



the challenge

NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTER FOR GIFTED STUDIES NO. 10, WINTER 2003

COME CELEBRATE: VAMPY TURNS TWENTY!

The Summer Program for Verbally and Mathematically Precocious Youth (VAMPY) turns 20 this coming summer, and we're eager to celebrate. Mark your calendars for July 5, and make your travel plans! Come share a time of rekindling friendships, reminiscing about summers past, and making new memories. Also, please share this information with your friends and encourage them to update their information with The Center. We'll mail more information later, but save that date now! We want to see you there!

GIFTED MIDDLE SCHOOL KIDS TELL THEIR STORIES!

That's the title of our new video designed for educators and administrators. This summer nineteen VAMPY campers were asked simple, straightforward questions such as "Were you prepared for high school?" and "What tips would you give teachers of gifted middle school kids?" The answers, honest and pointed, paint a very realistic portrait of what it's like to be a gifted middle school young person in America.

Videos are available for \$50.00 through The Center for Gifted Studies. Call, email, or fax a request. You can even download an order form from our web site. This video provides critical insight; it's a must-see.



LETTER FROM JULIA ROBERTS



DEAR FRIENDS OF THE CENTER,

The No Child Left Behind legislation focuses on ensuring that all children achieve at grade level in mathematics and reading. While that is important, that emphasis ignores the need for all children to make continuous progress. Each child deserves to make continuous progress every year he/she is in school. A child who is reading above grade level or is performing at a higher grade level in math must be challenged with assignments that require intellectual stretching. Only when challenged can a child be allowed and encouraged to make continuous progress.

Most people are familiar with the needs of children created by deficits and acknowledge the importance of addressing these needs. However, many people do not see the importance of addressing the needs of gifted children whose needs are related to their strengths. Communicating with educators and others about the needs of children who are gifted and talented is often difficult, and the communications are frequently misunderstood. Fairness is not requiring each child to do the same work - rather it is matching instruction to needs. Remember - gifted children will "spin their wheels" academically unless they have challenging learning to do and unless they are encouraged to work hard to meet the challenge.

Let's work together to make 2003 a terrific year for all children to learn. Sometimes we must speak up and remind educators and decision-makers that all children must be making continuous progress and that for some children there is no challenge to achieving at grade level. They may already be able to do that when the year starts!

Sincerely,

THE MISSION FOR THE CENTER

We are committed to encouraging excellence by providing educational opportunities and resources to three populations: gifted and talented students, educators working with gifted students, and parents of gifted students.

THE VISION FOR THE CENTER

Becoming an internationally preeminent center is the vision of The Center for Gifted Studies. This vision includes expanding services in five areas: (1) offering educational programs for gifted children and youth, (2) providing professional development opportunities for educators, (3) enhancing communication and advocacy for gifted children, (4) conducting research and developing curriculum to remove the learning ceiling, and (5) building a testing and counseling component for gifted children and their families.

**the
challenge**

Editor/Writer

TRACY INMAN

Designer

MARCUS DUKES

SCATS Remembered

Has it really been 20 years? I can still remember how excited I was to learn that I had been accepted to Dr. Julia Roberts' Summer Camp for Academically Talented Students. Finally, a non-athletic summer camp. A camp for teens to come together to explore areas of academic interest and enjoy activities with other teens while living on a college campus.

Summer Camp did not disappoint me. After a minor personal setback with homesickness, I came to thoroughly enjoy Summer Camp. The classes were interesting. Who knew learning could be this much fun! The campers were the most memorable aspect of Summer Camp. It was truly a neat group with a variety of talents and interests. It was thrilling to meet so many other teens and have the opportunity to get to know them through classes and seemingly constant activities planned by the staff like trips to Opryland and Mammoth Cave, games, movies, and plays. After two weeks, it seemed like we, the campers, had known each other all our lives. Upon leaving, I believed, at least for a day, that life could not go on without my new friends. These two weeks were some of the most enjoyable of my teen years.

Summer Camp had impact far beyond its two weeks. I returned home with an added appreciation of the importance of academics. Interesting classes were the focus of Summer Camp. The classes enforced the notion that learning can be fun. The director, teachers, and counselors were all positive about classes, academics in general, and the importance of academics in the future of each camper's life. None of the faculty shoved academics down our throats. It was their positive attitude and excitement about academic success that im-



PHOTO BY SHERYL HAGAN-BOOTH

STUDENTS

pacted me. Their positive influence came at a time when positive and negative peer pressure was at a peak. For me, it was the perfect reinforcement that academic success is the building block to a successful future. Doing well in school, and in life, should be a source of pride, not something of which to be ashamed.

Summer Camp also gave me a boost of self-confidence. If Dr. Julia and Dr. Dick could find positive things to say about me after I spent the first three days at camp crying because I was homesick and the last day crying because I did not want to leave, I must have some redeeming qualities. Dr. Julia always seemed to have a kind word to say to each camper and was not hesitant to tell others, including parents, of a camper's positive attributes. Her positive nature was contagious to her staff. The compliments meant a great deal and helped bolster confidence in self. While compliments cannot make the tough choices that will face each teen later in life, they do help give the individual strength to make positive and sometimes tough choices.

Most importantly for me, Summer Camp brought the realization of the existence of other teens like me. It is so important in our early teens to have the sense of fitting in with our peers. At Summer Camp, we learned we could be bright and fit in. To hide our talents and academic skills only serves to shortchange ourselves. Through Summer Camp, I learned that to do well in school should be celebrated, not hidden.

Drs. Julia and Dick Roberts have devoted their lives to the betterment of gifted students. The time and energy they devote year after year to young people are extraordinary. I feel fortunate to have been a participant in the first Summer Camp. I, like so many others, have been enriched by their programs and by their involvement in my life.

*Mary Genice Burchett Bower
Glasgow, KY
SCATS 1983 and 1984*

This year 240 more young people from 10 states and 2 countries have been enriched through the SCATS experience. Just as we did for Mary Genice, The Center provided challenging classes, an accepting environment, and the opportunity to be with others who have similar gifts and talents. In fact, since we began SCATS, we have serviced over 3300 residential and non-residential campers from all over the United States. And we hope that the lessons Mary Genice learned were shared by all 3300.

VAMPY Turns Twenty: What's to Celebrate?

Plenty! For twenty years The Center has provided a rare opportunity for highly precocious 7th through 10th graders to delve deeply into advanced subject matter. More importantly, perhaps, is the opportunity to be around kids like themselves, to form life-long friendships. So a thirteen-year-old may spend her day reading Milton's *Paradise Lost* or solving calculus problems. Then that night she and her friends create newspaper costumes to act out Cinderella '70s style at Paper Theater. Or they might play chess or music. Not only are minds challenged, but hearts are opened.

These young people take the SAT or ACT as 7th graders and must meet qualifying scores to be a part of VAMPY (The Summer Program for Verbally and Mathematically Precocious Youth). This summer we hosted 184 students from 11 states and 2 countries!

INTERESTED IN AN ALUMNI NETWORK?

Not only do our alumni span the fifty states, but they also practice hundreds of different professions, know the admission and scholarship ropes for universities from England to California, and participate in a myriad of organizations. In short, they are a fount of wisdom. The Center would love to take advantage of this expertise and experience. We propose an alumni network wherein interested alumni can be connected with current Center participants or even other alumni. We could even use alumni to help The Center! And the possibilities are endless:

- become an electronic mentor;
- show a high school senior around your college campus;
- provide guidance in a career;
- make presentations at our summer camps;
- teach camp or Super Saturdays;
- suggest possible college roommates;
- share educational or professional contacts;
- write articles for *The Challenge*; or
- create your own idea!

If you are interested, please let us know.
Email tracy.inman@wku.edu or call The Center at 270.745.6323. We think it's a wonderful idea!

VAMPY turns 20 this coming summer, and we're eager to celebrate. Mark your calendars for July 5, and make your travel plans! Come share a time of rekindling friendships, reminiscing about summers past, and making new memories. We'll mail more information later, but save that date now!

Why save that date? Why celebrate? Just read some of the remarks 2002 VAMPY campers made:

VAMPY is an unimaginable place, beyond my dreams where I can truly be myself – and (here's the best part) everyone likes me for it. I never thought I'd find a place like it, but here I am in my own personal heaven.

It's like being reintroduced to all the great things in life. You meet new people, do fun things, and realize that, just because you hate school, it doesn't mean learning can't be fun!

VAMPY is a summer program that is much more than any description can explain – you have to come and experience it to grasp what VAMPY really is: amazing people, lasting friendships, challenging and engaging classes, freedom to be you in the most you-ish sense of the word.

VAMPY is a place you can come where you suddenly don't feel all alone anymore. Surprisingly, there are people here with the same thoughts and feelings as you when you thought you were the only one in the world.

VAMPY is a great place! A place in which you can express ideas without fear of ridicule, and a place where you are able to grow intellectually and emotionally in a supportive environment. The people here function properly. They just work.

At VAMPY, I've been able to just be myself, and I like the person I've discovered.

I would describe VAMPY as the best place in the world. It's where you don't have to worry about not being accepted, where your best friends are, and where you learn about the world and yourself.

My greatest gain is knowledge in general, but in particular that special feeling of knowing that you've been a part of something very special.

VAMPY is an awesome camp that challenges not only your mind, but also your ability to live in the world on your own.

I have learned that I am not alone in my views or in my willingness to express them. I'd say that more than anything else VAMPY has given me a sense of community.

VAMPY is an awesome summer program. Not only are the classes fun and educational, but the people you meet will change your life.

Oh I love VAMPY so much. It's been my home for four summers, and I'm so upset that I can't come back next year.

We certainly hope to see you there.



Dr. Mary Evans didn't start her career in education with intentions of becoming a principal. She wanted to be an elementary teacher and inspire kids like one of her teachers had done when she was in fourth grade. "Mrs. Clifford (her science teacher) made learning fun, and I wanted to be like her," explained Mary. She actually never really considered anything but teaching. So she certainly never considered the possibility of her school (Cumberland Trace Elementary) being selected as a shining example of differentiation and meeting all kids' needs – including those who are gifted and talented. Nor did she envision that school being showcased in a new book that instructs parents on how to ensure the best education for their children. But one of Mary's most special traits is recognizing opportunity and expanding her vision – so that is exactly what happened.

Bob Chase, along with Bob Katz, wrote *The New Public School Parent* (Penguin Books). This former teacher and past-president of the National Education Association approached Mary with what he'd heard about her school and wondered if it were true. A visit there affirmed that indeed their teachers do pre-assess to determine readiness, then use flexible grouping so that all children make continuous progress. Bob Chase was so impressed that he featured the school in the chapter "When Your Child Isn't Challenged." The author explained: "It's a problem in almost every classroom in the United States. I think, in Bowling Green, you have one of the real role models of how to solve the problem."

Just as Mary never intended to become a principal, she also never knew she'd specialize in gifted education. She began her college education at Truman State University, where she received her Bachelor's degree in elementary education. She then furthered her education at the University of Missouri, earning a Master's degree in special education. She began her teaching career as a third grade

teacher, but she only taught that a year. The principal of her little Missouri school walked in her classroom one day and asked if she wanted to teach the gifted students.

"The teacher who was going to head up the gifted studies program changed her mind; I had one or two classes from college that emphasized gifted studies," Mary explained. "The principal just happened to go through my transcript and approached me about this program." The program that Mary began teaching was one of the first in the state. It was at that time that she found her passion for gifted education.

Eventually Mary found her way to Bowling Green when her husband, Sam, was given an opportunity to come to Western as a professor in the

ties are still strong. The Center helped fine-tune her passion for gifted education, something Mary takes with her everywhere she goes.

She left to become principal at Cumberland Trace seven years ago. Although she never planned to be a principal, under her leadership Cumberland Trace Elementary is a model school for gifted and talented education – as Bob Chase well knows.

In addition to revamping the school, Mary finished the doctorate degree just last year through a program at Western in conjunction with the University of Louisville. "That was a nightmare," Mary sighed. "Never try to be a principal, raise a family and finish up a doctorate degree at once." Of course, her dissertation focused on gifted: she developed a configuration

'TALENT SCOUT' MARY EVANS FEATURED IN NEW BOOK

— BY TARA JOHNSON, PUBLIC RELATIONS INTERN

Teacher Education Department. (He's now Acting Dean of the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences.) Mary and her husband uprooted their family (composed of two gifted children) and moved. This move brought Mary to The Center for Gifted Studies where she met Julia Roberts. And a match was made! She became Program Coordinator for our first Javits grant.

In addition to her working with curriculum, testing students, and providing professional development for teachers, Super Saturdays came to fruition once Mary joined our team. Since 1990 over 13,000 children have participated. "Helping kids learn as much as you can – that's what it's all about," she explained. She worked for The Center for seven years – and the

checklist, the ICC Map, based on the national standards for gifted education wherein schools can chart the progress of their services for gifted students.

Mary plans on keeping close ties with The Center for a long time. She currently conducts presentations to parents explaining the many programs we have to offer, opens up her school for local KAGE meetings, participates in research – the list is endless. She is indeed a wonderful advocate for gifted children. "I support The Center and appreciate the opportunity I had to work with the people and programs it offers," Mary said. "I value the encouragement it offers kids, inspiring them to reach for the stars."

A 'Super' Experience in the Fall - Thanks to a Scholarship!

— BY TARA JOHNSON, PUBLIC RELATIONS INTERN

Valicity Willis may appear to be an average fourth grader at T.C. Cherry Elementary School in Bowling Green, Kentucky. Unlike some of her fellow students though, Valicity enjoys and looks forward to attending school each day – even on Saturdays. Also unlike some of her classmates, she is in the top percent of her class, a straight A student, and the joy of her mother's life.

Valicity's mother, Veronica Willis, always knew her daughter, who loves both science and art, was special. Because she wants the best for her daughter – that includes a future that will make her happy – Veronica has sought out every opportunity for Valicity. And that includes Super Saturdays.

A recent college graduate, Veronica is a single African-American mother who has never fallen short in providing for her family's needs. Although money was tight when she returned to college and is tight as she strives to find a full-time job in her area given the economy, she has always put Valicity first. But she admits when she first heard about the Super Saturdays program at Western Kentucky University, she felt it was for families with higher incomes because of the tuition fee. In fact, she would have enrolled her daughter in the program as a first grader, but felt the fee wasn't possible at that time. It wasn't until Valicity was in her third grade year that

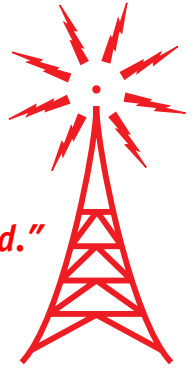


Our initial Fall Super Saturdays brought 550 young people from as far away as Lexington, Louisville, and south of Nashville. With 53 classes offered in the Winter Super Saturdays, we hope to host over 800!

***"Harry Truman once said,
'C students run the world;'
I say G-T kids change the world."***

JOHN STARTER

Russellville Middle School, Russellville, KY
Public Service Announcement Winner
Second Place Middle School Division



Veronica became aware of the scholarship programs The Center offers – and Valicity was one of the first enrolled!

These scholarships are awarded to qualifying students who would not be able to attend because of the fee. This provides an equal playing field so that all families regardless of income can share in the joys of learning and provide challenge for their children.

Valicity loves the program and attended the Spanish class in winter of 2002. This past fall she was in the 'Fun' Damental Art class, and she thoroughly enjoyed it: "I like Super Saturdays because you get to choose any class you want. Also, I liked my Super Saturdays class this fall because I liked working with art materials like clay and paint."

She has enjoyed the classes so much that she plans on attending Super Saturdays until her sixth grade year. In fact, she's already targeted her next class: Hogwarts 101: The World of Harry Potter. After elementary school, Veronica and Valicity plan on keeping close ties with The Center throughout Valicity's middle and high school education.

But for now, Valicity's involvement is dependent on scholarship support. Veronica explains, "As a parent I deeply appreciate the scholarship program. If it were not for this funding, my daughter would not have had the opportunity to meet and share ideas with peers sharing the same interests. Not only does the Super Saturdays program stimulate my daughter's imagination, but the program also provides another way for her to experiment and become more aware of the gifts God has given to her. A special thank you to all of your scholarship contributors!"

So what does this precocious fourth grader dream of becoming? Valicity doesn't dream of being a doctor or changing the world. Her mother says she wants to be a professional basketball player. That is just fine with Veronica who says she only encourages Valicity to follow her dreams. And that's what The Center does through Fall and Winter Super Saturdays and the scholarships available: we encourage young people to dream.



Kelly Lally Molloy (counselor 1986 and 1987) finished her Master's of Arts in Folk Studies at WKU in 1988. She then relocated to North Carolina (1988-1995) and then to Texas (1995-1998) to work in the field of historic preservation. Kelly married Chris Molloy in July 1997 and gave birth to Mary Claire Molloy in September 2000. Currently her family lives in Indianapolis where Kelly is a full-time mom to her daughter and also does some historic preservation consulting work.

Ann Skulas (SCATS 1996; VAMPY 1997, 1998, and 1999), is currently a sophomore attending Worcester Polytechnic Institute on full merit scholarship. She is majoring in biochemistry in order to pursue a career in nutritional research. Last summer she interned at Washington State University researching cyclodextrin derivatives. Only two students from Kentucky attend her school, and the other just so happens to be another VAMPY alumnus, Chris Hamman (1999.) At many cross country meets, she also runs into Ian Driver (another VAMPY alumnus – 1996, 1997, 1998 and 1999 – who is now a student at MIT).

Daniel Nobles (VAMPY 1993; Travel to Russia 1994) is a senior at Texas A&M who is pursuing a BS degree in Aerospace Engineering. As a student worker for the NASA Commercial Space Center, his projects have ranged from doing the optimization work to place a startracker on an express pallet on the space station (2006+) to performing vacuum integration testing for a startracker being launched soon on a space shuttle. His current project is in the field of thermal analysis as it relates to satellite equipment design.

"VAMPY is still far and away the best experience I've ever had. It's hard to believe that it's possible to draw on an experience from middle school for college course work. The programs really set students up for a life-time of achievement. There's just some special sort of development that takes place over those short weeks and stays with you for a lifetime."

**ANN SKULAS
VINE GROVE, KY**

"About 17 years ago I attended your summer academic camp. That camp and the two travel/study opportunities in which I participated still impact my life today.... You made a huge investment in my life many times over."

**DEBBIE GREEN DANIEL
ST. CLOUD, FL**

"I remember my days as a camp counselor fondly! It was a lot of fun. I hope that Mary Claire and any siblings she might have will have the chance to attend some day!"

**KELLY LALLY MOLLOY
INDIANAPOLIS, IN**

"I feel that VAMPY and the Russian Study Abroad trip were the two most influential things that pushed me into a scientific field. Dr. Jenkin's physics class is the bomb! I never lost the enthusiasm that he instilled in me, nor will I ever forget the lessons I learned while studying in Russia. VAMPY was a life changing experience in many ways. I can not overstate its direct influence on the development of my appreciation for learning. Science is supposed to be exciting. Dr. J will always be one of my heroes."

**DANIEL NOBLES
COLLEGE STATION, TX**

ALUMNI UPDATE

Mary Genice Burchett-Bower (SCATS 1983 and 1984) was a 1988 graduate of Glasgow High School. She attended Centre College, graduating in 1992, where she was a member of the Kappa Kappa Gamma social sorority and the history and government honorary societies. She graduated cum laude from the University of Louisville School of Law in 1995. While in law school, she received the Professional Responsibility Award and was on the Dean's List each semester. After passing the Kentucky bar examination in 1995, she began practicing law with her father, Dale Burchett. Her primary area of focus is representing the interests of disabled individuals. She also teaches Administrative Law for the Paralegal Studies Department through Western Kentucky University (Community College). She and her husband, Bryan Bower, make their home in Glasgow, KY.

Debbie Green Daniel (SCATS 1985, Travel) celebrated her tenth anniversary with her husband, Jared, and her son's third birthday this past fall. Before motherhood, she worked mostly in newspaper as a copy editor and columnist. Now she works out of her home coordinating the communications for 120 missionaries throughout the world, all of whom work for Campus Crusade for Christ. She does freelance work in writing, editing, and general project managing. She looks forward to her son attending camp in about 10 years!

TEACHERS

Winebrenner Workshop A Success

— BY CHRISTY GRUBB, PUBLIC RELATION INTERN

We often emphasize how critical it is that young people are challenged, but we don't always realize how challenging it can be for classroom teachers to do that. Although many educators have the desire to meet needs, few have training in gifted education. This summer The Center provided a wonderful opportunity to help teachers help kids. Over 170 teachers from across Kentucky participated in Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Classroom, a practical workshop led by Susan Winebrenner who authored a book by that same name.

Susan presented strategies which can aid teachers in ensuring that their gifted students are challenged. She explained how gifted students are often frustrated or bored with regular classroom curriculum: "My whole philosophy is that they shouldn't have to do work on content that they have already mastered." She shared numerous methods to make sure that happens.

For example, she encouraged pre-testing. All students should be given the opportunity to show what they know – whether that be the five hardest problems in math, a short response describing what they know on a topic, or a quiz. (She provided the how-to's for each.) Then the teacher should



PHOTO BY SHERYL HAGAN-BOOTH

provide students with opportunities to learn what they don't know (giving credit for what they do know) – and she provided samples of learning contracts to assist. From tips on curriculum compacting to tic-tac-toe multiple assignments, Susan exposed teachers to a wide variety of strategies that would ensure continuous progress for gifted and talented young people.

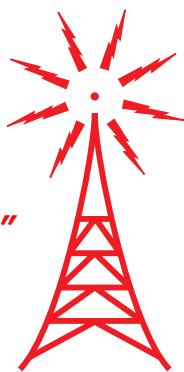
After a full day of mapping out techniques to implement in their own classrooms, participants had a chance to evaluate their experience. One educator commented: "Susan makes giftedness sound easy to handle and making mistakes something to learn with rather than suffer from." Others agreed: "Great ideas that are practical and user-friendly — not always the case with a workshop. I'll be encouraging our principal to order several books for our building."

In addition to *Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Classroom*, Susan has also authored *Teaching Kids with Learning Difficulties in the Regular Classroom* and *Super Sentences*, a vocabulary building guide for students who excel verbally. She has also produced a number of educational videos encouraging parents to be better advocates for their child's gifted education.

For more information on Susan Winebrenner, ECS, or educational materials, please visit www.susanwinebrenner.com.

***"Our children are the seeds
of the future. If they're never
watered, they will never grow."***

CHERELLE DABNEY, SEAN RUTHERFORD
AND CIERRA PRESBERRY
Spring Hill High School, Columbia, TN
Public Service Announcement Winner
Second Place High School Division



Western has always been a leader in gifted education. We are the first (and only) university in the Commonwealth to offer the full sequence of graduate classes required for the endorsement in gifted education every single year since the endorsement began. Now we're breaking new ground again as we offer those classes online. This is a wonderful vehicle for training educators throughout the nation. One such teacher taking advantage of the program comes from Murfreesboro, TN: Kathy Daniel.

Kathy discovered the opportunity in a roundabout way: "Last year, as a result of information I gathered at the Tennessee Association for the Gifted Conference, I found out about the Super Saturdays program. My son enjoyed the program, and the parent seminar part was very informative. While searching The Center's site for information about the

most distressed to learn that my classes (and a math class) have been the first time in their school careers in which they feel they have even had to work close to their potentials. Since my son is just now in 4th grade, I will have to assume that the same will be true for him in most areas of school." And with this assignment came a strong realization for Kathy, one that impacts her family personally: "I can be an advocate for my son, because no one else will. I can speak out for him, and I never did for myself. I have become somewhat of a rebel in my thinking and am much more willing to try new ideas in my own classroom because of the conclusions in the literature about how gifted children are so different from the norm." With this knowledge comes empowerment as a teacher, a parent, and an advocate.

GIFTED GRADUATE CLASSES OFFERED ONLINE

"Here's the most impressive thing I have learned throughout this whole journey. The gifted child, who scores in the top 2% on IQ tests (yes, I know it is just a number) is just as far from the norm as the child who scores in the bottom 2%!!!! What a disservice we are providing to our gifted children (in Tennessee) when only 2 cents of every \$100 of Special Education money is spent on GT services!!!! If the rest of the world, or at least the rest of the education profession could begin to understand this, we might actually begin to see our GT children receive the education they need and deserve."

Fall Super Saturdays, I discovered the gifted endorsement program online." This 17-year veteran teacher first learned of The Center five years ago when she attended the AP Summer Institute.

What prompted her interest in gifted is what prompts most – her 9 year-old gifted son: "I have done extensive reading on gifted children and dealing with their needs. I teach gifted students in Advanced Chemistry and AP Physics B also, in a 'heterogeneous' classroom situation. I want to know more about how better to serve my students and what more I can do to enhance Michael's education. It is totally an uphill struggle." This is her first online course, but she enjoys the advantages, mainly the flexibility of time. One disadvantage for her deals with discussions. She explains, "The asynchronous discussions are interesting, but I miss the opportunity to actually 'get into the discussion' like one could in the real classroom." But she argues that the benefits outweigh the negatives.

One of those benefits, of course, is the gained knowledge. Part of an assignment required her to interview gifted young people, and she found the results impressive: "I was most excited to learn that neither of these children felt that they had any problems with their giftedness from their friends or teachers as they were growing up. I was

One other interesting insight came from an assignment dealing with creativity. Kathy decided to interview her younger sister concerning her creativity. She explains, "We are fairly close but don't spend a great deal of time together. My aptitude is in the area of science and logic. My sister has always 'marched to a different drummer' than myself, and the things she told me in her interview (also via email) were things I would have never guessed about how she thinks and reasons and deals with problems. We have never discussed face-to-face these kinds of ideas, and I was totally flabbergasted. I thought I knew her fairly well, but I was obviously totally oblivious to her real personality. I just thought she was a bit different from me." Such knowledge yields compassion.

Now could Kathy have discovered these realizations and learned the same concepts with a class taught in a typical classroom? The answer is probably yes. But one problem would have been commuting to Bowling Green from Murfreesboro, TN. Another would be working under someone else's schedule when she had too many responsibilities already. So this Physics Teacher of the Year and Teacher of the Year from her 26 district region decided to expand her horizons, take on a new challenge, and leap into cyberspace. And she's thrilled she did.



PHOTO BY SHERYL HAGAN-BOOTH

Vertical Team Institutes: 'The Shot in the Arm'

That's what an English Vertical Team participant expected from the institute: "The shot in the arm that our fellow teachers received by coming here two years ago." And he wasn't disappointed. Nor were the record 62 educators who attended the Mathematics, English, or Social Studies institutes this past July. Nine districts (from Kentucky, Tennessee, and Mexico) sent teachers to learn how to bridge the gap between middle and high school curricula. The goal is to vertically align the curricula so that students reach world class standards and are prepared for Advanced Placement classes.

Since 1996, The Center has collaborated with The College Board to offer vertical teaming with this past summer being the first for Social Studies. From "time to work with others from my district on vertical alignment" to "learning a way in which to coordinate various grade levels for a better English program," participants' expectations were many. Those expectations were filled as they gained much from the institutes: "a better understanding of how to prepare kids for the AP classes plus some wonderful teaching materials;" "a heightened sense of collegiality;" and "many applications that can be used at several grade levels to be shared with other instructors." In fact, the workshop evaluations overall praised the institutes and the instructors.

One participant was eager to get home so that he could "meet with the Lateral Math Team from (his) county and recruit other people from schools not present. (He) will also use and prepare many of the teaching methods for the upcoming school year." Another was going "to tell people about the potential in Vertical Teaming." And yet another attendee wrote that "I will be using a part of almost everything we did." Whether the participant will "plan (his) year using EVT materials" or she will "look at (her) lesson plans to see how (she) can use this info to improve them," teachers left the institutes with new knowledge, heightened enthusiasm, and wonderful materials. The institutes truly were a "shot in the arm."

He Keeps Coming Back For More!

— BY CHRISTY GRUBB, PUBLIC RELATIONS INTERN

Tony Melton well knows the challenges of working with high-ability students at the high school level. And teachers like Tony have found an ally in The Center for Gifted Studies.

For 19 years, the Advanced Placement Summer Institute, sponsored by The Center and The College Board, has provided AP teachers with the tools necessary to refine their skills. Held this past summer on Western's campus, the AP Summer Institute brought together both new and experienced AP teachers in fields such as Biology, Calculus, Chemistry and Statistics. This year's Institute comprised 251 AP teachers from 13 states including 150 from Kentucky schools.

While AP Calculus consultants Benita Albert and Phillis Hillis welcome a fresh class of enthusiastic AP teachers every summer, one face has remained the same — Tony Melton's. He has traveled from eastern Kentucky four different summers to learn as much as he can to help his students. He took the beginning workshop once and the experienced workshop three times! Tony's belief that "The Center for Gifted Studies provides a valuable service to aid teachers in meeting the needs of the gifted" has kept him coming back.

As the AP Calculus teacher at Perry County High School, Tony has developed a good working relationship with his students: "I feel the needs of my students are no different than those of any student. They need to be given the opportunity to succeed and provide the support necessary to ensure their chances of being successful."

As for his classroom, Tony mixes materials and hands-on activities to stimulate his students. "I assure my students of my belief in their ability to be successful. I then make myself available to them for extra help and support them along the way," Tony explains. And it seems his passion for success is contagious: "For the past three years, 100% of my AP Calculus students have passed the AP Exam." Ten students passed in 2000, 15 in 2001 and 10 in 2002. That's an impressive statistic

ADVANCED PLACEMENT

Have you checked out The College Board's web site devoted to Advanced Placement? Not only is the Acorn Book available online, but scholarship applications are too! Any school with more than 50% free and reduced lunch is eligible for funding. In fact, you'll find everything you need at AP Central, The College Board's Online Home for AP Professionals: <http://apcentral.collegeboard.com>

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considering 1.4 million AP exams were administered in 2001 with 12,853 of them in Kentucky.

Tony recommends the AP Institute to both new and experienced AP teachers: "It has been extremely helpful and encouraging to me. It provides valuable resources and helps create an AP family of colleagues."

Cluster Grouping of Gifted Students: How To Provide Full-Time Services on a Part-Time Budget

— BY SUSAN WINEBRENNER AND BARBARA DEVLIN

There is an alarming trend in many places to eliminate gifted education programs in the mistaken belief that all students are best served in heterogeneous learning environments. Educators have been bombarded with research that makes it appear that there is no benefit to ability grouping for any students. However, the work of many researchers (Allan, 1991; Feldhusen, 1989; Fiedler, Lange, & Winebrenner, 1993; Kulik and Kulik, 1990; Rogers, 1993) clearly documents the benefits of keeping gifted students together in their areas of greatest strength for at least part of the school day. It also appears that all students, including average and below average students, may benefit when gifted students are placed in their own cluster (Gentry, 1999).

What does it mean to place gifted students in cluster groups?

A group of three to six identified gifted students, usually those in the top 5% of ability in the grade level population, are clustered in a mixed-ability classroom. The teacher has had training in how to teach exceptionally capable students. If there are more than six gifted students, two or more clusters could be formed.

Isn't cluster grouping the same as tracking?

No. In a tracking system, all students are grouped by ability for much of the school day, and students tend to remain in the same track throughout their school experience. Gifted students benefit from learning together, and need to be placed with similar students in their areas of strength (Hoover, Sayler, & Feldhusen, 1993; Kulik & Kulik, 1990; Rogers, 1993). Cluster grouping of gifted students allows them to learn together, while avoiding permanent grouping arrangements for students of other ability levels.

Why should gifted students be placed in a cluster group instead of being assigned evenly to all classes?

When teachers try to meet the diverse learning needs of all students, it becomes extremely difficult to provide adequately for everyone. Often, the highest ability students are expected to "make it on their own." When a teacher has sev-

eral gifted students, taking the time to make appropriate provisions for them seems more realistic. Furthermore, gifted students can better understand and accept their learning differences if there are others just like them in the class. Finally, scheduling out-of-class activities is easier when the resource teacher has only one cluster teacher's schedule with which to work.

Isn't gifted education elitist?

Gifted students need consistent opportunities to learn at their challenge level — just as all students do. It is inequitable to prevent gifted students from being challenged by trying to apply one level of difficulty for all students in mixed-ability classes. When teachers can provide opportunities for all students, including those who are gifted, to be challenged by rigorous curriculum, there is nothing elitist about the situation.

Don't we need gifted students in all classes so they can help others learn through cooperative learning, peer tutoring, and other collaborative models?

When gifted students are placed in mixed-ability groups for cooperative learning, they frequently become tutors. Other students in these groups may rely on the gifted to do most of the work and may actually learn less than when the gifted students are not in their groups. Research indicates that a

particular structure of cluster grouping raises everyone's achievement level (Gentry, 1999). When class placements are made, students should be sorted into 5 groups: I, II, III, IV, V. One class, taught by a teacher with some gifted education training, should be assigned the cluster group of gifted students (group I) and some students from groups II to IV. All other classes should include a range of students from groups II through V. This method creates a more narrow range of student achievement levels, allowing the teacher to focus instructional activities. It is important to place some group II students in each non-cluster class, even if it means placing no group II students in the gifted cluster class.

Won't the creation of a cluster group rob the other classes of academic leadership?

Research on role modeling (Schunk, 1987) indicates that to be effective, role models cannot be drastically discrepant in ability from those who would be motivated by them. When gifted students are grouped in their own cluster, they have the benefit of working with one another and new leadership emerges in the other non-cluster classes. As classes are formed, be sure the classes without clusters of gifted students include several highly capable students. Teachers and administrators can expect measurable achievement gains across all classes.

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PHOTO BY SHERYL HAGAN-BOOTH

Won't the presence of the clustered gifted students inhibit the performance of the other students in that class, having a negative effect on their achievement?

When the cluster group is kept to a manageable size, many cluster teachers report that there is general improvement in achievement for the entire class. This suggests the exciting possibility that when teachers learn how to provide what gifted students need, they also learn to offer modified versions of the same opportunities to the entire class, thus raising the level of learning for all students, including those who are gifted. The positive effects of the cluster grouping practice may be shared with all students over several years by rotating the cluster teacher assignment among teachers who have had gifted education training and by rotating the other students so all students eventually have a chance to be in the same class with a cluster group.

What are the advantages of cluster grouping?

Gifted students feel more comfortable when there are other students just like them in the class. They are more likely to choose more challenging tasks when other students will also be eligible. Teachers no longer have to deal with the strain of trying to meet the needs of just one precocious student in a class. Teachers are also much more likely to provide appropriate learning opportunities if more than one student will benefit. The school is able to provide a full-time, cost-effective program for gifted students, since their learning needs are being met every day.

What are the disadvantages of cluster grouping?

There may be pressure from parents to have their children placed in a cluster classroom, even if they are not in the actual cluster group. Gifted students may move into the district during the school year and may not be able to be placed in the cluster classroom. These situations may be handled by:

- providing training for all staff in compacting and differentiation so parents can expect those opportunities in all classes
- requiring parents to provide written documentation of their child's need for curriculum differentiation instead of requesting the placement by phone
- rotating the cluster teacher assignment every 2 years among teachers who have had appropriate training so parents understand that many teachers are capable of teaching gifted students
- rotating other students into cluster classrooms over several years

Another disadvantage might arise if the cluster teachers are not expected to consistently compact and differentiate the curriculum. Their supervisor must expect them to maintain the integrity of the program, and must provide the needed support by facilitating regular meetings of cluster teachers, and by providing time for the enrichment specialist to assist the cluster teachers.

Conclusion

If we do not allow cluster groups to be formed, gifted students may find their achievement and learning motivation waning in a relatively short period of time. Parents of gifted students may choose to enroll their children in alternative programs, such as home schooling or charter schools. The practice of cluster grouping represents a mindful way to make sure gifted students continue to receive a quality education at the same time schools work to improve learning opportunities for all students.

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Visit the Kentucky Academy's web site at www.wku.edu/academy.

Behind every distinguished educator is a passion for designing curriculum that will stimulate learning in the classroom and foster curiosity for life. These teachers are constantly seeking new resources and innovative strategies. For the past five years, The Center has provided such a forum. In fact, in the last few years middle school students across the Commonwealth of Kentucky have noticed a change in their regular science classes – a direct result of Raising Achievement in Middle School Science (RAMSS) which not only strives to reach teachers, but also the students they inspire.

Teachers in four districts first met in 1998 to formulate objectives necessary to raise the performance of middle school students in science to the level of proficient or distinguished. For five years the Eisenhower-sponsored program has worked toward these objectives. By aligning science curriculum with Core Content, developing effective mini-units, and improving teachers' preparation and professional development, the RAMSS Leadership Team (made up of past Eisenhower participants) continues to strive to maintain the high standards set in the first workshop.

THE EISENHOWER INSTITUTE: RAISING ACHIEVEMENT IN MIDDLE SCHOOL SCIENCE

— BY CHRISTY GRUBB, PUBLIC RELATIONS INTERN

Rico Tyler, then on loan to the Kentucky Department of Education's Region 2 Service Center from Franklin Simpson High School, presented at that first workshop where much of the content centered on physical science topics. Since then he has taken a job at Western and is involved with the Leadership Team. In fact he believes, "My real role is to be the 'pizza delivery guy' for the goals and ideas generated by the Leadership Team" – which he demonstrated on the Day of Sharing by cooking up a comet! Just as the first year focused on physical science, the subsequent years centered on different sciences.

Every year more districts joined RAMSS. This year participating districts include science teachers from grades 5-8 in Breckinridge, Butler, Christian, Daviess, Hardin, Logan, McLean, Metcalfe, Ohio, Pendleton, Pulaski, and Warren County School Districts plus Bowling Green and Paintsville Independent Schools and Sacred Heart Model School.

Julie Clark, a former middle school principal in McLean County and now Daviess County's Secondary Instructional Supervisor, is just one of the many professionals praising RAMSS' effectiveness: "Math and science teachers at McLean County Middle School have been involved in Eisenhower training opportunities since the inception of the program five years ago. This content specific professional development has been most valuable to our teachers. The emphasis on hands-on, application oriented instruction with direct content connection has increased learning among our students. The networking opportunities with WKU and other teachers in our region have been wonderful. I strongly recommend this training for middle school teachers."

The Center for Gifted Studies is currently developing a proposal for the next school year. We hope that the high standards of RAMSS set a precedent for future greatness for Kentucky's science students.

FRIENDS WISHING TO CONTACT US

Dr. Julia Roberts, Director
The Center for Gifted Studies
Western Kentucky University
1 Big Red Way
Bowling Green, KY 42101
phone: (270) 745-6323
fax: (270) 745-6279
e-mail: gifted@wku.edu

Karl Miller, Director of Development
College of Education and
Behavioral Sciences
Western Kentucky University
1 Big Red Way, WAB 109
Bowling Green, KY 42101
phone: (270) 745-7025
fax: (270) 745-2009
e-mail: karl.miller@wku.edu

A Must Read: Dr. Karen Rogers' Latest Book

Although the title *Re-Forming Gifted Education: Matching the Program to the Child* seems geared to educators, this book is actually a wonderful guide for parents of gifted children. In fact, Dr. Karen Rogers argues, "The primary purpose of this book is to provide a series of blueprints to help children with high ability succeed in the K-12 school systems of our country, which are currently designed and structured for average and slow learners, and which are often stifling environments for rapid or advanced learners." And she believes that parents are key to this success: "Successful educational planning for bright children requires positive collaboration between the parents (who, incidentally, do generally know their child better than anyone!) and the teachers in the school that the parents select for their child."

Dr. Rogers explains various programs for acceleration and enrichment, as well as grouping practices. For each educational option, she delineates what the current research says about the benefit or lack of benefit for different categories of gifted children and explains how to arrange each option.

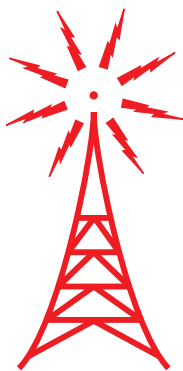
This book is a real eye-opener for educators and parents unfamiliar with the full body of research in the field of curriculum for gifted education. Some of the topics include types of giftedness, gifts versus talents, assessment tools, Parent Inventory for Finding Potential, types of acceleration, types of enrichment, group learning, independent study, Yearly Educational Plans and negotiating with schools.

This practical guide provides the research, the rationale, and the process for parents to be able to partner with their child's school. And the information comes from a career devoted to the subject. In addition to this latest book, Dr. Rogers has written over 80 articles on gifted and talented curriculum. Currently she is a professor in the Curriculum and Instruction Department at the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota.

Contact Great Potential Press (PO Box 5057, Scottsdale, AZ, 85261 or www.giftedbooks.com) for details on how to get your copy. Remember parents: you are the best advocate your child will have. Be a knowledgeable one.

The Center for Gifted Studies, "Where Talented Kids Fulfill Their Potential"

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PARENTS

Video on the Horizon for the Kentucky Academy

Plans are moving steadily along for the Kentucky Academy for Mathematics and Science. The blueprints for the renovation of Schneider Hall are in progress, operating money is in the yet-unapproved Kentucky budget, and a video designed to educate and gain support is in the editing stages. This video includes voices from many different arenas: business and industry, legislation, and education (i.e., successful academies and young people associated with academies). Those three young people, Stephanie Davis of Cape Girardeau, MO; Ben Howard of Valdosta, GA; and Hank Zimmerman of Aurora, IL, all have connections to The Center in addition to their affiliation with separate academies. Stephanie attends the Missouri Academy of Mathematics, Science, and Computing; Ben goes to the Georgia Academy of Mathematics, Engineering, and Science; and Hank is a counselor at the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy. Because of their personal experiences with these academies, they are able to share their insights that support Kentucky's Academy. Each responded to a series of questions; their answers prove enlightening.

Briefly explain your connection to The Center and the impact it had/has on you.

Ben: I have been connected to Western Kentucky University and The Center for Gifted Studies since 1999 when I first went to VAMPY during the summer of that year. I have since been to VAMPY '00, '01, and volunteered for VAMPY '02.

Stephanie: I was a four-year VAMPY camper. I probably would not have had the courage to apply to MASMC if not for that fact. From attending VAMPY, I knew that I could live away from home, be thrown into a new environment and adapt easily, live in a dorm, etc.

Hank: I was first introduced to Western's Center for Gifted Studies after participating in Duke's TIP program. I qualified for state recognition through the program, and first heard of Dr. Julia Roberts and The Center at that time. I participated in the VAMPY program for three summers. I suppose it is somewhat of a cliché, but those three summers spent on Western's campus completely changed my life. I met friends that I still have twelve years later. I learned that I was not alone, that there were other people who were going through the same things I was, and who found shelter for three weeks every summer with each other.

Later, I returned to the VAMPY and SCATS programs as a Residential Counselor. I have worked six summers in that position. While working for The Center, I quickly realized that I wanted nothing more to do with my life than work with gifted students. I have seen hundreds of students leave changed by their experiences on Western's campus. I see the connections they make with their fellow campers

Describe your educational journey.

Ben: My educational journey has pulled me through public and private schools in South GA, namely Valwood School and Hahira Elementary and Middle Schools into the massive high school that is Lowndes High School and finally to the Georgia Academy of Mathematics, Engineering, and Science where I currently reside. During most of the summers in between school years I have visited outdoors/recreation camps and academic camps to further my educational and social well-being. The road has been long but never ceases to throw challenges my way.

Stephanie: I went to a private grade school from grades 1-8 and a private high school in grades 9 and 10. These schools were very small and offered no gifted/talented classes. My high school did offer AP/honors courses. When I wanted to take advanced classes, they told me that the social aspect of high school was just as important as the academic aspect, and that I would feel uncomfortable in "junior" and "senior" classes as an underclassman.

Hank: Long and winding. I attended St. Xavier High School in Louisville, KY. I began college at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY, before transferring to Indiana University where I completed a B.A. in Mathematics and a minor in Psychology.

What prompted your decision to attend an academy?

Ben: I was prompted to enter an academy because the challenges and social benefits offered in high school weren't up to par with my needs. The high school tended to focus at the average student as opposed to the excelling student.

Stephanie: My school offered few advanced classes, and I was often bored. I also had a lot of support and encouragement from my parents especially my father.

Describe how the academy functions.

Ben: The GA Academy is nothing more than a college environment for advancing high school students to go before finishing high school. It is a single dorm on campus, and college life is pretty much the same for us as any student on campus. After getting accepted, a student agrees to many rules that are different from the normal college students because of age. We take the same classes at the same times with the same teachers. The only difference is that we are really high school students who demand more than what high school can offer.

Stephanie: Students attend traditional college courses taught by regular college teachers, sometimes alongside traditional college students, sometimes in Academy-only classes. We live in a dorm, and we have curfews and electronic locks on the doors. We are free to join clubs on campus or start clubs of our own.

GAIL MILLER HILES WINS AWARD

If you've called The Center, there's a strong possibility that a warm, helpful voice answered the phone. That would be Gail Miller Hiles, Office Associate for The Center and The Kentucky Association for Gifted Education, an indispensable member of our team. Now if you call, you may notice an extra bit of enthusiasm or lightness to that voice – that's because it's the voice of a Western celebrity!

This October, Gail earned the Staff Excellence Award in the Administrative Support Category for Western Kentucky University. Sponsored by the WKU Alumni Association, this award brought with it an engraved plaque and a \$300 check – plus smiling faces at The Center.

The opening paragraph of her nomination letter sums her personality pretty well: "It is with great pleasure that I recommend Gail Miller Hiles for an excellence award – in fact, I'd recommend her for a superlative, there's-no-one-like-her award! Not only does she brighten The Center for Gifted Studies with her wit and humor, but she also accomplishes more in a day than other people accomplish in a week." The Center and KAGE are so fortunate to have such industrious, creative people as Gail!

What are the advantages for you?

Ben: The advantages for me include getting a jump on my college education as well as spending two years in an environment that is beneficial to my educational and social well-being. The academy offers many challenges and opportunities that the high school couldn't dream to offer. All and all it focuses like-minded teens in a positive atmosphere for fun and study, creating the perfect living and learning environment of peers.

Stephanie: I am receiving two years of college for free, besides the fact that I'm able to start early. I've met many, many incredible people here and made friendships that are much deeper and more fulfilling than anything I could ever have imagined back at home. I have a much better chance at getting into a good college, because I have (am) proven (proving) to them now that I can succeed in a college environment.

What are the disadvantages for you?

Ben: The disadvantages would include being farther from my family and not being able to be a part of the high school activities such as soccer which I played for two years.

Stephanie: We aren't allowed to have cars. We have curfews. Most colleges don't know how to react to us, because they haven't encountered situations like ours before. Filling out college applications is harder because we have to stress the difference between what we did in high school and what we are doing here. I also have to study for the first time in my life!! I suppose that's not entirely a disadvantage, but it's new and hard!! I'm also far away from home (8 hours), and I miss my family (sometimes), especially my brothers.

Describe your position at the Academy.

Hank: I work as a Resident Counselor. My duties include monitoring academic success and personal growth of 24 high school students, counseling, and mentoring. I am responsible for both social and residential programming. Simply put, I act as an advocate and mentor for students on the residential side of the academy. I make sure they stay out of trouble and follow their academics to make sure they are staying on top of the enormous workload. In addition, I am responsible for their social growth.

How does the educational experience for these kids differ from your own experiences?

Hank: I attended St. Xavier High School in Louisville, Kentucky. I feel I got one of the best educations I could have received in the state. I had plenty of chance for advancement in my classes. With all of my advancement, however, St. X was going to be unable to provide me with a full complement of classes my senior year. As a result, I left St. X after my junior year and attended Cornell University.

In addition, I was taking classes mostly with students a year or more ahead of me. My peer group in my high school

was a large mishmash of students from several grades. There were very few students that had more than one or two classes with me. My needs were somewhat unique at St. X, and I was acutely aware of this due to the lack of fellow students with my abilities and needs.

Students at IMSA do not have these difficulties. There are countless opportunities for them, even if they are extremely ahead in mathematics or science. All of the students they are in classes with have abilities comparable to their own.

IMSA students have opportunities that no high school in Kentucky could ever think of offering. Scientists from across the country are brought in to speak to the students, and the instructors are pioneers in their subjects.

Why did you seek such a position?

Hank: When I finished with my undergraduate work, I wanted nothing more than to work with gifted students. My eventual goal is to teach math at the high school level. Since I knew that I would probably not be able to get a position teaching gifted children straight out of my undergraduate work, I looked for positions that would allow me to work with such students immediately. Positions similar to what I held with The Center came to mind.

Why is it important that Kentucky have an academy?

Ben: I'm sure that Kentucky has brilliant children who don't belong in a high school atmosphere; they are both too mature and too advanced for that environment. Leaving them bored in school will only lead to their focusing their minds on other less positive things. The Academy would allow them an outlet for these thoughts and ideas and allow them to talk to professors about topics which interest them deeply. Most high schools don't offer that. Not only will the student be better off being in an academy, but also the society around that academy will, in turn, profit from these bright teens. The students will come back after completing their education and be the leaders and innovators of tomorrow.

Stephanie: Having an academy in KY will provide interested students with the opportunity to truly excel which cannot be obtained anywhere else in the state. An academy like this challenges the top students, preparing them for life in tomorrow's world.

Hank: There are students in Kentucky that, despite the best efforts of their teachers, schools, and districts, are not getting their unique needs met. Kentucky has an obligation to provide these students with a place that can meet their needs. This is not just for the students themselves, but for the betterment of both education in the state of Kentucky and the future of Kentucky. These students are Kentucky's best and brightest. They are the future leaders of America, and Kentucky has to make a commitment to develop these students to their full potential.

These last three statements – given by people intimately involved – provide the rationale for the Kentucky Academy for Mathematics and Science. Their voices and the others on the video are clear, strong, and pointed. If you are interested in the video or have questions about the Academy, please contact The Center.

CELEBRITY QUESTION

Do you know a celebrity we could get to come for an event planned to raise scholarship money for children who could not otherwise participate in programs sponsored by The Center? If you do, please contact us.

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April 4 - 13, 2003	Spring Break in Paris
June 1-13, 2003	The Italian Experience
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June 22 - 27, 2003	Advanced Placement Summer Institute
June 29 - July 19, 2003	VAMPY
July 5, 2003	VAMPY Turns Twenty Celebration
July 8 - 11, 2003	English/Mathematics/Social Studies Vertical Team Institutes
October 25, November 1, 8, 15, and 25, 2003	Fall Super Saturdays
November 20 - 21, 2003	Leadership Institute VIII

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