Guest Editorial

Special Issue on Curriculum

Joyce VanTassel-Baska A. Harry Passow

This special issue on curriculum represents the attainment of one of the NAGC's Curriculum Committee's goals. Formed about five years ago, the Committee has focused its efforts on several curriculum projects including a survey of critical issues in curriculum for the gifted and a needs assessment. At the two recent Midwinter Institutes, the Committee has presented a curriculum strand. At the NAGC Conference in Las Vegas, the Committee is sponsoring a Curriculum Day which will bring together leaders from major curriculum organizations with leaders in the field of curriculum for the gifted.

We view curriculum as the substance of instruction—the plan regarding what is to be taught, using what strategies and resources, within what organization and time frame, with which personnel, and its evaluation. We have attempted to understand and clarify the nature of the state of the art of meaningful curriculum for the gifted. What is considered "successful" as curriculum for the gifted? What are some "promising" trends? What are the important parameters to consider in developing curriculum for the gifted? How might progress be made in merging curriculum theory with current practice in curriculum design for the gifted? This special issue represents the Curriculum Committee's first effort to address these kinds of questions.

The articles included in this issue are divided into two sections. The first section is devoted to general issues and concerns in curriculum and instruction for the gifted. June Maker focuses on guidelines for developing scope and sequence in curriculum for the gifted, including an examination of the issues. Specific examples from a school district's efforts provide illustrations of product outcomes. Joyce VanTassel-Baska traces the history and development of three distinct curriculum and instructional models for the gifted that have been found effective from the vantage point of both research and practice. She urges a synthesis of perspectives on curriculum for the gifted and argues that successful models currently being used are complementary, not dichotomous in nature. Heidi Hayes Jacobs and James Borland discuss the importance of interdisciplinary curriculum for the gifted and ways to develop it. Their presentation of important assumptions underlying the use of interdisciplinary curriculum, coupled with the explication of the concept, provides new meaning to this type of curriculum which is often extolled but too seldom implemented. Kay Bruch argues for bridging popular conceptions of curriculum with paradigms to promote creative development in students. She proposes a way of accomplishing this, suggesting creative characteristic models that can be used across the curriculum. George Betts and Maureen Neihart describe the role of self-directed learning in the overall development of curriculum for the gifted, laying out important principles to consider in adopting self-directed learning models.

The second section of this issue includes articles dealing with more specific areas of the curriculum with respect to the developmental level of students and individual domains of inquiry in which curriculum may be developed. A. Harry Passow addresses the adolescent years in respect to curriculum, reviewing important secondary models and suggesting the importance of combined programs and services for gifted students at this age. Ann Robinson presents a model for elementary language arts that bridges general curriculum work in traditional areas such as literature and writing with appropriate adaptations of these areas for the gifted. Dorothy Sisk describes a new videotape series titled Portrait of America as a prototype for leadership development within the social studies curriculum.

This special issue represents a broad spectrum of views held in the field about the nature and direction of curriculum for the gifted student. It does not reflect the professional views of just a few but rather those of many educators who care deeply about the learning experiences of the most talented individuals in our society.

For the Curriculum Committee, this issue of the Gifted Child Quarterly represents another step in fulfilling its goal of sharing with other educators in the field perspectives on what adequate and appropriate curriculum for our gifted and talented students might be.