Hello everyone, and welcome to Volume 3, Issue 2 of The Bridge, the Center for Gifted Education’s biannual newsletter. The past several months have been an exciting time for us as we have been celebrating the first 25 years of the Center. To that end, we began an annual affair of inviting an alumnus back to give a keynote speech at our National Curriculum Network Conference. This year our speaker was Dr. Catherine Little, associate professor of educational psychology at the University of Connecticut. She did a marvelous job. As part of the same event, we unveiled a beautiful framed portrait of Dr. Joyce VanTassel-Baska, the Center’s founder. The portrait now hangs in the Center. Banners advertising the 25th birthday of the Center are hanging outside the new School of Education building on The College of William and Mary campus. The celebration will continue through the end of the year.

This year saw considerable success with our precollegiate learner programs. Our January Focusing on the Future (FOF) event for students, parents, and counselors yielded more than 425 registrants. Camp Launch, a residential program for financially impoverished students of high ability, had a wonderful second year, with praises being sung by every stakeholder group. The two new Saturday and Summer Enrichment Programs (SEP) in Richmond are growing and showing great promise for the future. A new enrichment program located in Norfolk began in October and represents a partnership between the Center and Norfolk Public Schools (NPS). Dr. Linda Sevigny, Deputy Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, and Dorie Banks, Senior Coordinator of the Office of Academic Rigor, were instrumental in putting this program together, and we thank them for her tireless work on behalf of students.

Our Advanced Placement training, coordinated by Laura Ionescu, set new records this year, with more than 370 teachers in attendance. The Professional Summer Institute was also well attended, with more than 170 people participating in the 2-day event.

This year was our first for sponsoring two of the Virginia Governor’s Schools. These Governor’s Schools sponsored 11th and 12th graders who spent 4 weeks living on a university campus and working with mentors at either the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences or the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. All students produced a presentation of their work that was quite impressive.

This year was also a banner year for new and updated curriculum materials. Dr. Kimberley Chandler worked with teacher Molly Sandling to produce a series of humanities units by decade. In total, this series will provide rigorous curriculum from the 1950s through the 2000s. This December, two books, Exploring America in the 1950s: Beneath the Formica and Exploring America in the 1960s: Our Voices Will Be Heard, will be available from Prufrock Press. Four additional books in this series will be published in future semesters.

In essence, the 25th year of the Center was significant for historical reasons, but also for historical curriculum (a joke for Joyce). It was a banner year for the Center in reaching its goals of positively affecting the lives of gifted students.

Dr. Tracy L. Cross
Executive Director
Laurence J. Coleman
(1941–2013)

In Memory of a Friend of the CFGE

Laurence J. Coleman, a longtime member of the CFGE’s National Advisory Board and a principal figure in gifted education over the past three decades, passed away unexpectedly on September 5, 2013 while on a hiking trip with his wife, Betty. Coleman—Larry, as he was known to friends and family—was active in The Association for the Gifted (TAG), a division of the Council for Exceptional Children, and the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) since the early 1980s. He was editor of the Journal for the Education of the Gifted (JEG) from 1995 to 2005. A professor of special education, Larry retired in 2012 from his position as Daso Herb Chair of Gifted Studies at the University of Toledo. Prior to moving to Toledo, he served as Professor and Head of the Department of Special Education at the University of Tennessee.

Larry was the author of an early gifted education textbook, Schooling the Gifted, published in 1985, which was later revised with his frequent collaborator, Tracy L. Cross, current CFGE Executive Director, in a new edition, renamed Being Gifted in School: An Introduction to Development, Guidance, and Teaching (Coleman & Cross, 2005). This textbook is widely used in teacher preparatory classes. In the late 1990s, Larry spent a year conducting an ethnographic study of adolescents in a residential high school for gifted students. He lived in the dorm, ate with the students, attended their events and club meetings, and was fondly referred to as “The Old Guy on the 4th Floor.” His findings from the yearlong study were published in the book, Nurturing Talent in High School: Life in the Fast Lane (2005), a superb example of ethnography in gifted education.

Larry wanted to understand the experience of giftedness, from the day-to-day activities (Coleman, 1997, 2005; Coleman & Cross, 1988; Peine & Coleman, 2010), to the passion these students experience (Coleman & Guo, 2013), to the experience of teachers of the gifted (Coleman, 1992, 1994a, 1994b). He proposed that gifted students encounter a unique type of stigmatization (1985) and much research developed from his Stigma of Giftedness Paradigm. He was known as a rigorous researcher and caring teacher.

In 1982, Larry and a parent advocate, Gayle Bush, created a summer camp for gifted children. The Appalachian Institute for Creative Learning still exists, having provided a nurturing, welcoming environment for hundreds of gifted children over the years. Larry was a Taoist Tai Chi instructor and active in the peace movement, serving on the board of directors of the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance and present at many protests.

Through his dedication to causes and people, his research and writing, his nurturance and inspiration, Larry had an impact on countless individuals. The CFGE benefited from his wisdom over the years, and his loss brings great sorrow to all of us.

Larry will be remembered during the NAGC Convention in Indianapolis on Saturday, November 9, from 11:45–12:45 in Grand Ballroom 10 at the JW Marriott. Please come to share your memories of this special member of the CFGE community.

References


Center Curriculum
Dr. Kimberley L. Chandler, Curriculum Director

This fall, there are many new curriculum materials in production at the Center for Gifted Education. I would like to highlight the items that will be available in late 2013 and early 2014. Because these items are still in production, please note that titles are subject to change.

Kendall Hunt

Exploring Nonfiction: Questions and Organizers to Guide Reading and Understanding Nonfiction Texts Teacher Guide and Student Guide are currently in development at Kendall Hunt. The Exploring Nonfiction books are tools for upper elementary and middle school teachers and students to use to support comprehension and analysis of nonfiction texts. These guides were developed as a component of Project Athena, a language arts curriculum implementation and research project conducted by the Center for Gifted Education in conjunction with seven school districts in Virginia, Maryland, and South Carolina. As such, the guides reflect key emphases of Project Athena, including the development of critical thinking and reasoning skills in the language arts. These two publications will include information that will be useful in implementing the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts related to informational text.

Prufrock Press

Prufrock Press is publishing two humanities units this December.

Exploring America in the 1950s: Beneath the Formica is an interdisciplinary unit for high-ability students in grades 6–8 that focuses on the struggle to define the United States during the Cold War. During this period, Americans grappled with the confidence of winning WWII, of being a world superpower, and the corresponding anxiety over that influence and the weapons behind it. This humanities unit looks at literature, art, and music of the 1950s to provide an understanding of how those living through the decade experienced and felt about the world around them. Through the lens of identity, it explores life in America and the myriad groups that coexisted in harmony and, often, with friction. Cultural icons like Elvis and the Beat poets are examined alongside larger issues such as the Cold War, conformity, and Civil Rights struggles.

Exploring America in the 1960s: Our Voices Will Be Heard is an interdisciplinary unit for high-ability students in grades 6–8 that begins with the optimism of the early 1960s as seen with the Kennedys and Camelot and moves to increasing disillusionment and despair by the end of the decade as hopes are dashed through assassinations and the involvement in Vietnam. This humanities unit also uses literature, art, and music of the decade to provide a greater understanding of this time, of how and why the social changes occurred, and how they gave voices to groups who were seeking a greater role in American society in the 1960s.

Focus on the Common Core State Standards

The Center for Gifted Education is excited to be working with a group of teachers to develop supplementary units for gifted and advanced students correlated to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The series, which will be published by Prufrock Press, will include six math books and six English language arts books for grades 3–8. Each book will include enrichment and extension activities aligned with the standards as well as practice assessments. The first three math books will be released in early 2015, with the rest of the books following in late 2015 and 2016.

Professional Development for Unit Materials

Center staff members are available to provide tailored professional development for implementation of the William and Mary curriculum materials. We will design sessions focusing on specific unit implementation, trainer of trainers models, or other workshops related to the curriculum materials. Please contact Dr. Jennifer Robins at jrobins@wm.edu for additional information.

Thank You!

Thank you for your continued interest in our curriculum materials. The Center for Gifted Education is proud to have supported gifted learners, their teachers, and their parents for 25 years. For additional information about curriculum materials or participation in piloting units, you may reach me at 757-221-2588, or at kchan@wm.edu.
Peers, teachers, and school safety play very different roles in the lives of high-ability students from different socioeconomic statuses. In a recent study, we asked the question, “What things about you or your environment or people around you keep you from achieving your academic goals?” of students from high- and low-income households. What we learned is that the achievement gap between high- and low-income students may have little to do with their academic ability. These students are learning in very different environments that set the stage for potentially very different outcomes.

We interviewed 45 middle school students (44% were female) from households with incomes under $45,000 per year and 22 middle school students (50% female) from households with incomes over $150,000 per year. These high-ability students were interviewed in focus groups of each SES. In the interviews, students from high-income households told us about peers who got in the way of their learning by talking when they should be paying attention to the teacher or by taking the teacher’s time when they do not understand something. These students feel they are held back when assigned to work with less able peers or when other students “use” them by “freeloading” or asking them for help on assignments that are not of interest. Teachers inhibit learning when they attend to other students who are not as interested in working as hard as these students. The high-income boys, in particular, were very frustrated by the slow pace of their classes, especially when teachers would not allow them to work ahead of their peers. High-income students did not report school environments as a barrier to their achievement. Fighting is infrequent, security guards are a necessity to keep “hobos” and “strangers” out, and drugs are an abstract concept in their schools.

Peers of students from low-income households pose very different problems. These students must avoid peers who will “get you into trouble” by pressuring them to experiment with drugs, steal, or “work on your social life too much.” They gave numerous examples of being subjected to such pressures. Some teachers in these students’ low-income schools have difficulty with classroom management, often losing control and yelling at the students. The slow pace frustrates these students, as well, and they may be allowed free computer or naptime, because “I’m too advanced.” Boredom is a problem for both high- and low-income students. The school environment as a barrier to achievement came up again and again with students from low-income backgrounds. Fighting in their schools is frequent, and instruction time is lost when teachers must attend to fights down the hall. To avoid fights among students, students shared that lunch would be eaten in the classroom rather than the cafeteria and dismissal times would be altered so that aggressive students did not meet in the hallways. Security guards are omnipresent, and several students reported being mistakenly accused of wrongdoing, losing time from lessons, as they had to prove their innocence. One girl reported being thrown against the wall by a security guard after

“What things about you or your environment or people around you keep you from achieving your academic goals?”
The Bridge  
Fall 2013  

Research, Continued

slamming her locker door. Rather than being a presence that keeps the students safe from the outside world, security guards are in these low-income schools to maintain order.

Although both high- and low-income students were identified as having exceptional academic abilities, their disparate learning environments almost guarantee disparate outcomes. Both face barriers to achieving their potential, but the effort required to overcome them is likely to be much greater among the students from low-income households. All gifted students need support to achieve what is possible for them. At the CFGE, we are learning what those supports are and how we might go about providing them.

This study was conducted by Jennifer Riedl Cross, CFGE Director of Research, Mihyeon Kim, CFGE Director of Precollegiate Learner Programs, and Andrea Dawn Frazier, Assistant Professor in the Department of Counseling, Foundations, and Leadership at Columbus State University.

Dr. Tracy L. Cross Publishes New Book

Dr. Tracy L. Cross, Jody and Layton Smith Professor of Psychology and Gifted Education and Executive Director of the Center for Gifted Education, recently published a book on suicide. Suicide Among Gifted Children and Adolescents: Understanding the Suicidal Mind explores the phenomenon of suicide among students with gifts and talents. It provides readers with a coherent picture of what suicidal behavior is, clarifies what is known and what is unknown about it, shares two major theories of suicide with explanatory power, and offers an emerging model of the suicidal behavior of students with gifts and talents. In addition, the book offers insight into the personal experience of students with gifts and talents, details what schools can do to help prevent suicide among gifted students, and shares a variety of resources available to help.

The book is based on empirical research, direct observation, a review of the literature, other researchers’ findings and arguments, and a theory emerging from years of study. In writing this book, Cross hopes that a greater awareness of the suicidal behavior of students with gifts and talents will be had and that additional efforts to prevent suicides among this population—and all children—will be put in place. The book is now available from Prufrock Press.

2014 Professional Development Offerings

Dr. Jennifer H. Robins, Director of Publications and Professional Development

We are excited to announce the dates for our 2014 professional development offerings. The National Curriculum Network Conference (NCNC) will be held March 13–14, 2014. This annual conference offers sessions on curriculum, instruction, and assessment for high-ability learners. This year, our two keynote speakers are Dr. Del Siegle from the University of Connecticut and Dr. Susan K. Johnsen from Baylor University. Dr. Elissa F. Brown from Hunter College will give the Joyce VanTassel-Baska Alumni Lecture. We are honored to have these gifted education experts speak at NCNC.

The Center for Gifted Education invites you to submit a presentation proposal for consideration. The theme for this year’s conference is Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment for the 21st Century. To submit a proposal, please visit http://education.wm.edu/centers/cfge/forms/form11560/index.php. Submissions are due December 2, 2013 and notification of decisions will be given to lead presenters no later than January 24, 2014.

The Professional Summer Institute will be held June 26–27, 2014. The Institute provides teachers and administrators with the knowledge and skills to design and use high-quality curriculum within effective programs for advanced learners. Participants select one strand of study for the 2-day institute and receive intensive training in a particular area of curriculum development and implementation.

The Advanced Placement and Pre-AP Summer Institute is scheduled for August 4–7, 2014. Endorsed by the College Board, the Advanced Placement and Pre-AP Summer Institute is designed to help new, beginning, and future AP teachers plan and implement more effective AP programs in their schools. Each of the subject-based workshops shares curriculum content and teaching methods of AP courses and explores the content, structure, and grading of the AP exams. In addition, the workshops afford teachers the opportunity to interact with colleagues and to discuss issues and concerns surrounding the AP courses they teach.

Registration for all of the professional development offerings will be open soon. Please visit the Center’s website for the most current information on each of these opportunities and be sure to save the dates!

Suicide Among Gifted Children and Adolescents: Understanding the Suicidal Mind

Dr. Tracy L. Cross
The Center for Gifted Education offers the Saturday/Summer Enrichment Programs (SEP) for K–9 gifted students. The Saturday Enrichment Program is an academically challenging program with an emphasis on inquiry-based learning that allows students to explore specialized areas of science, mathematics, humanities, and arts.

The enrichment programs have been a long-standing tradition since 1988. Parents who attended the programs as children are now bringing their own children to SEP. Students enjoy attending SEP as they face academic challenges, socialize with peers, and explore interest-based topics. SEP provides gifted students opportunities to apply process skills in inquiry fields and problem solving in new and exciting ways.

This year, SEP has expanded its offerings to include programs in both Richmond and Norfolk. The Richmond program is for students in grades 1–5. Fall classes include What Makes the Sea Salty?, Greek Mythology, Engineering: It’s All Around Us, and So You Want to Be a Doctor. The newest SEP offering is in collaboration with Norfolk Public Schools (NPS). Spearheaded by Dr. Linda Sevigny, Deputy Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, and Dorie Banks, Senior Coordinator of the Office of Academic Rigor, the district has provided support for 32 students from low-income backgrounds to attend the 5-week program at Tidewater Park Elementary. The Norfolk program offers courses in The Science of Optics and Art and Orion Space Academy for gifted students in grades 3–5.

The Spring 2014 SEP program will be held on the William and Mary campus, and many exciting courses are currently in the works. For more information about SEP, please visit http://education.wm.edu/centers/cfge/precollegiate/index.php.

Saturday Enrichment Program Dates
Norfolk: October 12–November 9, 2013 (5 Saturdays)
Richmond: October 12–November 9, 2013 (5 Saturdays)
Williamsburg: February 22–March 22, 2014 (5 Saturdays)

Summer Enrichment Program Dates
Richmond: June 23–26, 2014
Williamsburg: July 7–11, 2014 (Session I); July 14–18, 2014 (Session II)

Focusing on the Future
The Center for Gifted Education will be hosting its annual Focusing on the Future (FOF) event on February 1, 2014. This program is geared toward students in grades 6–12 who are interested in a wide range of careers relating to science, technology, engineering, mathematics, arts, and humanities. For these students, the CFGE has recruited several guest speakers from various career paths. The speakers are from The College of William and Mary, the Williamsburg community, and other neighboring communities.

Not only is this event beneficial for students, it is also valuable for their parents and counselors. The adults will attend sessions dedicated to guiding their children and students toward success and ensuring a bright future both academically and career-focused. Session topics will include Time Management and Organization Skills, Helping Children Cope With Depression, Motivating a Gifted Child Who Underachieves, and Identification and Nurturance of Culturally Diverse Gifted Children, among others.

Students and adults will have the option to register for different sessions. The audience will be divided into four groups: middle school students, high school students, parents, and counselors. The deadline to register is January 20, 2014. It is our hope that students will not only stay sharp—they will also stay focused on their future.
Precollegiate Learner Programs, Continued

International Precollegiate Programs

The Center for Gifted Education provides international educational outreach through curriculum training, professional development, and academic enrichment programming. The two primary international programs include a collaborative program with the Chungcheongnamdo Office of Education in Korea and the Centre for Talented Youth and Centre for Academic Talent in Ireland.

Nobel Project Group From Korea The Korean Nobel Project’s goal is “to stimulate the minds and develop the skills of Korea’s future global leaders.” Educators and students travel to Williamsburg, VA, to exchange ideas about teaching and learning through a variety of science and math curricular conceptual learning activities.

This year is the fourth year the Center has hosted this group, and we are excited to have 28 students and 5 teachers participating. In January of 2014, these students and teachers will arrive in Williamsburg for the intensive weeklong program. Half of the students will take a science class and the other half will take a math course. The students will attend class a total of 6 hours per day for 6 days to gain in-depth knowledge about their selected topic. In addition, the students will be given time to experience American history during field trips to Jamestown and Richmond. The teachers are interested in learning more about the Integrated Curriculum Model (ICM) developed by Joyce VanTassel-Baska and will be observing classes to see how educators can facilitate problem-based learning with the ICM.

International Exchange Program for High School Students The Center is preparing for an international summer exchange program in Ireland that will provide American students with the opportunity to take challenging courses in medicine, engineering, science, and computing and technology. The program will be held June 24–July 4, 2014 at the Centre for Talented Youth, Dublin City University, Ireland. Rising 9th–11th graders will have the opportunity to study abroad in an exciting educational environment, while spending time with other students who have similar interests. For more information about this new program, please contact Dr. Mihyeon Kim at mxkim3@wm.edu.

2013 Camp Launch
Darlene Dockery

“I can’t tell when we are having fun or when we are learning. It’s just the right balance of fun and learning.”

This was a recent camper’s comment about Camp Launch, the 2-week residential program offered by the Center for Gifted Education at The College of William and Mary July 21–August 3, 2013. Born out of a desire to help gifted students from all socioeconomic levels, the program provides high-ability middle school students from low-income backgrounds with enrichment and academic opportunities in various areas, including STEM fields. The program, funded by the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, started last year with a group of 47 rising seventh graders, who were invited back this year as rising eighth graders. This year, Camp Launch added a new cohort of rising seventh graders who participated in Lego Robotics or Nanotechnology classes. Eighth graders had the opportunity to take one of two new STEM courses: Spatial Reasoning and Acid, Acid, Everywhere: Exploring Engineering, Science, and Technology.

Camp Launch has four goals:

• To deliver advanced instruction in academic content such as STEM fields, writing, academic self-efficacy, and personal development.
• To provide enrichment opportunities in a wide variety of content areas.
• To encourage the development of peer support networks.
• To develop in campers a future orientation that includes a college education, along with preparation that will help them take advantage of enabling opportunities to achieve that goal.

All the experienced staff members, including counselors and teachers, have strived to meet these goals. Dr. Tracy L. Cross, Executive Director of the Center for Gifted Education, shared

Special Thank You to Marissa Rosenblum!

The Center for Gifted Education would like to extend a big thank you to Marissa Rosenblum for her generous donation to the Fall Saturday Enrichment Program. Mrs. Rosenblum paid the entire tuition for a first grader in financial need. We appreciate Mrs. Rosenblum’s continued support for the Saturday Enrichment Program.

Thank You to Marissa Rosenblum!
Camp Launch, Continued

this advice with the students and their parents: “Dreams without action are only dreams; dreams with action, but not enough information, are doomed to mediocrity; dreams with action, based on significant information, are destined to be reached.” Camp Launch focuses on increasing students’ confidence and provides the “significant information” needed to help them achieve their dreams.

Counselors and teachers agreed that there were both academic and social benefits for the students. “I think for many of my campers, the value of Camp Launch is as much social and emotional as it is academic. Yes, when my students study acids and bases in physical science this school year, they are going to be light years ahead of their classmates. But much more importantly, in my mind, they are also considerably more willing to get to know new people and try new things at my school.”

Because the rising eighth graders were returning for a second year, in the Personal Development class they were assigned as mentors for the seventh-grade students in the hopes that they could help them in their transition to camp and share some of the benefits of having come to camp before. During a recent focus group of returning campers, one student’s experience would attest to that: “I am more open since going to Camp Launch. Because people were there from all different places and I got to know them, it made me more willing to get to know new people and try new things at my school.”

“Dreams without action are only dreams; dreams with action, but not enough information, are doomed to mediocrity; dreams with action, based on significant information, are destined to be reached.”

An Interview With Claire E. Hughes, Ph.D.
Doctoral Program Graduate

Describe your career path since completing your doctorate.

I was the Director of Gifted Programs for Hampton City Schools while I was working on my doctorate until 1999. In 2000, I finished my doctorate and became the NC Teach Director for the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and an adjunct instructor in special education and educational psychology. I also did some gifted consulting for the state of North Carolina.

From 2000–2005, I followed my husband around through his consulting and was an adjunct at University of Rhode Island, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, and Florida Gulf Coast University. I was also a full-time Visiting Professor of Gifted Education at University of South Florida for a year. In 2005, I took a tenure-track assistant professor position at Bellarmine University in Louisville, KY, in a dual-enrollment elementary/special education program. I got a visiting fellow position at Oxford University in 2008 where I studied autism. In 2009, I took an associate professor position at the College of Coastal Georgia (CCGA) in Brunswick, GA, to start a dual-enrollment elementary/special education program.

Students also reported a greater sense of resiliency after participation. One student noted, “I used to give up when something was really hard, but in robotics when we didn't get it right, he [the teacher] let us do it until we got it right, so now if I don't get it the first time, I just take a break and come back and try again and then I get it.”

Participating school districts were Charles City Public Schools, King and Queen County Public Schools, Newport News Public Schools, Norfolk Public Schools, Petersburg Public School, Portsmouth Public Schools, Richmond Public Schools, and Sussex County Public Schools.

I received tenure at CCGA in 2013. I have remained very active in the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) over the years, becoming the chair of both the Research and Evaluation Division and the Special Populations Network. I wrote two books about parenting and teaching children with high-functioning autism in 2010 and 2011. I’ve written several chapters about twice-exceptional children in different texts. In addition, I’ve co-authored several books about differentiating the Common Core State Standards for gifted learners. I work pretty extensively with 2TeachLLC, a consulting company started by another William and Mary graduate in special...
education, which helps school districts in inclusive efforts and co-teaching. I’m currently chairing the National Twice-Exceptional Community of Practice through NAGC and IDEA Partnerships. I’m the co-founder and co-editor of an online journal through The Association for the Gifted, Council for Exceptional Children (CEC-TAG) called EDGE: Excellence and Diversity in Gifted Education.

Did you have an assistantship at the CFGE? If so, describe your assignments there and how you have used the skills acquired in your subsequent positions.

I was a graduate assistant on three Javits grants from 1994–1998: the original science grant and two of the language arts grants that developed curriculum. Through those assistantships, I learned amazing skills, especially presentation and writing skills. I also learned to collaborate with content experts. Because of my work on the science grant 20 years ago, I have had the opportunity to co-write lessons for NASA and a chapter for developing creativity in science. I learned how to talk with content experts and add my expertise in teacher education to create a powerful product.

I once taught for 3 days to a group in Kentucky who wanted Dr. Joyce VanTassel-Baska but had to settle for me, and I learned how to meet their needs, entertain them, and keep the integrity of the vision and skills I was trying to pass on.

By writing and rewriting and rewriting the language arts units, I learned how important it was to focus on the user of material and how the right material can make a difference in a child’s life if it’s written in a way that teachers can understand. I learned that writing is never perfect, but at some point, it’s just due.

In a field test we did of one of the language arts units, I also learned the importance of trying out theoretical lessons on real kids and directly involving real teachers in the development, the dissemination, and the refinement of lessons.

I also learned how to run a conference: I helped organize the first two NCNC conferences. Through that process, I learned how to create interesting schedules, find speakers, and stuff folders and packets, and I realized the importance of meals and aesthetics.

For a couple of years, I was the Director of the SEP Program, and I learned how important it was to balance tradition with innovation, that gifted kids often come from gifted parents, and how important it was to keep minds and bodies active and engaged.

Perhaps the skill that I learned the most at the Center was that nothing comes without hard work. Accomplishments are achieved by balancing vision and details. And that so much of success is just showing up. No matter how hard I have worked in my life since I left the Center, I know that there is always more work to be done. I was exhausted when I left the Center. But I have never again had the kind of fun and intellectual stimulation that I had there either.

What was most memorable to you about your experiences in the doctoral program?

The Center was my program. I went to classes, but all of their applications and all of their reality focused on my experiences at the Center. With the exception of a few classes (hello, Intermediate Stats with Dr. Ward!), most of my memories are based around the Center.

I remember staying with Joyce in a hotel room in Salt Lake City after meeting people I had only read before and talking about how real and human and personal these “Gifted Gods” were. I remember staying up late with Linda, Dana, and Chwee, creating presentations to be done the next day in Saratoga Springs, NY. I remember sitting in a hotel in New York City, watching Times Square in all of its fizzy glory, reveling in the experience at AERA with Tracey, Donna, Lou, and Bill. I remember laughing and swearing with Elissa and Catherine as we raced to complete a literature review for the language arts book while finishing the SEP brochure and stuffing NCNC packets.

The Center was perhaps the most intense time in my life—ever. During those 4 years, I made lifelong friends; wrote books and units that are still in use today; learned the cycle of publish, learn, teach, learn, and publish again; got set up with my future husband by Joyce; and traveled more than I had ever done before or since.

And I learned how to mentor—how to expect more of someone than they even knew they were capable of. Joyce taught me how to stretch limits in others and show them that they are limitless. I hope to be half as much of a mentor, a teacher, and as passionate of life and change as she is.

What was most memorable about my experiences? Joyce. And my fellow students. But mostly Joyce.

What advice would you give to someone who is considering pursuing a doctorate related to gifted education?

With luck, it’s the hardest work you’ll ever do in your life. It will be the most impactful work you will have done. And it prepares you for hard work and impactful work later. The doctorate is only the beginning. It is the ticket to other doors, but you have to walk through those doors and take the opportunity. Those doors aren’t there without that ticket. So finish, so that you can go on with the rest of your life and so that you have the credential to make the difference you want to make.

The doctorate is more than the ticket though. Allow yourself to be transformed. Allow yourself time to see things from those lofty heights and to argue about what it means and how it can be done. Talk about it with your fellow students. Learn from your professors and challenge your own
Hughes Interview, Continued

thinking. And never lose track of the amount of hard work that it takes to achieve anything. Others have gotten through by finding balance. I never found balance in the program, and it consumed and became my life. Either way, you can find happiness.

There is always more work to be done than can be done. There is always another project to start, a new version to edit, grading to be done, and not enough time to do it. You can be daunted and give up, or you can continue to add your piece to the process. Be open to learning and new paths. I wanted higher education, and I found it in special education. But it was because of my classes in special education and my experience in the program that I was prepared for this path. I could have gone many, many other directions. But I chose to be happy with the path that I chose.

It really is about the children. Remember why you got into education and keep that focus during and after your classes and your program. The whole thing is about growing and making a difference.

An Interview With Lydia Lassalle
Master’s Degree Program Graduate

When did you graduate? What was your degree?
I graduated in 2006 with a master’s degree in gifted education.

Describe your career path since completing your master’s degree.
I got a job upon graduation with York County School Division. I teach second grade at Yorktown Elementary Math Science Technology Magnet School. My summers still include teaching in SEP, though!

Did you have an assistantship at the CFGE? If so, describe your assignments there and how you have used the skills acquired in your subsequent positions.
I did have an assistantship at the CFGE working with the precollegiate programs. I planned Focusing on the Future (FOF) and worked with the SEP program. Funny enough, the experience of planning the FOF conference was put to good use when some friends hired me as their wedding coordinator!

What was most memorable to you about your experiences in the master’s program?
The other folks in my program that I worked with were most memorable. I remember eating lunch on the porch (we still were in the house on Scotland St.) and having potluck dinners during class. We had some good camaraderie in our cohort!

What advice would you give to someone who is considering pursuing a master’s degree related to gifted education?
Figure out what your goal is. Are you going to pursue a doctorate later on, or are you going to be a practitioner? Is the program you’re looking into a theory-based program, or is it a practitioner-based program? Theory-based programs can be very helpful when going for your Ph.D., but it might not be as helpful for folks who want to be in the classroom. If you want to be in the classroom, look for a program that encourages field experience and can help facilitate practicum placements. Try to keep your end goal in mind when grad-program shopping!

Don’t Forget!

Spring 2014 SEP Registration is online now! February 22–March 22, 2014

National Curriculum Network Conference March 13–14, 2014

Professional Summer Institute June 26–27, 2014

Advanced Placement and Pre-AP Summer Institute August 4–7, 2014

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