daughter came to SCATS, she wrote the following: "Her experience at SCATS helped her understand the potential rewards of belonging to a peer group that's more interested in Jane Austen and Shakespeare than Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger."

Another reason is that classes offer challenge – something gifted young people both need and relish. Summer programs offer opportunities to study subjects that they won't have the chance to take in school for some time or perhaps not at all. Remember that young people who are gifted and talented have passions in a wide variety of subject areas. Summer learning can match those passions while also providing a chance to meet age-mates who share their interests.

To learn more about SCATS and VAMPY go to The Center for Gifted Studies website [www.wku.edu/gifted]. You can read about the class offerings as well as about activities outside of class. You can also watch a video about SCATS and VAMPY and hear from last summer's participants and know why they will choose to come back for several summers. Please help us spread the word about these opportunities. Remember that an opportunity is not really an opportunity until you know about it!

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GIFTED IN THE NEWS

NAGC's list of great Resources!

<http://www.nagc.org/CMS400Min/index.aspx?id=1003>



"A lot of parents pack up their troubles and send them off to summer camp." ☺
Raymond Duncan



HOAGIE'S GIFTED RESOURCES

http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/whats_new.htm



"Can I go to computer tennis camp?"



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NORTHWESTERN
UNIVERSITY

School of Education & Social Policy

**Summer Program at Center for Talent Development (CTD)
Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois**

Powerful – that’s the impact CTD’s Summer Program has on students who attend. The impact is immediate, long-term, and can be life changing. The programs make an impact because CTD carefully matches them to students’ needs and interests. Middle school students have two programs from which to choose.

For students completing grades 4 to 6, CTD offers **Apogee**, a three-week program consisting of fast-paced, interdisciplinary enrichment courses. The program’s various courses, from language arts to computer programming, encourage students to explore and develop their academic, social and critical-thinking skills while promoting a positive attitude toward academic success. All Apogee sessions culminate in an *Expo* where students present what they have learned to family members and fellow students. (*Admission: EXPLORE participation through Talent Search in grades 3, 4, 5 or 6 or scores at the 95th percentile or above on a nationally normed, grade-level achievement test. Students without scores may apply via an admission portfolio.*)

When students reach grade 7, CTD ratchets up the intensity of the curriculum, offering accelerated honors course through its three-week **Spectrum** program for students completing grades 7 or 8 and even grade 9. Participants have the chance to study one subject in depth with peers who share similar interests and abilities. Classes are taught at the high school honors level by highly qualified, master teachers. Each course carries one or two semesters of high school credit. CTD offers the Spectrum Program at Northwestern University’s Evanston campus for residents and commuters and at Case Western Reserve University at Cleveland, OH for commuters only. (*Admission: Talent Search/above-grade-level SAT/ACT test scores – tests taken in grades 6, 7, 8 or 9. Students without scores may apply via admission portfolio.*)

Programs are also available for students in grades Prek through 3 and 9 through 12.

Contact:

Center for Talent Development / School of Education and Social Policy
Northwestern University, 617 Dartmouth Place, Evanston, IL 60208-4175
(847) 491-3782; Fax (847) 491-3394

E-mail: summer@ctd.northwestern.edu

Web site: <http://www.ctd.northwestern.edu/summer>

UCONN's Gifted Education Institute Sparks New Teaching Ideas

by Bonny Collins, FMG Middle School, Springfield, NJ

"My brain is so full, it's about to explode." So say most of the educators who go to the annual summer Confratute at the University of Connecticut's Neag School of Education. Over a week of activities (or two, for the masochistic) running from 8:30 AM to 11:00 PM, attendees hear so many new ideas and try out so many exciting programs that they can't wait to return to their school districts and apply them to their teaching.

Con-fra-tute, a phrase coined to describe a program that is part CON-vention, part FRA-ternity, and part insti-TUTE, is dedicated to helping teachers and administrators enrich the learning experiences of all students. You are able to restore your idealism and excitement through contact with leaders and those working in the trenches. To me, it was the epitome of what education should be—taking courses you WANT to learn about, with people who are as excited about them as you are, from people who are experts in the field. You learn how to create a program by participating in one, and not just reading about the theory. While my week turned into an arts festival, with screen printing (fine arts), animation (technology), and origami (modular mathematics), it could have just as easily been a technology fest or a science immersion, an administrative orientation, or a storytelling retreat.

The professors at Confratute are some of the greatest experts in education. To study with the people quoted by everyone else, watching them do as they recommend you should do makes a dream seem possible. Professors in the program represent all geographic areas of the USA and experience in many foreign countries. Expertise includes not only the education of the gifted, but also concerns for the social/emotional needs, differentiated learning, minority identification, twice-exceptional children, the arts, the sciences, and technology. Whatever you were interested in, you could find a strand to increase your own abilities.

To quote our daily communiqué, Confranotes! (July 16, 2007), "every school in America should have the services of an enrichment specialist who can escalate curriculum, provide high-end learning for students, coach teachers in compacting and differentiation, and most important, provide joyful, interesting learning experiences."

Attendees at Confratute can take three different "strands," or classes, each week. Educators can participate in all three types of experiences and get a first-hand experience with the SEM. Strands in the application of the Schoolwide Enrichment Model and many of its facets were available, such as Differentiating Curriculum, Talents Unlimited, and Student Identification. By close interaction with the experts in those fields, I was able to acquire some of the skills needed to pursue them on my own. The projects I completed in each class were of my own creation, and are things I can take back to share with my students, helping them to find new interests and ways to pursue them through to a satisfying product.

Educators come to the Confratute from many states and all over the world, and approximately 1000 were there this summer, the 30th year of Confratute. The week I was there brought a large contingent from Malaysia, who enlivened the experience with their intricate artwork, their gifts of mementos to encourage everyone to visit their homeland, and their performances at the Thursday night Talent show, both in a traditional folk dance and an audience-participation version of "Twist & Shout".

I teach gifted students in Springfield in grades 1, 2, 6, 7, and 8. I've been teaching for too many years to number. To me, the best part of Confratute was being able to be a student myself, to be able to get excited about learning new things. I was able to actually experience the enthusiasm and dedication that comes from truly wanting to be doing what I was actually doing, which is the basis of the entire Schoolwide Enrichment Model. It inspires me to take this excitement back to my district. The second greatest thing was doing it with other people who felt the same way. I loved being in a peer group that was as idealistic about teaching and ideas as I am.

I encourage any educator, especially one interested in the field of gifted education, to consider attending Confratute next summer. Though we were encouraged to wander and dream, read and relax, I have the whole next school year to do that. Confratute is too interesting for me to absorb it all in one year!



Middle Grades Network of the
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MIDDLE MATTERS

- Is **your** Middle Grades Network Newsletter!
- Become part of it by sending items for publication!
- Send in questions for our new Question/Answer column!
- Articles, stories, humor, or anything you'd like to share relating to Middle Level Gifted Education.
- 75 or more words (maximum of 600 words please!)

MISSION STATEMENT

The Middle Grades Network recognizes the unique needs of gifted middle grades learners and educators. Middle school is the level at which gifted students face great challenges to full development of their potential and is a time when a large number of gifted students, particularly girls and minority students, begin to underachieve in response to perceived societal and peer pressures. The division recognizes the need to develop appropriate strategies for working with these students. To address these concerns, the division works in the areas of curriculum, instruction, research, and communication and dissemination, to assist students, teachers, and administrators as they endeavor to make the middle school years a positive and challenging experience for gifted students.

HAVE YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO PUBLISH AN ARTICLE BUT DIDN'T KNOW HOW?

Well, here's your chance !

We'll do the editing (if you'd like), and you'll have your article published.

NEXT ISSUE'S TOPIC
SOCIAL STUDIES
Lesson ideas, project ideas,
teaching strategies and/or
stories

Please submit your articles! We really need them!