

To the Editor:

E. Paul Torrance's lead article in the Winter 1970 issue of *Gifted Child Quarterly* presents a brilliant and original solution of a problem which has perturbed many advocates of full educational opportunity for the gifted. This is how to rebut the charge that they are elitists. Dr. Torrance has confounded all such critics by conclusively proving that "giftedness" is completely democratic because almost everybody is gifted.

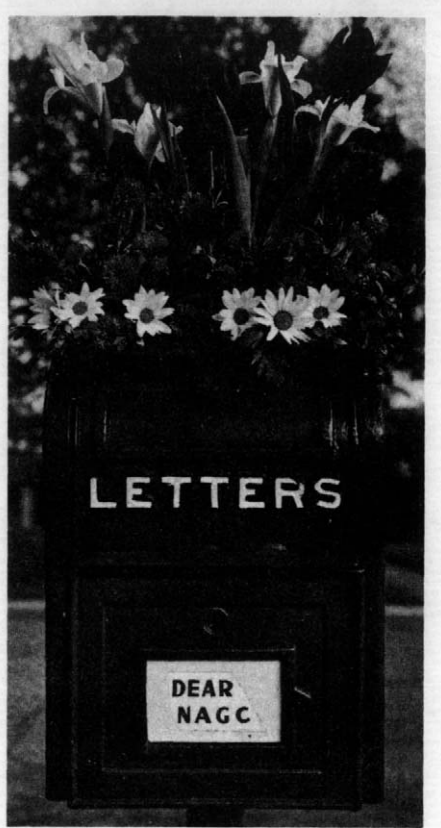
The "positive talents" which are the foundations of giftedness, according to Reissman, Torrance and other leaders of this Copernican revolution in psychology, include: slow learners with one-track minds (p. 201, item 1), those who enjoy physical activity (4), children who enjoy each other's company (7), who cooperate (5), who display informality and humor (8), who avoid competition (perhaps because they can't possibly succeed) and who are strain avoiders, (including no doubt the strain of mental activity.)

One small problem does remain. If these are characteristics of the potentially gifted, what are the characteristics of the mediocre and mentally backward? But perhaps in the psychological 1984 here limned, backwardness will be abolished. All children, like Orwell's animals, will be gifted, but some will be more gifted than others.

In the periodicals of the exact sciences, contributors perform the rather easy task of expressing complex thoughts with the utmost conciseness and clarity. Among educational theorists, the task often seems to be the opposite one of presenting simple ideas as verbosely and turgidly as the English language permits. I take it that Dr. Torrance's prolix thoughts concerning what he calls "ecological child psychology" — and, incidentally, he is again to be congratulated for pinning such an in-word as *ecological* to his area of interest — implies that giftedness may in part be judged in terms of successful adaptation to one's ecological environment, whatever that environment may be. This is not a new thought. If carried to its logical conclusion, we would conclude that the concentration camp inmate who stole Anne Frank's bread and thus condemned her to die of illness and hunger was ecologically more gifted than Anne Frank.

Speaking seriously, is it not time to re-examine our fundamental purposes? The major objectives of organizations in behalf of the gifted include getting society to recognize their potentially much greater contribution to mankind than the average and trying to create a milieu in which they are educated in accordance with their abilities and up to their capacity, and promoted in education and career in accordance with their capabilities.

If this is the purpose and direction, then nothing is achieved beyond ephemeral opportunistic advantage by confusing the issue. Torrance's "potentially gifted" underprivileged child may be characterized by physical exuberance, hatred of school, slow learning, a one-track mind, lack of individuality or ambition, humor (?) and informal behavior (does the last include kicking teacher downstairs?). But he is not



our cup of tea. This is not the profile of someone who has a great potential contribution to society or of the child isolated from his fellows and his faculty by superior intelligence.

If I were Black, I should probably regard Torrance's article as insulting and offensive. The criteria of true creativity and intellectual superiority are essentially the same regardless of race. If I were a Negro parent, I should not want my children to emulate the profile Torrance presents of an extroverted, undisciplined, unthinking and unmotivated individual, but to choose as models people like Philippa Duke Schuyler, who could spell 500 words including *rhinoceros* at two-and-a-half; won her first gold medal in the National Piano Guild competitions at four; had composed a hundred pieces for piano, one of which was played by the N.Y. Philharmonic at eleven, went through eight years of grammar school in three, grew up to become a professional concert pianist, a foreign correspondent and author, and died tragically at thirty-four while evacuating Vietnamese orphans by helicopter under enemy fire. It is true that Philippa Schuyler was at most half-Negro, but that is not the point.

Sincerely yours,  
Nathaniel Weyl  
4201 S. Ocean Blvd.  
Delray Beach, Florida 33444

---

Gentlemen:

I am interested in joining your organization, if membership is open to non-professionals in the field. Please send me some general information about NAGC and an application form.

I was a gifted child myself, and nothing special was done for me by the public schools I attended. Now I have three children, one of whom is gifted — and nothing is being done for him, either. So far as I have been able to discover, there is no school specializing in the gifted in the Washington, D.C. area. His mother and I have decided to do what we can for our son outside of school.

Sincerely yours,  
Gerald H. Bidlack  
6514 Wiscasset Road  
Mohican Hills, Md. 20016

---

You would certainly find your membership in NAGC doubly rewarding. The Gifted Child Q, which is yours with membership, will enhance your personal insights, and enable you to more successfully guide your child's development.

---

#### BRAVO TO AN ADMINISTRATOR WITH VISION

The five schools listed below would appreciate the following free material(s) for their Instructional Materials Centers.

Publications of The National Association for Gifted Children.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely  
James Knox, Ph.D.  
Assistant Superintendent  
South-Western City Schools  
3708 South Broadway, Grove City, Ohio 43123

Mrs. Norma Smith, Park Street Middle School,  
201 East Park Street, Grove City, Ohio 43123

Mrs. Jane Spung, Norton Middle School  
215 Norton Road, Columbus, Ohio 43228

Mrs. Kitty Tracey, Brookpark Middle School  
309 Southwest Blvd., Grove City, Ohio 43123

Mrs. Nancy Huffman, Finland Middle School  
1825 Finland Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43223

Mrs. Carmel Jenkins, Pleasant View Middle School  
7255 Kropp Road, Grove City, Ohio 43123