

# Mosaic

A Newsletter of the NAGC Special Populations Network

## *Welcome Beverly Trail, incoming Chair of the Special Populations Network*

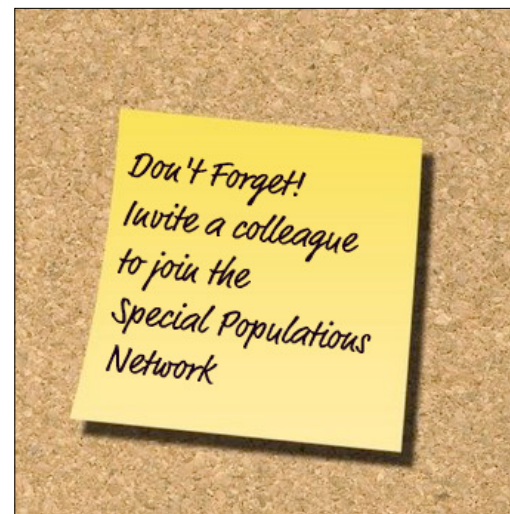


Beverly A. Trail, Ed.D., is a twice-exceptional consultant, trainer, researcher, and frequent presenter at the National Association for Gifted Children and Council for Exceptional Children Conventions. She earned a doctorate

in Special Education from the University of Northern Colorado, a master's degree in Gifted Education from the University of Denver, and endorsement as a Gifted Education Specialist. Currently, she is developing and teaching courses in a new master's degree program for gifted education at Regis University. Dr. Trail's career in education spans 22 years with experience at the district level as gifted education coordinator, resource teacher, and twice-exceptional consultant. The school based gifted program she coordinated was designated as a model program in gifted education by the Colorado Department of Education's 2+2 Excellence in Education Project. She was also contracted by Colorado Department of Education to develop an introductory resource handbook and training module for the Twice-Exceptional Project. For three years, Dr. Trail conducted twice-exceptional trainings throughout the state. She is an active member of the Colorado Association for Gifted and Talented Board of Directors and was inducted into the Colorado Academy of Educators for the Gifted, Talented, and Creative.

"As chair of the Special Populations Network, I will continue to support the Network's Mission "to develop initiatives that will serve to increase the recognition and

services provided to special populations of gifted. To accomplish this I look forward to implementing the NAGC GroupSite platform for network communities. I will continue the work of Peter Laing and Jaime Castellano to develop a network of resource people and committee members to publish a newsletter, generate articles for publication, present webinars, and encourage research so that our network will enhance understanding of special populations of gifted students."



# Q&A

## An Interview with Dr. Alexinia Baldwin, a Champion for Diversity in the Education of the Gifted / Talented



Dr. Baldwin is Professor Emeritus, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT. She has served as the President of The Association for the Gifted (TAG), was a former member of the board of directors for NAGC, and a United States delegate to the World Council for Gifted and Talented (WCGT). In 2004 she received a number of awards and recognitions, among them: NAGC Distinguished Scholar; Advocate of the Year given by the Association for the Education of Gifted Underachieving

Students (AEGUS); and the Distinguished Alumni Award by the NEAG School of Education, University of Connecticut.

Dr. Joy L. Davis, co-editor, had the distinct honor of interviewing Dr. Baldwin for our newsletter.

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***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 in this southern town for black gifted students.

To find students, I developed a process to use existing test data on core subjects, the Otis Lennon Ability test scores, and the results of the Slosson Intelligence Test, along with recommendations from teachers. The result was the selection of 26 out of 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 people, 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

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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 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. Vialle where the concept of our co-edited book “The Many Faces of Giftedness: Lifting the Masks.” began. The concerns about diversity, and teacher education in Australia are as strong as it is in the USA.

Research by Dr. Gross, Dr. Vialle, (Australian Professors) and 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.

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***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.**



# Gifted Education and Native American (Navajo) Students

By Dr. Jaime Castellano

As principal of Ganado Intermediate School located in Ganado, Arizona, and Acting Coordinator of Gifted Education for the Ganado Unified School District I have had the privilege of developing (or resurrecting) its gifted education program after many years of non-existence. Our renewed commitment to gifted education and serving the Navajo Nation's best and brightest students was readily embraced by the entire Ganado Community; and with good reason. During the 2009-2010 school year, our first year of development, we were able to assess every student in grades K-7; identifying 138 Navajo students as gifted through the administration of the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT). I must admit that I was not as surprised as my colleagues with the results knowing that gifted students are found in all schools regardless of culture, ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status and geography.

Once identified, we initiated a series of programs rooted in both enrichment and acceleration to meet their advanced cognitive and academic needs. Each student identified as gifted at my school, the Intermediate School, was invited to participate in an after school enrichment program dealing with robotics and engineering. It was an overwhelming success. I was also able to accelerate 9 fourth grade

students by placing them for three hours each day in fifth grade for their reading and language instruction. We also placed 4 fifth grade students into sixth grade for their math instruction.

In addition, I was able to convince my staff to move to a



cluster group model of instruction from January to May of 2010. Each grade level consisted of one section designed to serve our gifted and advanced Navajo students. One of the highlights of this transition was a sixth grade math class with almost 40 students, nine of which received state recognition for their outstanding results on the state assessment. As part of our summer school program in 2010 we offered a unique enrichment program on inventors and inventions. The program filled quickly with almost 30 students in both our K-3 and 4-8 programs.

Perhaps one of the biggest highlights for the Ganado Unified



School District's gifted education program was an invitation in March of 2010 to participate in a research project with Purdue University and its Javitz grant program on the Total School Cluster Group Instructional Model. This opportunity has resulted in the infusion of professional development, expertise, and resources that will benefit our gifted Navajo students. How cool is that!

Finally, in May of 2010 I hosted the First Annual Leadership Summit for Identifying and Serving Gifted Native American Students in Arizona. It was an overwhelming success! As a result of the summit we have entered into an agreement with the Gifted Education Special Interest Group (SIG) of the American Education Research Association (AERA), composed primarily of university professors throughout the United States, to conduct quantitative and qualitative studies on gifted Native American students for the next 2 or 3 years, with the Ganado Community serving as a hub of this research agenda. The hope is that after years of focus and research that a publication will be produced.

So, as you can see, we are making in-roads in gifted education on the Navajo Nation. Our students are worth the effort!

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# Mark Your Calendar!

NAGC's 57th Annual Convention will be held in Atlanta, Georgia, November 11-14, 2010.



The **Special Populations Network Evening Reception, Thursday, November 11th, 7:00 - 9:00 pm** at the Omni Hotel

The **Special Populations Business Meeting** will be held **Friday, November 12th from 3:30-4:30** in the Georgia World Congress Center, C104

**The Legacy Series Continues: An Afternoon with Alexinia Baldwin**

**Friday, November 12th, 4:00pm-5:30pm**

Conceptual Foundations

Georgia Ballroom - Georgia World Congress Center

Through the efforts of the NAGC Conceptual Foundations Network, the Legacy Series creates a permanent record in image and voice, of prominent individuals who have devoted their energy and professional talents to enhancing the lives of our nation's most able learners. Join us for the taping and learn more about this year's honoree, Alexinia Baldwin.

**NAGC 'Expert Perspectives'**

**Thursday, Nov 11th 8:30-11:15 a.m.** - Critical Conversations About Gifted Education in America: From the Voices of African-American, Hispanic, Asian, Gay, and Native-American Leaders in the Field.

Featuring Donna Y. Ford, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN; Joy L. Davis, University of Louisiana-Lafayette, Lafayette, LA; Rosina Gallagher, Chicago, IL; Ernesto Bernal, San Antonio, TX; Richard Cash, Bloomington Public Schools, Bloomington, MN; Kyung Hee Kim, College of William & Mary, Williamsburg, VA; Sandy Cohn & Mary Eunice, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ. Moderated by Jaime A. Castellano, Ganado Unified School District, Ganado, AZ. -These national leaders will offer their heart-felt perspectives on what is right and wrong with gifted education programs designed to serve our nation's most able minds from historically underrepresented populations. Personal insights and professional perspectives will frame this moderated panel discussion. Audience participants will have an opportunity to join this critical conversation.



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# NAGC Special Populations Sessions


## **NAGC SESSIONS OF INTEREST TO THE SPECIAL POPULATIONS NETWORK**

With over 350 sessions to select from, here are just a few that may be of interest to the members of the Special Populations Network that specifically address the needs of diverse gifted learners:

- The Experiential Gap: Responding to the Achievement Gap and Underachievement
- Unlocking Talents in Special Populations through Primary Thinking Skills
- Identifying and Retaining Underserved Populations: Making the Most of Middle School Years
- The Frasier Scholars Program: Lessons Applied to Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Gifted Students
- Javits-Frasier Scholars Making a Real Difference in Our Schools
- Swimming Upstream: Urban Schools, Underrepresented Gifted Children, and the Struggle for Gifted Education
- Practical Strategies for the Differentiation of Instruction for Underrepresented Gifted Learners
- Multicultural Approaches to Engage Diverse Gifted Learners in Social Sciences
- Using a Non Verbal Ability Test: Helping All Gifted Children Learn
- Lessons Learned from Project HOPE: Recognizing Giftedness Among Children of Poverty
- The Need for Cross-Cultural Education: A Gifted Program Evaluation Plan
- Assessing, Identifying, and Servicing Low-Income, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Gifted Students: Gifted 101



### **Newsletter Ideas?**



**Do you have ideas for upcoming newsletters?  
Would you like to submit an article or write a column?**

**Please send ideas and suggestions to  
[Margarita.Bianco@ucdenver.edu](mailto:Margarita.Bianco@ucdenver.edu)  
or [jdavis@louisiana.edu](mailto:jdavis@louisiana.edu)**

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