



# the challenge

Magazine of The Center for Gifted Studies

## The Center Turns 30: Let's Celebrate

Thirty years! Thirty years of providing opportunities for gifted children, their parents, and their educators! Join us July 2 as we celebrate those thirty years. We have a full day of activities that provides many opportunities to re-connect with old friends or make new friends, see Bowling Green, tour campus, enjoy delicious food, and reminisce.

Start off Saturday morning with brunch at the National Corvette Museum (NCM), home of America's sports car, at 10:00 a.m. Bring your family for a meal, then take a tour of the museum. The NCM has offered our visitors reduced price tickets that Saturday – \$3 instead of the usual \$10. Check our website for reservation information.

If you are a patriotic person and are interested in aviation history, you will want to visit Aviation Heritage Park (AHP), located at Basil Griffin Park. The park currently houses two aircraft, a F4D Phantom II #550 and a Grumman F9F-5 Panther. AHP board members will be at the park from 1:00 until 3:00 p.m. to answer questions and tell stories of famous local aviators. Don't miss this opportunity to see some great military aircraft and meet real heroes such as General Dan Cherry, pilot of the Phantom that shot down a MiG as described in *My Enemy, My Friend*.



The big event of the day will be on the South Lawn of WKU's campus from 3:00 to 6:30 p.m. Join us for barbecue, games, inflatables, music, art, tours, and many more activities. The Center's website has complete information about the anniversary event, local accommodations, and other regional events you might find interesting

as you plan your trip. Be sure to check out the new Center for Gifted Studies Alumni Facebook page where we have links to old camp pictures and rosters from SCATS and VAMPY. While there, be sure to fill out the Alumni Update Survey if you are an alum, so we can keep in touch.

We look forward  
to seeing you on *July 2*

Dear Friends of The Center for Gifted Studies,

Thirty years at The Center for Gifted Studies – Oh, my, how time flies. This year is a landmark anniversary for The Center. The idea of The Center first surfaced at a meeting of university deans, public school teachers, and parents that Dean J. T. Sandefur called to ascertain interest in gifted education. This 27th edition of *The Challenge* tells the story of ways The Center continues to provide services and programs for children who are gifted and talented, educators (teachers, counselors, principals, and central office education leaders), as well as parents of gifted children.

What has made it possible for The Center to offer programs and services over three decades? No doubt, the answer to that question is you, Friends of The Center. You have made gifts of resources and time. Gifts have made it possible to offer

specific workshops annually at no cost to participants. You have made gifts, both large and small, that provide numerous scholarships as financial assistance to children and young people who qualify for programming but who need a financial boost to participate. You have volunteered in numerous ways, and The Center

depends on volunteers to accomplish what it does with a small staff.

You have shared information with other educators, parents, and young people who might want to be involved in The Center's opportunities. You have participated or taught in summer and Saturday programming. You have come to the Advanced Placement Institute or a workshop on the social-emotional needs of gifted children or any of the

professional development opportunities offered by The Center. You have been one The Center counts on.

I am proud of The Center's thirty years, and

I hope you will join us in the celebration on July 2. Plan to make The Center's celebration the first day of your Fourth of July weekend.

Sincerely,



Julia Link Roberts

Mahurin Professor of Gifted Studies



## Letter from Julia

### July 2, 2011 30th Anniversary Celebration

Brunch at the National Corvette Museum  
10:00

(Reservations online)

Aviation Heritage Park  
1:00 to 3:00

(No reservations necessary)

Tours of Ransdell Hall & Schneider Hall  
3:00 to 4:00

30th Celebration  
3:00 to 6:30  
(Reservations online)



**the  
challenge**

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# HIGH SPEED SUPER SATURDAYS

BY CARA PITCHFORD

"OH MY GOSH! This is amazing! I just don't know how this works," exclaimed a wide-eyed first grader, as he shifted levers on the hovercraft in the science exhibit at the National Corvette Museum (NCM) during Winter Super Saturdays. "That's what we are here to explore," explained Katie Frassinelli, *From Here to There* class instructor (SCATS 1993-94; Paris 1995; Advisory Board Member).

Katie, marketing director of the NCM, designed this class about transportation with plenty of hands-on activities and time in the museum science exhibit for some first and second graders involved in Winter Super Saturdays. During the first week of class, Aviation Heritage Park's Bob Pitchford shared his expertise with airplanes, teaching the kids about aerodynamics, which led into

the exploration of the museum displays. Bob and Katie helped the students use the interactive displays in the museum so that they could better understand the concepts of gravity, friction, lift, and inertia.

During the second week, NCM Events Manager Roc Linkov explored the concept of simple machines, both in cars and out in the world. To make sure the students understood, Katie and Roc held a scavenger hunt in the museum to locate examples of the different types of simple machines. The kids were thrilled when they were admitted into the Corvette portion of the museum to see the history of America's sports car. They ended their day by creating hovercraft and puff mobiles to demonstrate understanding of the forms of transportation they had discussed.

Transportation on the water was the topic during the third week. Katie led the students in an experiment to

students



Cara Pitchford

determine which materials float and which sink by creating boats out of clay and aluminum foil to see whose boat could hold the most weight. Some amazing, seaworthy contraptions were created and tested to see their weight endurance.

A highlight for the class was moving to Corvette Boulevard within the museum itself, where Steve Grilli, Quality Manager of the GM Corvette Assembly Plant, and Eric Millett, GM's Business Planner, gave the students a personal tour of a brand new ZR1 Corvette. Steve and Eric talked with the children about how the operation of car production works at the Corvette plant. The kids asked many questions about automobiles, and the engineers were impressed with the students' grasp of the concepts involved.

The last week of class, artist Tyler Hardin traveled from Cynthiana, KY, to teach the students how to draw cars. After their artistic endeavor, the kids designed their own cars, powered by balloons and rockets. The highlight of the week came at the end of the day when each child was treated to a ride in a Z06 Corvette by an official High Speed Performance Driver. What an opportunity for 15 happy first and second grade high ability students!



*My daughter enjoys being able to express her creative side but also thrives on and craves the scientific and mathematical offerings that her wonderful classroom teachers just don't have the time to build on and develop. She has enjoyed the staff at Super Saturdays and always feels welcomed and special every time she arrives at class. My middle child, a kindergartener, is actually jealous and cannot wait to have the opportunity herself to attend Super Saturdays!*

—JULIE HARTMAN, Super Saturdays Parent

**Super Saturdays provides opportunities for high ability students in grades 1-8 to broaden the scope of their interests and interact with other bright young people. The classes emphasize a hands-on, minds-on approach to learning in an environment in which creative and critical thinking are encouraged. In the winter session, 536 students from three states participated. Although most of the classes are held on WKU's campus, we sometimes partner with other organizations, such as the National Corvette Museum and the Louisville Science Center.**

## *Preview of Super Saturdays*

**Fall Super Saturdays**  
October 29,  
November 5, 12, & 19, 2011

**Winter Super Saturdays**  
January 28,  
February 4, 11, & 18, 2012





# The World Council for Gifted and Talented Children Headquarters Settles In at WKU

The international headquarters of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children moved to WKU on January 1, 2011. A search for the Executive Administrator for the World Council was launched at that time, and preparations are ongoing for the World Conference in Prague this August and for

the election of two members of the Executive Committee. Lots of activity arrived in The Center for Gifted Studies when the headquarters moved from Winnipeg, Canada.

Gary A. Ransdell Hall opened in late January as the home of the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences and

the headquarters of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children. The office of the World Council is located in room 2007 in a beautiful suite. Thanks to the generosity of Lexmark International, the office is equipped with a printer/copier. Sam Moore, a member of the Advisory Board of The Center for Gifted Studies, made that

gift possible. Thank you, Sam and Lexmark.

The search for the Executive Administrator resulted in the hiring of Tracy Harkins. Tracy comes to us with a range of administrative experiences including international ones. Welcome, Tracy.

The World Council holds a conference every other year,

and the next World Conference will be held in Prague, the Czech Republic, August 8-12. The host organization in Prague has been busy registering participants, planning the program, and generally making arrangements for the biennial gathering of educators and other individuals interested in gifted education.

**For information about the World Council or to join the organization, go to <https://world-gifted.org>.**



Cara Pitchford



# The Center Travels to ITALY



Travel in Italy is both educational and enjoyable. Just ask the 33 middle and high school honors students and adults who spent 10 days traveling with The Center over spring break. Specifically, they left April 1 with Julia Roberts, Dick Roberts, and Tracy Inman leading the group.

The travelers, many of whom had traveled abroad previously with The Center, had opportunities to visit a metropolis in Rome, a smaller city in Florence as well as smaller towns in Assisi and Orvieto. They also saw the countryside from the coach as they moved from one location to another.

The sights and experiences varied from day to day. A stop at Pisa allowed all to witness the leaning tower. A day trip to Pompeii let all walk the streets of a city caught in time. What would a trip to Italy be without the painting and statuary of Michelangelo, the ancient ruins of the Colosseum and the Forum, or numerous stops for gelato?

Interest in Spring Break in Italy has led to a fall trip being planned to repeat the travel opportunity. Dates for Fall Break in Italy are September 30 to October 9, 2011. The fall travel opportunity will not displace the spring trip to France. That travel experience will take place from May 28 to June 6, 2012.



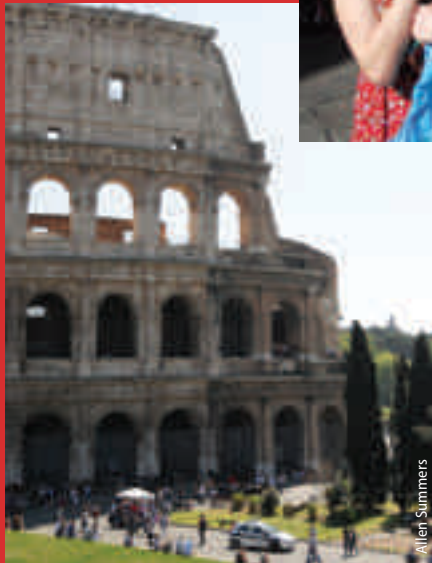




Allen Summers



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# Alumni Update

**KATIE DAVIS** (VAMPY 1999-2002; London 2002) earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Boston University in 2007. She moved to New York City and worked on and off Broadway as a stage manager for two years before relocating to Wichita, KS, to work with Habitat for Humanity through AmeriCorps. Currently she lives in Wichita, where she serves in homelessness and housing services and works as a political consultant.

**JULIE HANSBROUGH** (Super Saturdays 1998-2003; London 2006; Paris 2007) is currently finishing her sophomore year at Harvard, where she is a computer science major. She plays oboe in the pops orchestra and writes a video gaming column for the *Harvard Crimson*. This summer she will be working as an intern in software development at Amazon in Seattle, WA.

**KELLY ANN SEWARD** (VAMPY 1990) graduated from Samford University in Birmingham, AL, in 1995 with a BA in Graphic Design. She spent the next ten years in various design and art director positions. In 2008, she relocated to Cincinnati, OH, where she is an office manager. Kelly spends her free time volunteering with Give Back Cincinnati, The Dragonfly Foundation, and other local events as well as enjoying live music, spending time with family and her dogs, and traveling whenever possible.

**Advisory Board Member DAVID LAIRD was recently named President and Chief Executive Officer of Jewish Hospital & St. Mary's HealthCare in Louisville, KY. With a strong and diverse background in healthcare, he served as Senior Vice President of Strategy and Business Development since early 2008. David's father, Larry Laird, received one of the first Challenge Awards given out by The Center honoring those individuals who have made a lasting impact in the field of gifted education.**





# GATTON ACADEMY STUDENTS RECOGNIZED

BY COREY ALDERDICE

Two Gatton Academy students were recognized this spring by the Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Program. Sarah Schrader (VAMPY 2008) of Bowling Green became the second Gatton Academy student awarded the prestigious Goldwater Scholarship. Clarice Esch of Somerset received an honorable mention in the highly competitive, national program.

For Derick Strode, Coordinator for Research, Internships, and Scholarships at the Gatton Academy, research acts as an extension of every concept students encounter in the classroom and is a central component of the Academy experience. "Sarah and Clarice's acknowledgements in the Goldwater competition confirm that the research Gatton Academy students have access to at WKU is on-target with the best undergraduate research in the nation," Derick said.

Colleges and universities must nominate students for consideration, and the program limits four-year institutions to four nominations each year. In 2011, 275 scholarships were awarded from nearly 1,100 nominees. Scholarship recipients receive \$7,500 annually to cover undergraduate tuition, fees, books, or room and board.

**Sarah Schrader** said the process of applying for and receiving the Goldwater Scholarship has solidified her desire to pursue a career in research. In the lab with Dr. Rodney King, associate professor of biology and Super Saturdays instructor, she has been discovering a new virus that can only infect bacterial cells and is characterizing it based on its DNA and physical properties.



Sarah plans to pursue a Ph.D. in molecular biology or genetics and to become a research scientist in genetics. She attributes much of her success to the Gatton Academy for the many opportunities that the program offers as well as the Office of Scholar

Development for helping to refine her Goldwater Scholarship Application. For Sarah, receiving the award is just the beginning of even more exciting pursuits ahead: "With a good taste of what real scientific research involves, I am more confident than ever that my future career lies in research."

A graduating senior, Sarah was named a U.S. Presidential Scholar, one of only 141 in the entire nation. Congratulations, Sarah! She will continue her undergraduate studies at WKU.



**Clarice Esch** has been researching methods to utilize lichens to reduce the need for nitrogen-based fertilizers under the direction of Dr. Martin Stone, Leichhardt Professor of Horticulture. Like Sarah, she plans to pursue a Ph.D. after she completes her undergraduate career. According to Clarice, her research has shaped her thinking on her future. "Through this project," she said, "I discovered a passion for conducting research and intend to continue conducting research throughout the rest of my college career and beyond." Clarice will also continue her degree at WKU.

The Goldwater Scholarship Program seeks to recognize excellence in the sciences and to encourage talented students to pursue research careers. Those results – both now and in the future – come through hard work and dedication.

"Both students have put forth a tireless effort into their respective research projects since the day they arrived at the Gatton Academy two years ago," Derick said. "They have each accumulated countless hours in the lab and greenhouse, reading journals from their fields and writing up their own projects. I see their Goldwater recognition as equal-part tribute to the level of scientific research they have conducted and the endless work ethic that these students have put forth."

# Friends

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Rachel Roberts-Galbraith  
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Prospect, KY

Christina Garcia  
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Bowling Green, KY

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Counselor) & Anna Hitron  
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Ints & Melissa Kampars  
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Richard & Julia Roberts  
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Martin & Angela Rowe  
Harrisburg, IL

J. T. & Martha Sandefur  
Bowling Green, KY

Murali & Madhavi Santapuram  
Glasgow, KY

Bud Schlinker  
Bowling Green, KY

## THANKS ALSO GO TO...

Katie Fleming Frassinelli,  
Laura Fleming, &  
Scottie Beth Fleming  
**Alumni Facebook Page**

Tom Foster  
**Artwork for 30th Year**

Frank & Sharon Gieselmann  
**Copper Sculpture**  
Lexmark International  
**Equipment for  
World Council**

David & Ann Scott  
Russellville, KY

Justin & Marcia Eisenstein  
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1998-2000; Counselor; TA) Segall  
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Janet Skees  
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Jay & Patsy Sloan  
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Olu & Raymonda Stevens  
Prospect, KY

Kathy Strunk  
Nashville, TN

Flora Templeton Stuart  
Bowling Green, KY  
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Twice Exceptional Fund*

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Bruce & Joyce Teale  
New Port Richey, FL

Mary Nancy Todd  
Bardstown, KY

Rocky & Jennifer Toll  
Shepherdsville, KY

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Kuttawa, KY

Nora Traum  
(Paris 1997; London 1998)  
Raleigh, NC

Michael & Ashley Farris Trimble  
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Coralville, IA

David & Jill VonGruben  
Wildwood, MO

Kristen VonGruben  
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Fenton, MO

Bob & Catherine Ward  
Bowling Green, KY

Hillel Weinberg & Debra Weiner  
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Dennie & Peggy Welsh  
Philpot, KY

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Bill & Rachel Farmer  
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Georgetown, KY

Max & Lucy Wilson  
Hickman, KY

Lori Wittlin (VAMPY 1987-89)  
Arlington, VA

Stuart & Linda Yeoman  
Alvaton, KY

Haiwang Yuan & Shizhen Gao  
Bowling Green, KY

## A GIFT ESTABLISHES THE VICTORIA FELLOWS

Victoria, Linda, and John Kelly have made a gift and a three-year commitment to The Center for Gifted Studies that will initiate a program to build advocacy support for advanced learners among decision-makers in education in Kentucky. Please watch for more information on this new initiative. Julia Roberts notes, "This gift will make it possible to make a huge difference for gifted children as the inaugural class of The Victoria Fellows has a year of collaborating to build support for advanced learners." Thank you, Victoria, Linda, and John.

Meaningful youth leadership opportunities have increased over the past twenty years. As adults recognize the value of intentionally engaging youth in leadership development experiences, the desire to inspire self-awareness and measure gains from these experiences has also increased. But because leadership development has long been considered the territory of business or management, much of the existing research applies to the adults functioning in a corporate environment. The same is true for leadership assessments and inventories, most being written, tested, and tabulated for adult relevance.

*The Everyday Leadership Skills and Attitudes (ELSA) Inventory* (Free Spirit Publishing, 2010; <http://www.freespirit.com>) is different. This 49-statement, self-scoring leadership inventory is written specifically for tweens and teens. It takes into consideration the unique attitudes and perspectives kids and teens have as they learn to be leaders and seek ways to strengthen and develop leadership skills and competencies. And because kids and teens often have limited exposure to deliberate leadership “training,” the inventory is an excellent springboard for infusing leadership into everyday settings.

The ELSA inventory uses youth-friendly language and a four-point Likert scale: Not like Me (Never), A Little

# The Everyday Leadership Skills and Attitudes Inventory (ELSA) for Tweens and Teens

## *A Youth-Specific Tool to Use in Any Setting*

BY MARIAM MACGREGOR



like Me (Sometimes), Often like Me (Usually), and This is Me! (Always). The lack of an Undecided or Don't Know option is intentional, designed to prompt kids and teens to carefully consider their responses instead of circling a non-committal response. Of course,

some statements may leave teens wishing for an Undecided option, particularly if objectively assessing their leadership skills is unfamiliar. In this situation, the facilitator can encourage teens to choose between the two lower options on the scale (Not like me or A little like me) because they aren't strongly convinced that a particular statement describes their leadership behaviors or connect to their everyday experiences.

After completing the inventory, which takes approximately 15-20 minutes, youth use their results to explore seven youth-leadership relevant categories: Self-Awareness (SA), Working with Others (WWO), Qualities of Leadership (QOL), Communicating, Listening, and Being Heard (CLBH), Decision Making and Problem Solving (DMPS), Social Solutions (SS), and Seeking Opportunities (SO).

### LOOKING AHEAD TO LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE XVI

This winter Barbara Lewis will focus on service leadership at Leadership Institute XVI. A national award-winning author, Barbara has penned such works as *What Do You Stand For? For Kids*; *What Do You Stand For? For Teens*; *The Kid's Guide to Social Action*; *The Kid's Guide to Service Projects*; *The Teen Guide to Global Action*; and *Kids with Courage*. Mark December 1 and 2 on your calendars, and check the web later this summer for more detailed information.





Cara Pitchford

No two leadership programs are alike, yet leadership skills and attitudes in young people run along similar paths regardless of the leadership experiences in which they're involved. While the *ELSA Inventory* aligns directly with the *Building Everyday Leadership* curriculum, field tests across a wide range of leadership programs and courses involving teens and tweens indicate its validity with all youth, regardless of program. There are various ways to incorporate this tool into one's leadership efforts:

- ▶ As a pre- or post-assessment tool to measure changes in attitudes and skill development.
- ▶ As a goal-setting tool within an experience to identify strengths and challenge areas and establish leadership goals mindful of those areas.
- ▶ As a personal-awareness tool to help teens gain a greater understanding of their leadership abilities.

### LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE XV

For the past fifteen years, The Center has hosted the Leadership Institute. Designed to equip educators and other interested adults with strategies and resources to develop leadership skills in young people, the Institute shares cutting-edge research and best practices for leadership development. This year Mariam MacGregor of Youth Leadership introduced the *ELSA* inventory (as discussed in her article) in addition to effective strategies from her *Building Everyday Leadership* curriculum. Twenty-five participants came from 18 districts.

- ▶ As a team-awareness tool to help teens assess the skills, talents, and short-comings of their team or group.
- ▶ As part of a leadership program to collect data measuring the effectiveness of leadership education and development efforts.

If you're interested in further exploring youth leadership, using the *Inventory* and the *Building Everyday Leadership* curriculum and supplemental materials, or finding additional resources and training opportunities, visit <http://www.youthleadership.com> or contact Mariam MacGregor at [mariam@youthleadership.com](mailto:mariam@youthleadership.com).

The idea of an excellence gap may be a new concept for many, but it is critically important to the future. What is an excellence gap? That answer is twofold. First, a gap exists between the potential of high ability students and their performance. The fact that only a small percentage scores at Advanced Levels on state and national assessments suggests we are not meeting their needs. Second, the differences between subgroups of students performing at the highest levels of achievement are another component of the excellence gap. *Mind the (Other) Gap: The Growing Excellence Gap in K-12 Education* (2011) makes the critical nature of the excellence gap clear: "... continuing to pretend that a nearly complete disregard of high achievement is permissible, especially among underperforming subgroups, is a formula for a mediocre K-12 education system and long-term economic decline" (p. 34). What do the authors mean by "disregard for high achievement" for underrepresented groups? Reading a few startling facts makes it clear:

- ▶ Large gaps exist in advanced achievement of underrepresented groups (i.e., low income students, minorities, English Language Learners) relative to their peers on multiple assessments.
- ▶ Eighth graders scoring at the Advanced Level in reading have stagnated for all ethnic groups. Black students scoring at this level round to 0%.
- ▶ The top 10% of low income and minority students score well below the Advanced Level.
- ▶ In both grades 4 and 8, only a very small percentage of low-income, minority, and English Language Learner students score at the Advanced Level in math – percentages range from .05% to 2%.

# Plucker Discusses the Growing Excellence Gap in K-12 Education

- ▶ Low income White students outscored non-low income Black and Hispanic students.
- ▶ Only 1% of fourth and twelfth graders scored at Advanced Levels in science.
- ▶ Only 2% of eighth graders scored at Advanced Levels in science.
- ▶ White fourth graders scoring at the Advanced Level in math are roughly

2-3 grade levels ahead of the highest scoring non-white, English Language Learners, or low income students.

- ▶ White eighth graders scoring at the Advanced Level in math are roughly 4-5 grade levels ahead of the highest scoring non-white, English Language Learners, or low income students.\*

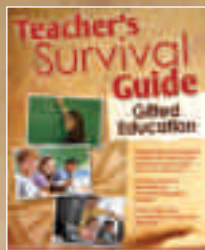
This ground-breaking study of the excellence gap, written by Jonathan Plucker, Nathan Burroughs, and Ruiting Song, examines data, explores and predicts trends, and makes recommendations to reduce the excellence gap. This is a must-read for all stakeholders in education.

Dr. Plucker, director of the Center for Evaluation and Educational Policy at Indiana University, shared the report's findings with multiple audiences over his two-day visit to Kentucky as part of the Wedge Lecture Series. On February 15, he addressed the WKU community in the morning and area school leaders in the afternoon. On the 16th, he presented the data to school, community, and political leaders in Frankfort. Superintendent of Warren County Schools





## Teacher's Survival Guide: Gifted Education



Julia Roberts and her daughter Julia Roberts Boggess (SCATS; VAMPY; Counselor; Super Saturdays and SCATS Instructor) have written *Teacher's Survival Guide: Gifted Education*, a book that became available in May. Julie is the librarian at Pearre Creek Elementary School in Williamson County, TN.

Julia and Julie's *Teacher's Survival Guide: Gifted Education* covers topics essential to teachers interested in gifted education, including tips and strategies for recognizing and identifying giftedness, encouraging creativity, and providing the multiple opportunities and resources gifted kids need. For example, chapters include Let's Start at the Beginning: Who Are Gifted Children?; Making Differentiation Defensible; Strategies to Light the Fire of Learning; Making All Special Teachers the Gifted Child's Best Resources; and Excellence: An Important But Elusive Goal in Schools. Go to [www.prufrock.com](http://www.prufrock.com) to order your copy now.

Tim Murley encouraged all of his district and school administrators to attend: "Dr. Plucker addressed the excellence gap issue in a very real way, using up-to-date facts easily understood. His presentation is one of the best that I have ever seen of that type. He believes in what we are doing and inspires us to do better with stretching all learners. It's an excellent presentation that all educators should hear."

Perhaps the most important part of the report lies in the recommendations. Necessary steps must be taken by decision-makers to reduce the excellence gap:

- ▶ Make Closing the Excellence Gap a State and National Priority.
  - Expose people to the data.
  - Policymakers and educators should ask two questions:
    1. How will this impact advanced students?
    2. How will this help more students perform at advanced levels?

- ▶ Acknowledge That Both Minimum Competency and Excellence Can Be Addressed at the Same Time.
- ▶ Set a Realistic Goal to Shrink Gaps.
- ▶ Determine the Appropriate Mix of Federal, State, Local Policies and Interventions.
  - Use things that we know work well such as grouping, identification of gifted students, professional development.
- ▶ Include the Performance of Advanced Students in Discussions of Common Standards.
- ▶ Address the "Low-Hanging Policy Fruit" Immediately.
  - Abolish policies that penalize advanced students such as a rigid age cutoff for starting

kindergarten or tying financial aid to diplomas thus circumventing those who start college early.

- ▶ Conduct More Research on Advanced Learning and Talent Development.

One of the hot topics in education is the achievement gap – and rightly so. In fact, shrinking that gap is one of the premises of No Child Left Behind. Equally important, though, is the excellence gap. Do what you can to encourage high achievement for all populations. Download your copy to share with decision-makers at <http://ceep.indiana.edu/mindthegap/>.

\* All startling facts come from the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data in reading, math, and science.

### ***Policymakers and educators should ask two questions:***

1. How will this decision impact advanced students?
2. How will this decision help more students perform at advanced levels?



Cara Pitchford

# Project GEMS Students 'Catch' a Lesson

BY CARA PITCHFORD



Cara Pitchford

In January, Infectious Disease Specialist Dr. Rebecca Shadowen had great advice for sixth grade Project GEMS (Gifted Education in Math and Science) students from Cumberland Trace, North Warren, and Bristow elementary schools: “Studying is very important. Learning details is what may give us the chance to help others in the future.” She spent the next hour with them sharing those details about infectious diseases – from what the cells look like to how people contract the diseases to how people get rid of them (if they do). Dr. Shadowen is the director of infection control and the

hospital epidemiologist at two Bowling Green hospitals. In addition to practicing medicine in the areas of infectious diseases, travel medicine, and health-care epidemiology, Dr. Shadowen is also the mother of two SCATS campers: Katie (SCATS 2010) and Jesse (SCATS 2010).

Project GEMS is a five-year federally funded Javits grant awarded to The Center for Gifted Studies in partnership with Warren County Public Schools. An important part of the grant is problem-based learning in science and mathematics. When sixth grade teachers began prepping for the William and Mary



science unit *No Quick Fix*, they realized it called for specialized knowledge. Dr. Shadowen was very willing to help out. Not only did she work with the teachers, but she also presented information to the students themselves.

Dr. Shadowen's presentation for the students was engaging with sounds and visuals to help the students understand her message that began with an explanation of the human immune system. As her instruction progressed, the students were given a mini-lesson on some of the immune system's worst enemies — infections and diseases. The kids' eyes riveted to the screen when the physician displayed information about bioterrorism and explained how important the students' knowledge of detail would be to our country's security in the future.

Dr. Shadowen ended the presentation with a simulation demonstrating the impact of vaccinations on the health of our nation. She started with one "sick" person, then showed how contagion spread through sneezing, coughing, kissing, and sharing food. She walked through the crowd of over 200 students telling the students as she touched their shoulder that she was passing on an infectious disease for which they had not been vaccinated. By the end, over a third were "infected." Baylen Wardlow, a sixth grader at North Warren Elementary, said, "I didn't want her to touch me. I thought I would catch the disease! She really made me think about it."

Dr. Shadowen made science real for these students and gave them the background needed to begin their problem-based unit. They couldn't wait to cultivate their own bacteria in petri dishes. Rich learning experiences is what Project GEMS is all about. Students examine real-world issues by thinking critically and creatively about them. Thanks to the friends of The Center — like Rebecca Shadowen — we are able to provide such engaging learning opportunities.

## ANNOUNCING ONLINE GIVING FOR THE CENTER

We live in an era of instant gratification — books, clothing, even groceries may be ordered and delivered to our door with simply the click of a mouse. The Center for Gifted Studies is pleased to offer the convenience of connection to those we serve through our presence on the web. Within the last two years, we have completely revamped our website to provide useful information to the educators, parents, and young people we serve. Each day, our Facebook community continues to grow with fans who "like" us. And our Camp Blog offers a forum for alumni, parents, and prospective campers who wish to discuss the details of camp life at The Center.

Most recently, The Center for Gifted Studies is pleased to offer friends the opportunity to financially support our programs through a secure online giving site. Want to make a single annual gift to support a specific program within The Center? Sure! Want to make a gift in honor or in memory of someone? Okay! Want to make a monthly gift that occurs throughout the year? No problem!

Your gift to The Center is unique, and we want to provide you with every opportunity to structure it in a way that is meaningful for you. Whether you designate your gift to help a young person attend camp for the first time or you support a lecture series that will inspire educators and parents to better respond to the gifted young people in their lives, know that you and your gift are special to The Center and are vital for our continued success.

To give a gift online, go to our web site [www.wku.edu/gifted](http://www.wku.edu/gifted). Then click on *Support The Center* then *Give a Gift Online*.





Cara Pitchford

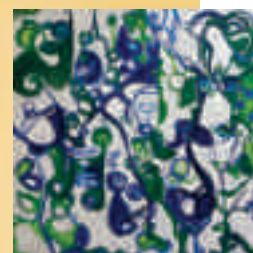
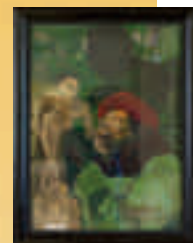
## Bill Braden Honored

Friend to The Center and to gifted children everywhere, Dr. Bill Braden was recently honored by the American Counseling Association (ACA) as winner of the Carl D. Perkins Government Relations Award. This award honors an ACA member who has made a significant contribution to the counseling profession by influencing public policy at the state or national level. Executive Director of the Kentucky Counseling Association, Bill's advocacy activities are impacted both by longevity and his counseling leadership roles. Over the past fifty years, because of his diverse leadership roles at the state and federal levels, he has had the rare opportunity to be involved in virtually every major advocacy action for counseling. This advocacy includes the social-emotional needs of gifted children. Congratulations, Bill!

## WANTED: ORIGINAL ART

Schneider Hall, home of The Center for Gifted Studies and the Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science, is beginning to be beautifully decorated with original art. Gracious friends have donated art in memory or honor of someone special in their lives. Others have given art to support our mission and vision. We will welcome new gifts of art.

Art is also needed to raise funds in honor of our 30 years. On July 2, in addition to artists setting up booths, we will host a sale of original art. To do that, we need donations. Alumni and friends, if you are an artist (or have influence over one!), please consider giving a piece to The Center either for sale or to enhance Schneider Hall – or both! Contact Julia Roberts at [julia.roberts@wku.edu](mailto:julia.roberts@wku.edu) for more details.







# A Celebratory Reception in Frankfort

On February 22, The Center for Gifted Studies hosted a reception in Frankfort to honor legislators and to celebrate 30 years of providing services to gifted and talented young people, their educators, and their parents. Dozens of legislators attended to show support for The Center, Gatton Academy, KAGE, and gifted education.

Berry Hill Mansion provided the perfect setting for conversation, food, and drink. Many WKU dignitaries participated in discussion: President Gary Ransdell; Vice President for Public Affairs Robbin Taylor; Gatton Academy Director Tim Gott; and Ogden College Dean Blaine Ferrell among others. Also in attendance was a long-time friend of The Center, Ogden College Associate Dean Bruce Kessler who began his relationship with us as a teaching assistant and later as a VAMPY teacher. Bruce remarked: "It was refreshing to see so many policymakers, from Senators David Givens and Mike Wilson to Representatives Jim DeCesare and Jody Richards and our own President Ransdell, getting together in support of gifted education and The Center for Gifted Studies. It was fun visiting with everyone, but the

thing that really struck me was that everyone was actually talking about the needs of gifted children and what they could do to help."

Another attendee, CEO of DataSeam Brian Gupton, agreed with Bruce: "It was great to see the reception well-attended by both legislators and educators alike. There continues to be a strong advocacy for gifted students in Frankfort, and this advocacy is important as we continue to develop Kentucky's next-generation economy through the future efforts of this group of talented children."

A special thank you goes to Board Member Kate Hinkle of Shelbyville for planning the reception. Kate graciously commented: "The evening in Frankfort at Berry Hill was a lovely event in a truly exceptional place that gave us the opportunity to celebrate The Center and its many accomplishments with elected leaders. If you reflect on what The Center for Gifted Studies has done for Kentucky's gifted children over the last 30 years, it is certainly worthy of celebration." The reception was a wonderful way to kick off the 30th year.



Dr. Bruce Kessler can be identified in multiple ways: Associate Dean in the Ogden College of Science and Engineering; mathematics professor; dear friend of The Center; VAMPY instructor and former teaching assistant; husband to endorsed teacher and former summer counselor and Super Saturdays director, Heather

(whom he first met in VAMPY's early years); father to four children, two of whom are Super Saturdays, SCATS, and/or VAMPY veterans; and, recently, comic book creator. Operation Comics blends creativity, mathematics, bright students, and a super hero. Although Bruce's brain child, Operation Comics received great input from Dr. Janet Tassell of the School of Teacher Education and Tressa Tullis, a mathematics education major, SKyTeach student, and illustrator. Bruce answered some questions about this creative endeavor.

# COMIC BOOKS TO TEACH MATHEMATICS?

*Bruce Kessler Says Yes*

## What is Operation Comics?

The name is a play on the comic book in which Superman first appeared, Action Comics, with a mathematical twist. It is a story of a strongman do-gooder named Wonderguy who patrols his city looking for people in trouble. In each issue, he is put into situations where strength alone will not save the day. Luckily, in the first issue, he befriends two elementary school students, Claire

and Dillon, who help him out with their understanding of basic mathematics.

It was important to me that the real heroes of the stories be the students, because I wanted the readers (4th – 6th graders are the target audience) to identify with the students and aspire to be like them. Mathematics content, appropriate for the target audience according to NCTM Standards, is embedded into each issue.



Joe Imel



## MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR BERTA SEMINAR

The annual Berta Excellence in Education Lecture Series focusing on the social and emotional needs of gifted and talented young people continues October 24 and 25. Dr. Thomas Hébert, professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Georgia and author of *Understanding the Social and Emotional Lives of Gifted Students*, will address

parents the evening of the 24th and present a six-hour workshop for educators, counselors, and administrators on the 25th. As always, the events are free and open to the public, thanks to the generosity of Vince and Kathleen Berta. More detail will be available on the web soon. Make plans to join us!

### How did the idea originate?

I went to an IdeaFestival meeting in Louisville, and they had a cartoonist, Keith Bendis, taking minutes of the meeting on three big 4' by 8' sheets of paper on the wall. I remember thinking that anyone would read these minutes, whether they cared anything at all about the meeting, just because they were so eye-catching and humorous. I remembered that they used to make comic (or graphic novel) versions of literary masterpieces like *Moby Dick*, etc., and I thought that someone should try to present mathematics in the same fashion. Although there had been some use of illustrations to convey mathematical ideas and even a couple of issues of a mathematical superhero (where math was his power, drawn for an older audience), no one had tried what I had in mind.

### Explain the publication and distribution process.

Once we have a comic drawn, colored, and text bubbled, we submit it to our printer. Cumberland Trace Elementary gets 225 copies of each comic for use in their 4th through 6th grade math classes. Janet is measuring their impact and will be assisted by Tressa. I also create an electronic version of the comics to



place on the Barnes & Noble PubIt website for sale as a NOOKbook. With the help of Dr. Gordon Baylis, Vice-President for Research at WKU, and due to several requests, we are starting a webpage where hard copies of the comics will be on sale. This site should be operational soon.

### How can the general public get access?

The most economical way right now to access the content is as a NOOKbook. Even if someone does not have a NOOK or NOOKcolor, one can still get the free reader for PC and Mac computers and

for the iPad. Teachers could conceivably download one copy of each of the comics to their classroom computer and place the comics up on their Smart-Board.

### Do you see a tie to gifted children?

Yes, in a few ways. The original idea was to put mathematics in front of students that may not necessarily enjoy mathematics in a format that would capture their attention. Not all gifted students enjoy mathematics but may rather enjoy art or comics or superhero stories. Operation Comics would be an excellent avenue to improve their attitude toward mathematics and its study. They would also be a nice hook for the student younger than our target audience that is ahead of the curve in mathematics and/or reading.

Dr. Mary Evans, Principal of Cumberland Trace, is excited about Operation Comics: "Teaching math with comic books is motivating for our students. It is refreshing to see children use their math abilities to solve real world problems that superheroes can't even solve. Bruce's creative story lines coupled with Annie Erskine and Tressa Tullis's delightful illustrations create engaging math learning experiences."



Cara Pitchford

# The Miracle Worker Sparks Interest in Twice-Exceptional Children

Helen Keller was certainly a twice-exceptional individual. She had a definite disability and was also advanced in her thinking, making her twice exceptional. The Arts Education Task Force, Inc. produced *The Miracle Worker* and made a gift to establish a twice-exceptional focus within The Center for Gifted Studies. The proceeds from the performances of *The Miracle Worker* established a fund to support professional development on twice-exceptional learners and scholarships for young people with dual exceptionalities to participate in programs offered by The Center for Gifted Studies.

The first professional development opportunity will be a one-day workshop



Erin Denny

on twice-exceptional children – how to identify them and strategies to allow them to thrive. The date is September 13, and the presenters are Dr. Elizabeth Nielson and Dr. Dennis Higgins, both from the University of New Mexico. This workshop will be at the Carroll Knicely Center in Bowling Green and will be offered at no cost to participants. Please share information about this opportunity with parents, teachers, and counselors. Thank you, Flora Templeton Stuart, for establishing this fund in the WKU Foundation for The Center for Gifted Studies to make such professional development opportunities possible in the fall as well as in the future.



## Make a Gift in Honor of 30 Years for The Center for Gifted Studies

Send to The Center for Gifted Studies

Western Kentucky University, 1906 College Heights Blvd. #71031, Bowling Green, KY 42101-1031

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☐ I would like to know more about including  
The Center for Gifted Studies in my estate plans.

☐ I would like to talk to someone about other  
ways to support The Center (e.g., endowment,  
scholarships, specific programs, etc.).

*Make checks payable to the WKU Foundation. All gifts are tax deductible.*

**FRIENDS  
WISHING TO  
CONTACT US**

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*Executive Director*

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# calendar

May 27, 2011

**Kentucky Recognition Ceremony for  
Duke Talent Identification Program**

June 12-24, 2011

**The Summer Camp for Academically  
Talented Middle School Students (SCATS)**

June 26 – July 1, 2011

**The Advanced Placement Summer Institute**

June 26 – July 16, 2011

**The Summer Program for Verbally and  
Mathematically Precocious Youth (VAMPY)**

July 2, 2011

**30th Celebration for The Center**

September 13, 2011

**Twice Exceptional Seminar**

September 30 – October 9, 2011

**Fall Break in Italy**

October 24-25, 2011

**Berta Education Series**

October 29, November 5, 12, & 19, 2011

**Fall Super Saturdays**

December 1-2, 2011

**Leadership Institute**