

# The Center for Talent Development at Northwestern University: an example of replication and reformation

Paula Olszewski-Kubilius<sup>\*</sup>  
*Center for Talent Development, Evanston, Illinois*

This article describes implementation of the talent search model developed by Julian Stanley at the Center for Talent Development of Northwestern University. While remaining true to the basic components of the talent search, the talent center at Northwestern has emphasized using talent search as a means to influence programming in local schools for gifted students, research and development of various types of educational programs for talented children, the creation of an articulated set of programs leading to systematic development of abilities across childhood and adolescence, extensions into other domains of talent, such as leadership, and creating synergy for gifted education through collaboration and partnerships with other leaders in the Midwest.

## Introduction

The Center for Talent Development (CTD) at Northwestern University was modeled on the Center for Talented Youth at Johns Hopkins University more than 20 years ago. CTD was originally called the ‘Midwest talent search’ in 1982 when it came to Northwestern University; Joyce Van Tassel-Baska, a leading scholar and educator in the field of the gifted and talented, began a state-wide talent search while she was the director of services for gifted students in Illinois. She then began a regional talent search for the Midwestern states, which she ran out of a local school district in a suburb of Chicago. The response to the first Midwest regional talent search was overwhelming (about 11,000 students from eight Midwestern states) and Joyce began to look for a university to house the project because she wanted to add legitimacy and research to the program. Julian Stanley, who was consulting with Joyce to replicate the talent search model in the Midwest, suggested that she talk to the then dean of the School of Education and Social Policy at Northwestern University, David Wiley, who was one of Stanley’s former students. Wiley welcomed

---

<sup>\*</sup>Center for Talent Development, Northwestern University, 617 Dartmouth Place, Evanston, IL 60201, USA. Email: p-olszewski-kubilius@northwestern.edu

the project and it officially became the 'Midwest Talent Search Project at Northwestern University'. Several years later, reflecting the growth of the program beyond talent search testing, the Center for Talent Development was established. At that time, in the late 1980s, the term 'talent development' was virtually unused in the gifted literature. The selection of the title for the center reflected the forward thinking of its main architects and presaged a conceptual shift in the field from gifted education to talent development.

In its basic structural elements, the Center for Talent Development is very similar to CTY. Talent search has been and remains the basis of our operations. It is the main mechanism for identifying academically gifted students and it feeds students into other Center educational programs. CTD, like CTY and the 'talent identification program' at Duke University, primarily focuses on serving a region of the USA (eight Midwestern states) both through direct services, such as our educational programs, and also by providing leadership to the Midwest with respect to gifted education. This leadership includes facilitating linkages and connections between leading educators working with gifted students in the Midwest, assisting them in their efforts to serve gifted students within their states and developing program models that can be used by other educators in other settings to assist in the development of gifted students.

After the talent search program was begun at Northwestern, educational programs were added. Chronologically, our distance learning program, 'LearningLinks' was added first, followed by a Saturday enrichment program, then a summer program for Grades 7–9. Over its more than 20 year history new programs have been added to this basic set of programs for both younger and older children, as well as programs in the area of leadership.

The Center for Talent Development currently has an array of programs including: a talent search testing program which consists of several off level tests appropriate for students in Grades 3–9 and serves 32,000 students annually; a distance education program that includes traditional by mail and online courses for students in Grades 4–12 and serves 900 students annually; four different summer program models that serve 2500 students in Grades pre-K to 11 annually, a Saturday Enrichment Programme that serves 2300 students annually in grades pre-K through 9; a leadership program with two different program models that serves 250 students annually; seminars for parents and educators; a master's degree in advanced teaching and talent development; an array of programs that focus on under-represented gifted students, including low income and minority students.

The Center for Talent Development at Northwestern University has remained true to the model established by Julian Stanley and colleagues at the Center for Talented Youth and is an example of a successful replication to another site. CTD has some unique features, however, including the following:

- a focus on using the talent search and educational programs to significantly affect the ways schools serve gifted children;
- a focus on forging strong connections with other leaders in the Midwest working in the field of gifted education and facilitating synergy between institutions, states and gifted educators;

- a focus on the development of program models and research on their effectiveness and transferability;
- a focus on other domains of talent, including leadership;
- a focus on extending services downwards to younger children and upwards to older children, resulting in an articulated set of programs from pre-K to Grade 12;
- a focus on inclusiveness and underserved populations of students, including low income families and under-represented minorities, and on alternative means of qualification for programs beyond scores on standardized tests.

### **Using talent search to affect schools**

Since its beginnings, a goal of the Midwest academic talent search has been to affect school practice. That is, while we developed summer programs and weekend programs to serve gifted students directly at Northwestern University in out-of-school programs, our hope has always been that talent search participation would significantly affect what goes on for students 9 months of the year in school. To that end, the CTD developed materials to help schools use talent search scores to place students in existing services for gifted students, design appropriate individualized programs for students and create new services for gifted children. Examples of these materials include recommendations for program options for students based on scoring levels on off level tests (see Tables 1 and 2), recommended sequences of courses for students in Grades 3–12 (see Table 3) and an individualized planning guide (see Table 4). It was our hope that both parents and educators would, through the use of our educational advisory materials, view the talent search as information that would help them provide better services for students within schools.

The CTD has also sought to influence schools by seeking accreditation as a special function school for the gifted from the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA). NCA is the body that accredits most public schools in the Midwest. Accreditation was sought to assure educators and parents of the quality of CTD educational programs and also to assist students in getting high-school credits for high-school level courses taken through the Center's various programs. As an accredited school CTD can issue high-school credits and official transcripts. CTD was the first university-based gifted center to obtain accreditation. The result of accreditation has been a substantial and significant increase in the percentage of students who get high-school credits for their summer or distance learning courses. Our own research on summer program students found that the percentage of students who got credits increased from 28% in 1992, before accreditation, to 62% in 2002, 8 years after accreditation. In addition, CTD undertook a program of research to understand what went into the decisions of high-school administrators regarding credit for out-of-school courses (see Olszewski-Kubilius *et al.*, 1996; Olszewski-Kubilius & Lee, 2005). By obtaining NCA accreditation CTD has forced schools to acknowledge summer coursework and has facilitated articulation between school curricular and out-of-school programs.

Table 1. Ranges of performance on SAT I or ACT

---

**A Range:** 230–470 on SAT-V, 200–510 on SAT-M; 0–21 on ACT-Eng or ACT-Read, 0–17 on ACT-Math

Program options should include:

1. Long-range academic planning
2. Early access to advanced school courses
3. Supplement coursework with enrichment-oriented school, Saturday or summer programs
4. Early career counseling
5. Sequence 1 of ‘Recommended course sequences’

**B Range:** 480–580 on SAT-V, 520–600 on SAT-M; 22–27 on ACT-Eng or ACT-Read, 18–23 on ACT-Math

Program options should include:

1. Long-range academic planning, following Sequence 2 of ‘Recommended course sequences’ in area of academic strength
2. Fast paced school, Saturday or summer classes in area of strength, using ‘curriculum compacting’ to compress courses into shorter time frames.
3. Early access to college level coursework through ‘Advanced placement’ (AP), distance learning, dual enrollment or summer courses.
4. Early career counseling, including access to mentorships, tutorials and internships.

**C Range:** 580+ on SAT-V, 600+ on SAT-M; 28+ on ACT-Eng or ACT-Read, 24+ on ACT-Math

Program options should include:

Options 1–4 from B range, plus:

5. Individualized program of study, using ‘test-out’ approach in areas of strength. This helps advanced students avoid spending time on material they already know.
  6. Consider grade acceleration (grade skipping) or early admission to college.
  7. Individualized work with a mentor to pursue advanced study in an area, possibly aimed at specific AP exam.
- 

### **Creating synergy in the Midwest**

CTD has sought to provide leadership to the Midwest region in the area of gifted education and to forge connections and synergy between institutions and educators working with gifted students. We have done this in the following ways.

- Through a regional advisory board that meets annually and brings together leading educators of the gifted in the Midwest. These individuals include state directors of gifted education, university researchers, leaders of parent advocacy groups and gifted coordinators in major school districts such as Detroit and Chicago. Most of them are involved in providing direct services to gifted children.
- Through an affiliation with the Wisconsin Center for Talented Youth, which includes sharing of students names for purposes of facilitating Wisconsin students’ access to more local gifted services.
- Through joint sponsorship of award ceremonies in several Midwestern states for high scoring talent search participants and the provision of support, including student names, certificates and speakers. Most of these recognition ceremonies are conducted by universities, including Ball State in Muncie, Indiana, the

Table 2. Program Options

|  | <b>A-Range Scores</b><br>230-470 on SAT-V<br>200-510 on SAT-M<br>0-21 on ACT-Eng or ACT-Read<br>0-17 on ACT-Math  | <b>B-Range Scores</b><br>480-580 on SAT-V<br>520-600 on SAT-M<br>22-27 on Act-Eng or ACT-Read<br>18-23 on ACT-Math   | <b>C-Range Scores</b><br>580 + on SAT-V<br>600 + on RSAT-M<br>28 + on ACT Eng or ACT-Read<br>24 + on ACT-Math   |
|--|---|--|---|
| Options for acceleration                             | Homogeneous grouping for acceleration at <u>one year</u> above grade level in area of strength  | Homogeneous grouping for accelerated, fast-paced, or telescoped classes <u>at least one year</u> above grade level<br>Grade placement in area of strength <u>1 to 2 years</u> above grade level and early access to higher levels of schooling (e.g. attending high school for math instruction) | Special gifted school placement<br><br>Grade placement in area of strength <u>3 to 4 years</u> above grade level  |
| Options for in-school enrichment                     | Differentiation of assignments, homework, and projects in area of strength<br>Resource room or pull-out program for enrichment or project work, at least 5 hours per week<br>In-class clustering for enrichment in area of strength | In-class clustering for acceleration in area of strength<br>Resource room or pull-out program for independent study or project work, at least 5 hours per week   | Individualized program of study in area of strength, including independent studies, mentorships, etc.   |
| Options for access to advanced or college-level work | Access to AP in grades 11 and 12<br>International Baccalaureate program   | Access to AP in grade 10<br>International Baccalaureate program<br>Dual enrollment (for college courses) in 11 <sup>th</sup> and 12 <sup>th</sup> grades   | Access to AP in grade 9<br>Early entrance into college<br><br>Dual enrollment (for college courses) beginning in 9 <sup>th</sup> or 10 <sup>th</sup> grades |
| Options for extra-curriculars                        | Extra-curricular activities (contests, internships, study abroad, summer programs, etc.) in area of strength  |  |   |

Table 3. Recommendations for foreign languages

| Grade | Sequence 1  | Sequence 2  |
|-------|---|---|
| 7     | Etymologies, word usage, linguistics  | 1st year level I language (according to the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages)              |
| 8     | 1st year level I language <sup>a</sup> (according to the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages) | 2nd year level I language   |
| 9     | 2nd year level I language   | 3rd year level I language & 1st year of level II, III or IV language  |
| 10    | 3rd year level I language <sup>a</sup> & 1st year of another level 1 language                               | 4th year level I language & 2nd year of level II, III or IV language or AP language course or AP literature |
| 11    | 4th year level I language & 2nd year of second level I language or AP language course                       | 3rd year of level II, III or IV language  |
| 12    | 3rd year of second level I language or AP literature  | 4th year of level II, III or IV language  |

<sup>a</sup>Level I or II languages refer to the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages guidelines for the difficult mastery of a given language. The commonly used romance languages are level I. Higher level languages are those considered to be of a greater difficulty because they do not use the English alphabet. Japanese, Finnish and Chinese are examples of level IV languages. Extracurricular or enrichment activities include: travel to foreign countries; contemporary foreign magazines, comparable to *People*, are available in larger cities and university bookstores or by subscription; college language departments sponsor a variety of activities centering around languages; many popular computer programs and board games are available in common second languages; competitions sponsored by the Junior Classical League, a national organization that offers scholarships for students and hosts a summer convention for Latin students.

University of Toledo in Ohio, the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy and Michigan State University.

- Through the production of an annual *Guide to Educational Programs*, a compendium of programs, summer, weekend and full year, in the Midwest appropriate for gifted students, which is mailed to every talent search family. The guide serves to increase awareness among educators and families of educational opportunities and facilitate access to Midwestern programs by students.
- Through a quarterly magazine *Talent*, which highlights CTD programs and research but also other Midwest programs.
- Through the provision of mailing labels of talent search participants to other institutions that run special educational programs for gifted students so that students can be informed directly about their programs.

# Midwest Talent Search Individual Long-Range Academic Plan

**Score**      **% of MTS Students**  
**at or below your score**

Use this form to plan and record your junior and senior high school course work and extracurricular academic activities. Read *MTS Recommended Planning and Resource Guide*. Reflect on your ACT or SAT scores, your goals, and your interests. Consult with your counselor and parents. Determine the sequence in each area and the academic opportunities outside of your regular course work (e.g., fast-paced summer classes and independent studies) that are best for you. Record these in the "planned" column. Later, record what you did in the "actual" column. Keep your plan updated.

**If your school contact on this sheet is not correct, please e-mail us at [ctd@northwestern.edu](mailto:ctd@northwestern.edu) or call (847)491-3782 to update our records. Thank you!**

|            | Planned Course | Actual Course | Planned Extracurr. | Actual Extracurr. |
|------------|----------------|---------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 8th Grade  | English        |               |                    |                   |
|            | Math           |               |                    |                   |
|            | Science        |               |                    |                   |
|            | Soc. Science   |               |                    |                   |
|            | Foreign Lang.  |               |                    |                   |
|            | Other          |               |                    |                   |
| 9th Grade  | English        |               |                    |                   |
|            | Math           |               |                    |                   |
|            | Science        |               |                    |                   |
|            | Soc. Science   |               |                    |                   |
|            | Foreign Lang.  |               |                    |                   |
|            | Other          |               |                    |                   |
| 10th Grade | English        |               |                    |                   |
|            | Math           |               |                    |                   |
|            | Science        |               |                    |                   |
|            | Soc. Science   |               |                    |                   |
|            | Foreign Lang.  |               |                    |                   |
|            | Other          |               |                    |                   |
| 11th Grade | English        |               |                    |                   |
|            | Math           |               |                    |                   |
|            | Science        |               |                    |                   |
|            | Soc. Science   |               |                    |                   |
|            | Foreign Lang.  |               |                    |                   |
|            | Other          |               |                    |                   |
| 12th Grade | English        |               |                    |                   |
|            | Math           |               |                    |                   |
|            | Science        |               |                    |                   |
|            | Soc. Science   |               |                    |                   |
|            | Foreign Lang.  |               |                    |                   |
|            | Other          |               |                    |                   |

For more information and suggested opportunities for students who scored in the following score ranges, please turn to page 3 in your *MTS Recommended Planning and Resource Guide*.

**Ranges of Performance on the SAT and ACT**

|       |         |         |
|-------|---------|---------|
| A     | Subtest | Scores  |
|       | SAT-V   | 230-470 |
|       | SAT-M   | 200-510 |
|       | ACT-E   | 0-21    |
|       | ACT-R   | 0-21    |
| ACT-M | 0-17    |         |

|       |         |         |
|-------|---------|---------|
| B     | Subtest | Scores  |
|       | SAT-V   | 480-580 |
|       | SAT-M   | 520-600 |
|       | ACT-E   | 22-27   |
|       | ACT-R   | 22-27   |
| ACT-M | 18-23   |         |

|       |         |        |
|-------|---------|--------|
| C     | Subtest | Scores |
|       | SAT-V   | >580   |
|       | SAT-M   | >600   |
|       | ACT-E   | ≥28    |
|       | ACT-R   | ≥28    |
| ACT-M | ≥24     |        |

Center for Talent Development/ Northwestern University Revised 02/18/04

- Through providing support for the efforts of other educators of the gifted within the Midwest to serve gifted children. For example, the 'Academically Talented Youth Program' which began at Kalamazoo College in 1981 and has been replicated at four sites in Michigan, including Hope College, Western Michigan University (Grand Rapids), Michigan State University (East Lansing), and

Central Michigan University (Mount Pleasant), is a collaborative program between local school districts and universities in which talent search students complete 4 years of high-school mathematics or language arts within 2 years and earn high-school credits. Students in a multi-district area are released for one afternoon per week to travel to the host university for their accelerated classes. Universities cover in-kind costs such as classroom and office space and school districts typically pay a minimal tuition fee. Students come from school districts within a 50 mile radius and most schools agree to give students course credits for their work. (See McCarthy, 1998, for a further description). CTD facilitates these programs by providing the mechanism, via the talent search, by which students can qualify for them. The ‘Academically Talented Youth Program’ and subsequent replications embody all the research-based principles of gifted education, including homogeneous grouping, off level testing, acceleration, curriculum compacting and accountability through pre-post testing.

### **Focus on program models and their effectiveness**

The Center for Talent Development began with a talent search and summer program for Grade 7 and 8 students. However, the goals of the Center included exploring different program models and service delivery systems for gifted students. We extended the programming to older and younger students, to different venues and to different areas of talent. Our goal has been to develop program models and evaluate their impacts and effectiveness with gifted learners.

The ‘Saturday enrichment program’ is designed to supplement students’ school curricula with high level enrichment courses. Students study advanced topics and concepts in developmentally appropriate ways. For example, preschool aged children are introduced to topics in mathematics and science that would normally be studied in elementary school. However, given that most preschoolers cannot write fluently, other means of expression and evaluation and other types of classroom activities are used to learn abstract, advanced concepts. Higher level thinking skills are emphasized, as well as connections between concepts. Research conducted by the Center has shown that parents perceived that their children were more motivated to learn and interested in the subject area they studied and had increased academic self-confidence as result of participation in the ‘Saturday enrichment program’. Parents also raised their expectations in terms of academic achievement for their child and some sought and received more appropriate services for their child in school as a result of their experience with the Saturday program (Olszewski-Kubilius & Lee, 2004).

The Center’s ‘LearningLinks’ program enables gifted students to take advanced coursework from home via distance education. Courses are available to students online or in a more traditional, by-mail format. Students may register for the high-school level courses at three different times during the year (October, January and June) and finish the course in a 9 month time frame or less. The program emphasizes



independent study and advanced learning. Recently, 'LearningLinks for the young' was developed which offers courses for students as young as Grade 4 in a 3 month time frame. Research has shown that distance learning is a viable option by which gifted students can obtain challenging and enjoyable academic experiences (Olszewski-Kubilius & Lee, 2005) and that most students took these classes for their own enrichment or because they were unavailable to them through their schools at an early age. Seventy-three percent of students completed their distance learning courses (much higher than the national average of 50%) and 93% earned grade A or B. Although most students were satisfied with most aspects of their distance learning class, some did express dissatisfaction with the lack of direct contact with a teacher. Also, most students who chose to take a course via distance learning did so because of their interest in the subject, the desire to enrich their school study or because the course was unavailable to them at their school. Interestingly, while most students wanted to use advanced technologies to have easy access to teachers, other students and course information, they still desired to work independently with traditional textbooks and written materials.

CTD has extended the model of fast paced classes upwards to high-school aged students and downwards to elementary school aged children in its summer programs. High school students complete 'Advanced Placement' or honors level high-school courses in a 3 week program and elementary school aged students complete high-school level coursework within a 3 week format. Substantial research supports the efficacy of the fast paced model for gifted students (see Olszewski-Kubilius, 1998, for a review) and indicates that students who participate in fast paced classes in which 120 hours of advanced/accelerated instruction is compressed into 75 hours of class time do as well or better on end-of-course standardized tests than older students who take these same courses for a full academic year, as well as performing very well, earning grade A, in subsequent courses. Both of these findings suggest mastery of the subject matter with the accelerated format. CTD has found similar levels of performance for Grade 5 and 6 students who study algebra and Grade 9 and 10 students who complete 'Advanced Placement' courses in the summer (Center for Talent Development, 2003). Research undertaken by the Center to understand the decisions that teachers make regarding content and instructional activities in converting their year long courses into fast paced summer courses indicates that most eliminate repetitious material, expect students to study and learn content on their own to a much greater degree, foster the connections between complex concepts and overarching ideas and teach at a higher, more abstract level and employ more advanced content material (Lee & Olszewski-Kubilius, in press). Our research also revealed that many teachers also rely on lecture methods to get students to learn a great deal of material quickly, capitalizing on gifted students ability to acquire information rapidly and to attend for long periods of time.

Most recently, the Center has developed a program of talent development in the area of leadership (see below). This program has several different models. It began as a program for college students to do volunteer work in communities during their spring breaks. The program combines community involvement and active learning

through volunteerism with traditional classroom instruction to learn about the causes and effects of major social issues such as youth violence, poverty or racism. CTD has extended the program to high-school students in Grades 10–12, who spend a week learning first hand about important social issues by working within communities during their spring break. Students spend several days together prior to their service week learning about the social issues they will soon explore in a real setting and several days afterwards debriefing their observations and experiences. This focus on active learning within communities combined with classroom learning around a major social issue has been developed into 3 week courses which are incorporated into existing CTD summer programs for middle-school and high-school aged students as well as the 1 week courses conducted in the academic year during students' spring breaks and holiday vacations. This program has also been developed into an institute for high-school aged students that consists of multiple classes of students, each focused on a particular social issue, and program components that bring students together across classes, such as special lectures. The leadership institute has been franchised to the Peabody campus of Johns Hopkins University as part of the Center for Talented Youth programs.

This leadership program is an example of CTD's attempt to take a basic program model with its core components of hands on community volunteerism and traditional classroom learning around important social problems and extend it to different age groups (middle-school and high-school), different settings (Eastern and Midwestern universities) and different venues (summer programs and academic year breaks). Currently, CTD is conducting a research project that explores the impact of participation in the leadership program on the community involvement and volunteerism of students 6 months to a year after participation, as well as a study of the characteristics of students who choose to participate in the leadership program in terms of moral development, leadership skills and emotional development. This research is funded by the Malone Family Foundation.

### **Extension to other domains of talent**

The Center for Talent Development has focused on the development of children's academic abilities since its inception, in large part because talent search testing is so effective at discerning verbal and mathematical and scientific reasoning abilities. However, in 1998 CTD expanded its focus to the area of leadership by developing a program that focuses on civic leadership and social entrepreneurship. This program, the 'Civic education program', has been described above. Research has shown that high intellectual ability and leadership are not necessarily strongly correlated. Leaders possess other qualities, such as a highly developed moral code, persuasive ability, social conscience or tolerance of risk taking, that make them exceptional. The 'Civic education program' at CTD has sought to connect the domains of academic talent and leadership by focusing students intellectual energies on a critical and scholarly examination of social issues combined with opportunities to develop and enact action plans to address those issues within their own communities. The

'Civic education program' engages students in thinking about and actively working to resolve significant societal social problems. Students spend part of their time in the classroom and part doing service and volunteer activities, including interacting with people who may be very different from them to learn first hand about issues such as homelessness, youth violence, housing and urban revitalization, social change and the media, rural poverty, Native American issues, immigrant and refugee issues and HIV, all with the purpose of gaining an understanding of the causes and effects of these societal problems and possible solutions. Students frequently meet with community leaders and politicians to gain a perspective on their efforts. During the course students develop projects that consist of ways to raise awareness about the issues within their communities and concrete means to address the problems. Examples of several classes include one that dealt with inner city violence in which students met with community and police officials in Cleveland after rioting had occurred when several unarmed Black young men were killed by the police and a class on political activism in which students traveled to Iowa in the autumn of 2003 to witness the Iowa caucuses and meet with candidates in the 2004 presidential election.

The 'Civic Education Project' was recognized as one of America's most promising new non-profit organizations in 1999 when it received a prestigious Social Entrepreneur Award from Youth Service America, a group committed to increasing the quality and quantity of volunteer opportunities for youth. Follow-up surveys of 'Civic education project' participants found that students report a greater interest in social and civic issues, increased confidence and motivation and more regular participation in community service (Civic Education Project, 2004). Recent program alumni have raised money for an emergency women's shelter by organizing a basketball tournament, lobbied to get presidential candidates to visit their school and discuss education policy, and started tutoring programs with local elementary schools.

While talent search students are certainly eligible for participation in the 'Civic education program', SAT and ACT scores are not used as the primary basis for selection. Criteria do include academic achievement and ability, as demonstrated by grades and class rank as well as standardized test scores, participation in extracurricular activities, leadership potential as demonstrated by awards, honors and holding offices in school or community organizations and exceptional personal qualities, such as responsibility, maturity, sincerity, originality, creativity and a wide range of interests, as demonstrated through application essays and teacher recommendations.

### **Articulated set of programs from pre-K to Grade 12**

Although the Center for Talent Development is accredited as a special function school for the gifted and most of our programs are supplementary to local school programs, we have attempted to build a set of articulated experiences across grade levels. The goal was to enable students to begin taking programs with us as young as

preschool age and to continue with services and programs until the end of high-school. This was accomplished as follows.

- By adding the EXPLORE test to our talent search program in 1994, which enables Grade 3–6 students to take an off level test to discern their academic abilities. We also provide ability and achievement testing to younger children through individual referral to qualified psychologists or via the administration of a testing battery consisting of the ‘Peabody Individual Achievement Test’ and the ‘Ravens Progressive Matrices’ for families that can travel to the Center. Assessment opportunities are currently available to children and families beginning at age 4 up until Grade 9.
- By adding the ‘Saturday enrichment program’ to the Center in 1984 and the ‘Leapfrog summer program’ in 1999 to provide educational programs to students in preschool and early elementary school.
- By adding the ‘Apogee program’ in 1995 to provide summer programs to students in Grades 4–6.
- By adding the ‘Equinox program’ in 1985 to provides programs to students in Grades 10–11.
- By adding courses to our distance education program ‘LearningLinks’ for students in Grades 4–6 in 2002.

In addition to adding programs around the core set that originally existed for Grade 7–9 students, we have attempted to build linkages between programs wherever possible. For example, classes that are offered at the middle-school level are offered at a more advanced level for high-school aged students, including creative writing, philosophy and physics. Classes in our leadership program are offered to middle-school (‘Youth and society’) and high-school students (‘Civic Leadership Institute’). Another example is our classes on law and legal issues, which begin with students in Grades 4–6 with an examination of the legal issues involved in fairy tale trials (‘Order in the courtroom’), and proceeds with a course on law and order for Grade 7–9 students and a course on constitutional law for Grade 10–12 students. Our goal is to create pathways for students to pursue study in an area of interest over time with courses moving from introductory and enrichment to advanced and accelerative. Courses are offered in multiple venues so, for example, a student can take a course as part of a summer program or via distance learning. Our purpose is to develop talent systematically through a set of articulated courses with maximum flexibility for the student.

### **A focus on inclusiveness and under-represented groups**

Since the inception of the Center for Talent Development we have recognized the shortfalls of the talent search as an identification mechanism for giftedness. Namely, the talent search is an excellent tool for assessing the abilities of children who are already achieving, at least as measured by standardized in-grade achievement tests.

It does not assist in the identification of children who show promise of higher achievement but whose home and/or school environments have not fostered the development of their intellectual abilities. Talent search will not identify children who are intellectually talented but who are underachieving due to any number of reasons or causes. It will also not identify children who do not display their abilities on standardized tests. As a result of these recognized limitations and in keeping with best practice, which recommends the use of multiple means of identification, the Center has incorporated the following into its programs and practices.

- For every program that the Center runs there are multiple and alternative means to qualify or enter the program. For example, students can enter the talent search on the basis of performance on standardized, in-grade achievement tests, which is typical and most often the case, but they can also enter on the basis of performance on state level tests, which are usually criterion-referenced, and on the basis of parent or teacher nomination. The rationale behind these options is that many schools, and typically ones that are in lower socio-economic areas, cannot afford to use standardized achievement tests. Thus, their students would be barred the opportunity for off level testing via the talent search. CTD has worked with state officials to determine appropriate cutoffs on state level tests so that many more students can participate in talent search. Our research shows that 16% of Midwest ‘Academic talent search’ participants qualify to participate in the talent search on the basis of state level tests. Another 7% enter via parent nomination. Additionally, research studies have shown that these students scores on the SAT and ACT are comparable with students who enter via the traditional method of performance at the 95th percentile on standardized in-grade achievement tests (Lee & Olszewski; in press).
- For all of our educational programs, including our summer programs, weekend programs and distance learning programs, students who do not have SAT, ACT or EXPLORE scores can enter by submitting an alternative admissions portfolio. The portfolio includes any test scores the student may have (IQ, PSAT, PLAN, etc.), teacher recommendations, report card grades and samples of student work, such as essays). Additionally, students who have taken the ACT or SAT or EXPLORE and do not meet the stated score criteria for a particular course may also submit an alternative admissions portfolio. The portfolios are evaluated by program coordinators to determine whether the CTD course is a good placement for the student.
- The ‘Civic education program’, with its focus on leadership, has always emphasized other characteristics of students in its qualifying criteria, such as evidence of leadership in school or community activities and exceptional personal qualities, as evidenced by teacher recommendations and personal essays.
- The Center has, throughout its more than 20 year history, had special programs to identify and serve students with high potential to achieve whose life circumstances had significant barriers to that achievement. Some of these projects consisted of separate programs for students while others consisted primarily of integrating students into the Center’s existing programs, such as

summer or weekend programs, with the addition of some special support, e.g. a special counselor. A sample listing of some current projects is given below.

1. Project 'Excite' identifies students of color, who are under-represented in accelerated and advanced programs, at Grade 3 and provides enrichment and accelerated classes through the Center's Saturday and summer programs so that they qualify for and succeed in advanced mathematics and science tracks in their local school districts and high-schools.
2. The 'Quaker Oats summer scholars program' identifies talented students from several inner city schools in Chicago and places them in the Center's summer residential programs. Students participate fully in all aspects of the summer program and receive intensive academic counseling and guidance through attendance at one of the Center's weekend conferences and through a special counselor who lives with them in the dormitory during the summer program.
3. The 'Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Young Scholars Program' is a program that CTD administers in the Midwest in conjunction with the foundation and in collaboration with other talent search centers. Very talented students with limited family resources are identified, provided with an educational advisor who develops an individual learning plan for the scholar and given support for talent developing activities such as private school tuition if necessary, summer or distance learning programs, travel abroad, etc. In addition, the Foundation provides its own summer programs and opportunities for scholars to meet and get to know each other.

Past projects included the provision of college counseling to high achieving high-school students with low family incomes who were first generation college attendees (NU-Horizons) (Olszewski-Kubilius & Laubscher, 1996); the development of counseling materials based on the NU Horizons model that teachers can use within their classrooms to increase the level of college counseling for students beyond what the designated college counselor can provide; the development of new models to identify talented minority students for participation in the talent search (funded by the Lloyd A. Fry Foundation).

## **Conclusions**

In summary, the CTD remains connected to its roots in the talent search model developed at the Center for Talented Youth. The persistence of the talent search model and its replication across the USA and to other countries is a testament to its sound scientific basis and widespread applicability and efficacy. CTD has sharpened the focus of talent search on particular areas and extended its scope further, contributing to the usefulness of the model and increasing its contribution to the field of gifted education.

## References

- Center for Talent Development (2003) *Summer program 2003: data analysis* (Evanston, IL, Northwestern University Center for Talent Development).
- Civic Education Project (2004) *Spring break program overview and application* (Evanston, IL, Northwestern University Center for Talent Development).
- Lee, S. Y. & Olszewski-Kubilius, P. (2005) Investigation of high school credit and placement for summer coursework taken outside of local schools, *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 49(1), 37–50.
- Lee, S. Y. & Olszewski Kubilius, P. (in press) A study of instructional methods used in fast paced classes, *Gifted Child Quarterly*.
- Lee, S. Y. & Olszewski Kubilius, P. (in press) Comparisons between talent search students qualifying via scores on standardized tests and via parent nomination, *Roeper Review*.
- McCarthy, C. R. (1998) Assimilating the talent search model into the school day, *Journal of Secondary Gifted Education*, 9(3), 114–123.
- Olszewski-Kubilius, P. (Ed.) (1998) Special issue on talent search, *Journal of Secondary Gifted Education*.
- Olszewski-Kubilius, P. & Laubscher, L. (1996) An investigation of the impact of a college counseling program on economically disadvantaged, academically talented minority students and their subsequent college adjustment, *Roeper Review*, 18(3), 202–206.
- Olszewski-Kubilius, P. & Lee, S. Y. (2004) Parent perceptions of the effects of the Saturday Enrichment Program on gifted students' talent development, *Roeper Review*, 26(3), 156–165.
- Olszewski-Kubilius, P. & Lee, S. Y. (2005) Gifted adolescents' talent development through distance learning, *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 28(1), 1–35.
- Olszewski-Kubilius, P., Laubscher, L., Wohl, V. & Grant, B. (1996) Issues and factors involved in credit and placement for accelerated coursework, *Journal of Secondary Gifted Education*, 8(1), 5–15.

Copyright of High Ability Studies is the property of European Council for High Ability. The copyright in an individual article may be maintained by the author in certain cases. Content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.