

indeed, something would have to be worked out and that if we would just be patient, it would be resolved. They would consider whether credit should be given for his CMU courses. We should have known not to expect ethical behavior.

During these 6 years of junior- and senior-high school, Eric represented Gateway at many math contests. He won trophies, plaques, and other awards for which the district publicly took credit. From the way the newspaper articles were written, a reader would assume Eric received his math instruction at Gateway. Many of these contests were on weekends and we transported him and the rest of the math team; sometimes other parents drove also. We were the only team present at these contests not accompanied by a faculty member from the district. After a few contests, some of the teachers from other districts assumed I was Gateway's coach and, as we usually won the first place team trophy, I guess they thought I did a good job! I would have much preferred a caring attitude from Gateway.

Eric was the top scorer at Gateway on the American High School Math Exam for the 4 years he was in high school. As a result of this, he attended the United States Mathematical Olympiad Training Program as one of the top 24 math students in the United States. The only reaction from his school to this honor was to mark him absent. Eric also qualified for the Pennsylvania Governor's School for the Sciences and the Research Science Institute, which picks the top 35 science students in the United States. He was a National Merit Finalist. He was named the top math student in Pennsylvania for 1988 by the Western Pennsylvania Mathematics Council and the Pennsylvania Council of Teachers of Mathematics. He had a 97% overall average on his high school transcript (without math). He received only a small merit scholarship and when I inquired about this, a college financial aid officer told me Eric's class rank wasn't all that impressive and that the National Merit Scholarship Corporation weighs that heavily.

Hearing Number 3 was held during Eric's senior year. The district was ordered to put the two CMU math courses for this year on Eric's IEP, on his high school transcript to fulfill the

state requirement, and to add them to his class rank. The district appealed the third part of the decision and the appeal was granted. Now they refuse to obey the rest of the order and have filed for Common Pleas Court. An hour before graduation, we were told that Eric should attend even though he would receive an illegal diploma. Eric feels cheated and used. He has worked hard and performed exceptionally well. Some of his teachers have been very supportive and are as aware of the shabby and unnecessary way he has been treated as he is. One praised him by saying that he never knew Eric to brag in any way about any of his accomplishments even though he had more reason to brag than most students. Another said he was ashamed of an educational system that puts a lid on excellence.

The parents of highly gifted students who might read this, sadly will be able to identify with many of our experiences. Gateway is not the only district geared to a "minimum education with mediocrity for all." There are good teachers who can do nothing because they are stuck with an inadequate curriculum. Our son hasn't been destroyed by this because we haven't allowed it; but what of other talented students whose parents can't provide what we did or who don't know what to do or where to turn? The system *must* change; hardly a week goes by that we don't see in magazines or newspapers new evidence of our nation's disastrous performance in mathematics. The parents are blamed; the teachers are blamed; the curriculum is blamed. I believe all deserve some of the blame, but the greatest degree of blame lies in a system that puts bureaucracy before the child, where the political power of the administration or the teacher's union weighs more heavily than why these people have jobs in the first place.

As for Eric, he has been named a Princeton Scholar by Princeton University because of his "unusual academic achievement and extraordinary academic promise." To add a bit of bitter irony, Princeton is donating \$250 in Eric's honor to the Gateway High School Library because of Gateway's commitment to academic excellence.

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The Gifted Child Today solicited responses from Julian Stanley of the

Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth (SMPY) as well as from the Gateway School System. As director of SMPY, Stanley observed Eric's academic progress first-hand and his response follows. Gateway was unable to prepare a response before our deadline, but their reaction will appear in the March/April issue of The Gifted Child Today.

Most Fare Better

by Julian Stanley

Eric is, indeed, exceedingly able, as I know from following his progress since 1979 and giving his mother many suggestions about how to provide the special, supplemental educational opportunities a youth of his great intellectual ability sorely needs. Her experiences with educators seem rather atypical, however. Many of the parents of mathematically highly precocious youths with whom we work closely have successfully negotiated a reasonably smooth passage between the proverbial rock and the hard place. They have managed to obtain for their quite talented offspring appropriate curricular flexibility and good articulation of out-of-school experiences with in-school ones without becoming chronically hostile to the school system and embittered toward it. I wish there were some formula we could give parents for dealing successfully with teachers and administrators, but obviously there isn't. Many aspects of personality and local circumstances are involved.

By contrast with Mrs. Lindblad's experiences, readers may want to reread the story of Terry Tao, the Australian boy of Chinese parentage who recently won a gold medal in the International Mathematical Olympiad competition just before his 13th birthday, having already won a silver medal at age 11 and a bronze medal at age 10. Even the usually inflexible Australian school system has adjusted nicely to Terry's educational needs, as carefully and diplomatically set forth by his father, like Eric's pediatrician. (See *G/C/T* July/Aug. 1986, p. 2; Nov./Dec. 1986, p. 25; and Mar./Apr. 1988, p. 39.) The educational experiences of many other SMPY protégés are more like Terry's than Eric's. ■