



## Guest editor's comments

Innovative programs and home schooling to meet the needs of gifted and talented students

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## From the Editor's Desk

Welcome to volume 24, number 4, of the *Roeper Review*. This is a special issue of the journal concerning special programs for gifted students. Dr. Nina Buchanan, from the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, served as the guest editor. She did an excellent job of recruiting manuscripts, working with authors, and helping the *Roeper Review* editorial staff put the final touches on the articles. She is to be especially commended for her assistance in the final stages of the process which took place while Dr. Buchanan was vacationing in Italy. This issue offers the reader numerous ideas about some differing conditions and circumstances where gifted students are educated. Intimate stories of individual students as well as studies of large numbers of students are portrayed. This issue includes articles that run the gamut from theory to practice. Dr. Buchanan overviews the issue and the individual pieces in her comments.

To set the stage for this special issue is an interview of Dr. Abraham Tannenbaum, conducted by Dr. Sandra Kay, a

former doctoral student of his and a talented professional in her own right. Dr. Tannenbaum is widely respected in the field and is one of the true "grandfathers" of gifted education. He worked for 20 years in Teachers College at Columbia University, producing some of the seminal work in the field. His 1983 book *Gifted Children* changed the field and all professionals in gifted education should have a copy on the shelf. I became familiar with his writings about twenty years ago and have been significantly influenced by many of his ideas. As one would expect, the interview provides many insights into both the person and the field of gifted education. We are honored to have Dr. Tannenbaum's sage perspective so candidly portrayed in the pages of our journal.

Rounding out this special issue are four thoughtful book reviews. Dr. Claire Hughes has coordinated the effort to see that the *Roeper Review* readership has access to informative books pertaining to gifted children. Should you wish to review a book for the journal, please contact her at [hugheslynch@comcast.net](mailto:hugheslynch@comcast.net).

Soon after this issue appears, the Roeper Review Conference will be held at the Birmingham campus of the Roeper School (September 26-27, 2002). I encourage you to participate in this event if you can. The speakers are always informative and the atmosphere is warm and casual. This venue provides many opportunities for interactions among colleagues interested in the well-being of gifted children. Immediately thereafter, the annual Annemarie Roeper Conference is also being held at the Roeper School campus. For more information on these two events, please contact Monique Anthus at [Monique@roeperreview.org](mailto:Monique@roeperreview.org). I hope to see you there.

Feel encouraged to send me any comments or suggestions about the journal. Tracy L. Cross, Ph.D., Editor  
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## Guest Editor's Comments

### *Innovative Programs and Home Schooling to Meet the Needs of Gifted and Talented Students*

Lehua is a bright, sensitive, inquisitive, active 12-year-old who has been referred to special education, suspected of having ADHD. His parents know that Lehua is able to concentrate at home because he has several continuing projects as well as notable success dancing hula and excelling in many out-of-school endeavors. He is often found outdoors skateboarding and playing with his cousins and neighbors. In school Lehua feels trapped and unmotivated. Once, Lehua dyed his hair a bright orange and pink and was told to wash it immediately. He is of mixed cultures and struggles with any prescribed way of behaving. Articulate when he needs to be, Lehua is a superb drawer of cartoons and word phrases. During English however, Lehua dreams of surfing. He is respected for his skills in listening and his ability to resolve conflicts.

The thought that Lehua might be placed in special edu-

cation only fuels a spirit of rebellion and shuts off any potential of blossoming in a structured school setting.

At one time in history, Lehua might have been labeled as an underachiever or as a learning disabled student, but not considered or selected for a G/T program. Today however, there are more available choices. If he lived in Montgomery County, Maryland, Lehua might be identified as GT/LD and have an array of programs available to meet his unique learning needs. In many areas of the country, Lehua and his parents could select an appropriate learning environment like a charter or magnet school that focuses on project-based, integrated curricula, and culturally appropriate methods that would strengthen Lehua's connection to the community and allow him to develop his talents in school as well as out. Hawai'i, along with all the other United States, gives Lehua and his parents the option to learn at home through home schooling.

This special issue of *Roeper Review* focuses on home schooling and innovative programs to meet the needs of G/T students. The articles in the issue add to

a growing discussion of a new 'culture' of school that is characterized by: 1) choice for parents, students, and individual communities; 2) complementary alternatives to one-size-fits-all comprehensive schools; and 3) small, caring communities of learners.

The call for the creation of innovative programs for gifted learners is not a new one. One of the pioneers in the field of gifted education, Abraham Tannenbaum, has made strong arguments for such programs. We are fortunate to have his comments in this special issue, lending a historical perspective to our understanding of the current state of gifted education.

Home school estimates (Ray, 1996) predicted that at least 1.3 million students nationwide would be home schooled during the 1999-2000 school year. Early studies of home schooling found that parents chose to home school their children primarily for moral or religious reasons. Today, however, the number one reason parents cite for home schooling is to give their children a better education than they could get in the public schools (Bielick, Chandler, & Broughman, 2002). Home school par-

ents tend to be White, traditional two-parent families with one wage earner. They are comparable to nonhome-school parents in income. They tend to have higher levels of education and more children than nonhome-school parents. A cursory search of the internet will locate many sites specifically designed to support home schooling G/T students (Ensign, 1997; Wickens, 1997; National Home Education Research Institute, 1997). One thing we don't know is how many G/T students are home schooled and how their education is different from traditional schooling.

In "Dancing with Monica," Michele Sheehan and her precocious daughter chose home schooling that combined some notions of traditional content in the context of life in another country and within changing relationships and roles as Monica transitioned from girl to woman. Self-discoveries became as important as book learning and the environment became a laboratory and source of content knowledge. While it is highly unlikely that many parents will find themselves in this situation, there are lessons to be learned. Every community has the potential to be just as exciting as Monica's. The strategies Sheehan describes — 1) community mentoring; 2) self-regulating by internalizing discipline and setting goals; 3) discovering and building on individual strengths and weaknesses — are excellent for all, but imperative for G/T students.

Lisa Rivero in "Progressive Digressions" provides another mom's-eye view of the process and substance of home schooling. Using self-actualization as a model, Rivero describes how "seemingly unrelated digressions" can combine with more traditional planned learning and be individualized to integrate home schooling approaches and theories of gifted education. Using examples from her own experiences as a parent and researcher, Rivero builds a case for creative learning at home and school. Her article concludes with a series of questions that parents and teachers might ask to direct attention to what really matters.

While many parents recognize that their child's needs are not being met at school, they may not be able to home school. Robert Schultz, in his phenomenological case study of Kate and Shawn, provides a compelling argument for rethinking school programs for all students but especially for the nebulous, often neglected, underachieving gifted and talented students. According to Schultz,

Most schools...do not make students with individual needs, strengths, and abilities a central focus point for education. Students in these schools are viewed as raw resources to be molded into a product—a contributing member of society. But, what exactly does this mean in today's world where diversity, flexibility, and entrepreneurship are important factors not addressed in the school curriculum? (p. 211)

In a global world, one-size-fits-all schools fail to provide differentiated experiences for students with diverse needs and abilities. However, in an expanding educational marketplace, parents and students can choose magnet, charter, and other public school options that might better meet learning needs. Bill Woerner and I have worked for the past 6 years developing integrative curricula at the West Hawai'i Explorations Academy, now a public charter school. In 1999, we had the rare opportunity to identify and visit recultured, innovative high schools. Hannay and Ross (1997) define reculturing as changing the cultural norms in schools, including student-adult interaction, priorities for establishing budgets, and governing the school, and/or a shared vision of the school environment, what is worth teaching and learning and how this should be learned. These schools are not one-size-fits-all but focus on areas such as science, environmental studies, performing arts, and technology. Grade configurations and grouping of students may not be standard (K-12<sup>th</sup> grade, 5<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade, 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade). None had sports programs but did make connections to the community so that students who wanted to participate could. In our article, "Meeting the Needs of Gifted Learners through Innovative High School Programs," we describe schools that develop student talents and allow G/T students to go beyond what would normally be available in traditional programs and schools.

One persistent challenge for G/T students has been isolation from their cognitive peers. This has become more acute in all schools as the Regular Education Initiative and full inclusion have led to changes in the way students are assigned to classes (Rogers, 1993). Maryland's Montgomery County Public School district has developed a unique, comprehensive program for students who are simultaneously gifted and talented and learning disabled. Through collabora-

tive efforts of administration, special education, gifted education, and regular classroom teachers, GT/LD students' needs are met through a range of program options in elementary, middle, and secondary schools and mentor programs. In their article "Academic Programs for Gifted and Talented/Learning Disabled Students," Rich Weinfeld, Linda Barnes-Robinson, Sue Jeweler, and Betty Shevitz describe this exciting program and offer advice for others who may want to create their own GT/LD programs.

Another often overlooked G/T population is that of highly gifted students. Susan Sullivan and Leslie Rebhorn in their article "PEGS: Appropriate Education for Exceptionally Gifted Students" describe the Program for Exceptionally Gifted Students (PEGS), a model that other school districts can adapt to collaboratively address the special needs of this population. PEGS makes it possible for 50 highly gifted students to engage together in an integrative program that includes acceleration and enrichment and is designed to meet individual needs and provide peer interaction and stimulation.

Another persistent challenge for G/T students is to have their many talents recognized and nurtured, especially if they are culturally different. How can G/T programs balance equity and excellence? Alan Awaya in a short take, "An Open Enrollment Gifted Program," describes Kahuku High School's open enrollment G/T policy that has significantly increased the number and percentage of native Hawaiian and other Polynesian (primarily Samoan and Tongan) students in G/T classes without decreasing the academic standards.

These examples are only the beginning. It is time for a new culture of school and unschooling that uses technology, small communities, and choice to stimulate the development of gifts and talents and improve the future, not just repeat it.

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