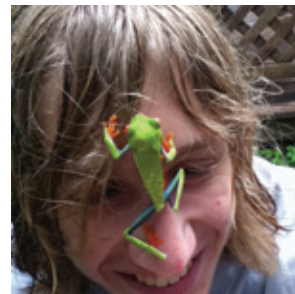
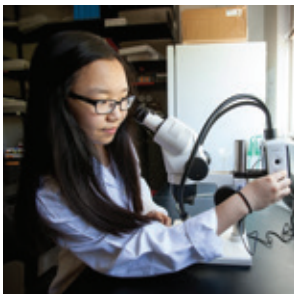
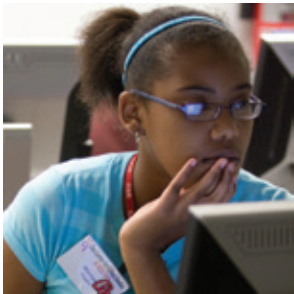


# LEADING THE WAY

A History of the First 35 Years of  
The Center for Gifted Studies  
at Western Kentucky University  
1982-2017







THEN  
AND  
NOW



Concept by Sam Oldenburg

Leading the Way:  
A History of the First 35 Years of  
The Center for Gifted Studies  
at Western Kentucky University  
1982-2017

Written by Erika Solberg  
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# CONTENTS

- 4 Introduction**
  - A Guide to the Text
  - Housing The Center
  
- 6 Chapter One–Educational Opportunities and Resources for Gifted and Talented Students**
  - Duke TIP State Recognition Ceremony
  - SCATS (Summer Camp for Academically Talented Middle School Students)
  - VAMPY (The Summer Program for Verbally and Mathematically Precocious Youth)
  - Super Saturdays
  - The Carol Martin Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science in Kentucky
  - The Summer Camp, Camp Explore, and Camp Innovate
  - Little Learners, Big Ideas
  - IdeaFestival Bowling Green
  - Financial Assistance
  
- 24 Chapter Two–Educational Opportunities and Resources for Educators of Gifted and Talented Students**
  - Western Kentucky University Graduate Programs
  - Advanced Placement Summer Institute
  - Leadership Institute
  - Vertical Team Training
  - The Berta Seminars
  - Administrators’ Institute
  - Twice-Exceptional Student Seminar
  - Workshops through Race to the Top
  - National STEM Scholar Program
  - Facilitated Professional Learning Opportunities
  - In addition ...
  
- 31 Chapter Three–Educational Opportunities and Resources for Parents of Gifted and Talented Students**
  - Phone Calls, Emails, and More
  - Parent Seminars
  - The Berta Seminars
  - In addition ...
  
- 34 Chapter Four–Communication and Advocacy for Gifted and Talented Students**
  - Symposia on Kentucky’s Children Who Are Gifted and Talented
  - Kentucky Association for Gifted Education
  - The Challenge*
  - White Paper
  - Challenge Awards
  - The Victoria Fellows
  - In addition ...



- 40 Chapter Five—Research on Gifted Education**
- Enhancing Educational Opportunities for Gifted Middle School Students Project
  - Restructuring Primary Education Project
  - Raising Achievement in Middle School Science Project
  - Project GEMS (Gifted Education in Math and Science)
  - i4/Innovate Kentucky
  - Nazi Germany and the Holocaust Murals Exhibit
  - Project RAP (Reaching Academic Potential)
  - In addition ...
- 49 Chapter Six—An International Center for Gifted Studies**
- Language Study in Student Programming
  - Travel/Study Tours
  - Russian Educational Partnership
  - An International Friend of The Center: Morton Holbrook
  - The Shanghai Connection
  - The World Council for Gifted and Talented Children
  - Saudi Arabia Visits
  - In addition ...
  - Participants and Travel/Study Tours World Map
- 56 Chapter Seven—A Preeminent Center for Gifted Studies**
- Advisory Board
  - Mahurin Endowed Professorship
  - WKU Centennial
  - Prichard Committee
  - Volunteers
  - Partnerships
  - Grants
  - Celebrations
  - In addition ...
- 62 Conclusion**
- 63 Timeline**
- 69 Appendix**
- Presentations, Consultantships, and Other Work for the Community
  - Publications: Books, Chapters, and Articles
  - Service to Organizations
  - Vertical Teams Training Institutes Dates and Subjects
  - Webinars on Wednesdays
  - White Paper
  - i4/Innovate Kentucky Projects
  - Twice-Exceptional Students Study
  - Grants Awarded to The Center for Gifted Studies
  - Awards and Recognitions for Publications and People

## INTRODUCTION

How to tell the story of The Center for Gifted Studies?

We could start with the facts: dates, grant amounts, course names, programs created, countries visited — yet although these concrete items are important and essential, they are not enough by themselves.

We could add in a description of objects, the things that have made the work possible: the buildings where The Center has been housed, the safety goggles and clown wigs used in the classroom, the stacks of AP textbooks distributed — but this approach, too, would leave the story incomplete.

Some might say The Center is Dr. Julia Link Roberts, our executive director, so all we need to do is tell her story, but Julia herself would object to that idea. Certainly there would be no Center for Gifted Studies without her, but to focus on her would be to ignore why The Center began and why we will continue to exist: gifted and talented children, those who work with them, and those who support them.



Julia and Dick Roberts with VAMPY campers in the early 1990s

Anyone who has worked with Julia for any length of time is likely to have heard her say, “Everything we’ve done is because we saw a need.” Time and again, The Center identified needs and addressed them, including the need of educators to learn how to teach gifted children, the need of gifted children to challenge themselves intellectually and work with like-minded peers, and the need for the parents of gifted children to understand how to advocate for them. And in addressing those needs, The Center has brought people together. Whether a seven-year-old Super Saturdays student, an expert on twice-exceptional students, a brand-new Advanced Placement course teacher, the parent of a teenager who excels in math and is not challenged at school, a VAMPY camper forging lifelong friendships, a superintendent looking to expand district offerings, or a state legislator deciding how best to allocate education monies, The Center has found a way to challenge them, educate them, guide them, or create a platform for their message. To do so, The Center has connected youth, educators, donors, volunteers, families, and community advocates; has reached out to countless communities to spread the word of opportunity; and has created a network of

## A Guide to the Text

When referring to affiliations of alumni of programs of The Center, the following abbreviations are used:

<b>S</b>	Participant in SCATS (Summer Camp for Academically Talented Middle School Students)
<b>V</b>	Participant in VAMPY (Summer Program for Verbally and Mathematically Precocious Youth)
<b>SmCp</b>	Participant in Summer Camp and/or Camp Explore and Camp Innovate
<b>TA</b>	Teaching Assistant for VAMPY
<b>Coun</b>	Counselor for SCATS and/or VAMPY
<b>Trav</b>	Participant in travel/study tours with The Center
<b>SS</b>	Participant in Super Saturdays
<b>Gatt</b>	Student at The Gatton Academy for Mathematics and Science in Kentucky
<b>Gatt RC</b>	Residential counselor for The Gatton Academy for Mathematics and Science in Kentucky

Those who play an ongoing role in The Center’s history will be introduced by first and last name in their first appearance in each chapter and thereafter identified by first name. These individuals include Executive Director Julia Roberts, Associate Director Tracy Inman and longtime volunteer Dick Roberts.

Initialisms and acronyms will typically be explained in their first appearance in each chapter, but the following list of commonly used initialisms and acronyms may be helpful in your reading:

<b>AP</b>	Advanced Placement
<b>KAGE</b>	Kentucky Association for Gifted Education
<b>NAGC</b>	National Association for Gifted Children
<b>SCATS</b>	Summer Camp for Academically Talented Middle School Students
<b>STEM</b>	science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
<b>VAMPY</b>	Summer Program for Verbally and Mathematically Precocious Youth
<b>WKU</b>	Western Kentucky University

individuals throughout Kentucky, the United States, and the world that together works to address the needs of gifted children.

Above all, the story of The Center is a story of people: this history tells the story of the people who developed the ideas, who did the work, who made the connections, who saw the needs, who offered the opportunities, who spread the word, and who took what was offered and expanded on it. It is the story of the youth who begins as a SCATS camper and returns as a student at The Gatton Academy, the VAMPY camper who as an adult becomes an advocate for gifted education in her own community, and the educator in Saudi Arabia who visits The Center and then applies its ideas in his own school. It is the story of the many children, youth, and adults, who have participated in a program at The Center and said, “I’ve found my people.”

It’s the story of individuals like Super Saturdays, SCATS, and VAMPY alumna Sarah Jo Mahurin, (S 1990-94; V 1993-96; Coun;

TA) who says, “The programs that I did through The Center both as a camper and later as a counselor were equally formative, as a person starting to think about what school meant to me — having a structure where learning and thinking were not just things that you did because it’s Kentucky state law for you to go to school, but actually things that were part of how you lived and foundational to how you went through the world. That was a really important thing when I was a kid: to encounter learning as non-compulsory but something that people did for fun, on purpose, in the summer when they didn’t have to.”

Sarah Jo is one of more than 38,000 young people who, over our 35 years, have been challenged and inspired by opportunities at The Center, where our programs have not only endured but have evolved and thrived. With active connections on six continents, we are proud of our longevity and our consistency.

We are also proud of our relationship with Western Kentucky University (WKU). Former WKU president Gary Ransdell said, “The Center for Gifted Studies has played a prominent role in the recent transformation of WKU. The Center, through its summer programs, the Duke Talent Identification Program, and other gifted education programs, has elevated academic quality at WKU and attracted talented young minds to our campus. It is now part of our WKU intellectual DNA.”

Our success is in no small part because of our clear sense of purpose, as outlined in our mission statement: 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. This mission in turn guides our vision: “An internationally preeminent center, The Center for Gifted Studies envisions expanding services in five areas: (1) offering educational programs for gifted children and youth, (2) providing professional learning 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.”

To celebrate and document 35 years of working toward our mission and fulfilling our vision, we have created this history. Chapter one recounts the educational opportunities and resources we have created for gifted and talented students, chapter two those we have created for their educators, and chapter three those created for their parents. Chapter four moves into the story of our work in communication and advocacy for gifted children, while chapter five describes the research we have conducted and the curriculum we have developed. The last two chapters take a broader look at The Center’s history, in chapter six by looking at the many ways in which we are an international organization and finally, in chapter seven, by mapping our preeminence. Following the chapters, we have included an appendix that records our work in detailed lists.

The organization of the history around the mission and vision statement reveals many places of overlapping and crossing over which are themselves part of The Center’s story: our work in one area has an impact on our work in other areas. These connections are a sign to us that we have created in our 35 years a complex and deep foundation, one that we will continue to build upon in the years ahead.



Florence Schneider Hall, home to The Carol Martin Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Sciences and The Center for Gifted Studies

## HOUSING THE CENTER

Originally, the offices of The Center were in Tate Page Hall, where the College of Education was housed — by “offices,” we mean one room for Julia Roberts with a student worker at a desk in the hallway on the first floor. It was not unusual for staff and volunteers to use the floor when they needed to spread out their work. All our supplies were kept in one cabinet in the hallway.

At one point or another over the next 25 years, our offices were on every floor of Tate Page, until finally we settled in on the fourth floor in an open space that suited us well. Initially, we had a small section; after we spent a year in Jones Jagers Hall while Tate Page underwent asbestos removal, we returned to occupy the entire center section of the floor.

In 2007, when The Gatton Academy opened, we moved into offices in Florence Schneider Hall. During the renovation of Schneider Hall, starting in the summer of 2015, we were split into three different locations: Tate Page Hall and the second and third floors of Gary Ransdell Hall.

In the summer of 2016, we moved back into an expanded Schneider Hall, where we plan to stay. The executive director’s office was supported by a donation from the Eisenstein Family and the associate director’s office with a donation from Doctors Daksha and Prabodh Mehta. We occupy eight offices, share a conference room with Gatton, and have a work area/kitchen. Our walls are decorated with art generously given by Gustaf (Gus) Swanson.

We’ve come a long way from Julia’s faculty office and a desk in the hall!



# Educational Opportunities and Resources for Gifted and Talented Students

Educational opportunities and resources for gifted and talented students are at the heart of The Center’s vision — as an example of this focus, consider the fact that Julia Roberts herself has served every year as the director of all our summer programming. Through our summer camps and Super Saturdays alone, we have reached over 38,000 young people. Just as significant is the fact that each program begun by The Center has endured, demonstrating that we have identified and met real, ongoing needs of gifted and talented youth. How has The Center created each of these experiences? First, we brought together kids who value knowledge, creativity, and exploration. Next, we recruited educators who are passionate about what they teach, how they teach it, and whom they teach. Finally, we provided support staff who possess a vast skill set and who believe in the mission of the program. With that kind of community, wonderful things were bound to happen.



Scottie-Beth Fleming Lindsley speaks at Duke TIP in 2009

inspired to continue to pursue excellence in education by speakers such as Kentucky Secretary of Education Virginia Fox and Speaker of the House Jody Richards, as well as by former participants in Center programs such as aerospace engineer Scottie-Beth Fleming (SS; S 1998-2000; V 2001; Trav) and pediatric neurosurgeon William Gump (V 1985-8; Trav). In addition, the ceremony signals The

Center’s commitment to removing the assessment ceiling for gifted youth and supports efforts by organizations like Duke TIP, with whom The Center initially coordinated The Summer Camp for Verbally and Mathematically Precocious Youth (VAMPY), to create opportunities for high-achieving youth to pursue enrichment activities.

The annual recognition ceremony is currently one of about 36 that are held in 16 different states in the Duke TIP region. However, Rick Courtwright, gifted

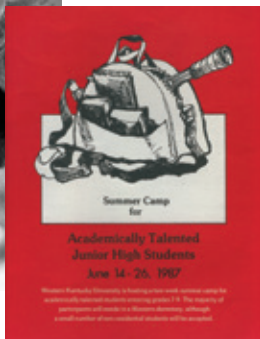
education research specialist with Duke TIP, says what makes The Center’s event special is more than the ceremony itself: “One of the things that is absolutely mind-boggling is the hospitality that Julia and her team show, to a degree that I don’t see anywhere else. They go above and beyond in organizing and hosting a luncheon for dignitaries from the university, the TIP representative, members of the Kentucky Association of Gifted Education (KAGE), and staff of The Gatton Academy and The Center. This luncheon provides an opportunity for folks to network and get acquainted, and it ensures that they get a chance to find out more about these very talented kids in Kentucky who are coming to the ceremony.”

## DUKE TIP STATE RECOGNITION CEREMONY

The Center’s earliest service to gifted and talented students began in 1982 when we started hosting the annual Duke Talent Identification Program’s (TIP) Kentucky State Recognition Ceremony. The event, which recognizes seventh graders who have scored exceptionally high on ACT and SAT exams, was held in Van Meter Auditorium until it outgrew the space; it was moved to E.A. Diddle Arena in 1999. Each year, the recognized students are



A SCATS clown in the 1990s



JENNIFER WILFINGER

### SCATS (SUMMER CAMP FOR ACADEMICALLY TALENTED MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS)

In 1983, the year after we began holding the Duke TIP ceremony, The Center launched our first summer enrichment program: the Summer Camp — later called the Summer Camp for Academically Talented Middle School Students and affectionately known as SCATS — a two-week enrichment experience for students who have finished grades 6-8. The vast majority of participants stay in dorms on the Western Kentucky University (WKU) campus, although we do offer a nonresidential option. The first iteration of SCATS was hand-scheduled, and its 60 students attended four of eight classes offered. In contrast, in 2017, close to 200 students selected their four courses from 25 possibilities. The camp is self-sufficient, with tuition covering operating costs and with financial assistance available for campers for whom the expense might prevent attendance. Overall, almost 5,700 students have participated in SCATS since it began.

The camp came to life as a way to provide a practicum to WKU graduate students seeking their gifted and talented endorsement; they were not involved until the second year, however, when the camp had demonstrated its feasibility. About half the SCATS teachers each year have been practicum students, with the remaining instructors coming from WKU faculty and outstanding school teachers.

Rebekah Murphy, a gifted and talented resource teacher for grades K-12 for Eminence Independent Schools in Kentucky, taught at SCATS in 2016 to complete her practicum for her gifted and talented endorsement from WKU. Her course, *Wicked Irony*, asked students to look at irony in the musical *Wicked*, in Walt Disney films, and in the lives of historical figures. Rebekah found the experience inspiring: “It was amazing to be with these students who were passionate about learning and who were intrigued, curious, and

intrinsically motivated. To see them in a classroom discussion or completing a project that I’d assigned was so rewarding. They cared about growth and progress, and it wasn’t about a grade or comparing themselves to others: it was for the joy of learning. It was a really good way to start my career as a gifted and talented resource teacher.” SCATS also gave her important skills: “SCATS helped me realize the need for differentiation even among gifted students because I had to address their individual needs even though they were all high-performing students.

There were also a few cases where students underachieved, so I had to learn how to gently approach those students so that they would work to their full potential. I felt a lot more prepared this school year having those skills added to my tool box.”

As valuable as it is for a practicum, SCATS has also been of inestimable value for the students who have attended. Whereas their

regular classes during the school year may not always be geared toward their interests or abilities, at SCATS campers can explore areas that fascinate them, try something entirely new, and take risks in an environment where it’s okay to fail. Over the years classes have included a wide range of topics such as Crime Lab 101, Open Air Painting, Photography, Epic Literature, Debate, Harry Potter, Fairy Tale Writing, Mask Making, Ancient Egypt, Spanish, Paper Making, Sand Sculpting, Robotics, the Great Depression, Russian, and Statistics.

Campers have made movies about their favorite band, used principles of chemistry to make homemade ice cream, designed balloon-powered cars, taken apart computers and put them back together, and made rockets powered by water and

Alka-Seltzer. Memories of SCATS class activities endure for some campers, such as John Hinkle (S 2000-01) who says, “I distinctly remember the engineering class I took where we got to build a lot



Emily Slaven and Ansuya Aikat during a SCATS class in 2015

SAMOLDENBURG





SCATS campers in 2007



Students work on coding at SCATS in 1989



Campers going to the SCATS banquet in the late 1990s

of different things, like bridges out of balsa wood. I had a lot of fun with that.” Each day of camp brings opportunities for new challenges and insights in each of the four selected classes.

Those opportunities happen because of the teachers, some of whom have returned over and over to engage with SCATS students. Bonnie Honaker and Linda Martin, for example, have taught Be a Writer for 15 years. Jim Fulkerson, a 27-year SCATS veteran, taught a variety of classes, including Musical Troupe and Career Decision Making. Nick Wilkins, better known as Broadway the Clown, has taught students how to make balloon animals and juggle, all the while building confidence and self-esteem, for around 30 years.

Not only do the teachers make SCATS what it is, but so do the counselors, who often are themselves former SCATS campers. One of the counselors’ most important tasks has been to create, organize, and run the esteemed SCATS (and VAMPY) tradition of Optionals. Also known as Mandatory Fun, these evening activities ensure that campers use a different part of their brains than they do during the day as they make T-shirts, learn to be princesses, or play Capture the Flag. Counselors are also active during the ordinary moments of camp, such as helping campers get to and from classes, eating meals with them, and hanging out with them at the end of the day during hall time.

Counselors are there to supervise, create fun, and keep everyone safe, but they are also there to encourage the personal connections and individual growth so important at SCATS. They draw timid



campers out of their shells, and they concoct games to indulge their campers' creativity. They comfort those who get homesick, and they inspire others to perform at the talent show. They accompany some to the laundromat, and for all campers they cultivate a community of care where everyone knows he or she belongs and matters.

Carolyn Hagaman served as the assistant for summer programming for thirty years beginning in 1986, and she spent a lot of time with the counselors: "They are great kids, and some of them were very funny. One time we had several of them in the office helping put labels on *The Challenge*, The Center's magazine. As the empty boxes were piled up, they started putting them on their heads and labelling them with clever things. The place was pretty hysterical that day."

It has not been unusual for a SCATS counselor to do more than what is in the official job description. Kate Hinkle, John's mother (and longtime Center Advisory Board member) recalls, "When John was at SCATS, he was running cross country, so one of the counselors got up every morning and took him to the track so he could work out. I thought that was an exceedingly generous thing. It also turned out that some of the young ladies

Paper Theatre, boogie down at dances, turn doing laundry into a social event, and add Shmoos (Big Red pins) to their name tags. SCATS students come from a variety of places geographically — from across the United States and from several foreign countries over the last 35 years — but by the next-to-last night of the two weeks, they come together as a community to perform or cheer at the camp talent show. These special experiences, repeating over and over from one year to the next, bind each new generation of campers to each other and to the generation that came before.

This SCATS experience produces lasting results. Kate, who



SCATS campers in 2009



SCATS campers in 2012

who were perhaps interested in John all of a sudden got very interested in track, and they got up and went to the track in the morning, too."

Indeed, social pursuits have been as intrinsic a part of the SCATS experience as the academic ones. That experience begins on the hot Sunday afternoon when most campers check into their WKU dorms, and from that moment on a community of young people who share similar outlooks, interests, and curiosity is formed — kids who, as John explains, "are interesting and interested." These kids gather at cookouts, play ultimate Frisbee, trudge up "the hill" for class, hang out in the dorms, create paper costumes and props for

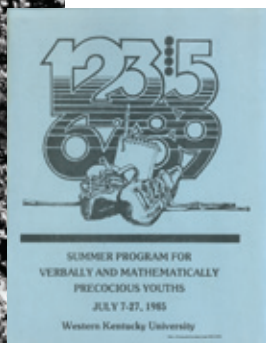
has had three of her four children attend SCATS (the fourth went to VAMPY) comments, "SCATS gave them a perspective on what was out there in the world beyond Shelby County, Kentucky, at a time when it was important to start doing that, and it made them more comfortable in their own skin and let them get to know other like-minded people." For John, the experience allowed him to be more himself: "SCATS made me more comfortable saying learning is fun to me — I faced the classic middle school thing where you want to seem like you either don't care about school or aren't trying, but SCATS gave me license to say I do care, I do like it, and I want to know things and learn things, and learning's exciting. It helped me develop that self-confidence to embrace my interests and pursue them and do well with them without feeling I had to do it surreptitiously."

Serving future teachers of gifted and talented students as well as the students themselves, SCATS has endured from the dawn of cordless phones to the birth of self-driving cars. Over this stretch of time, Carolyn Hagaman says, "I don't think the nature of the SCATS students has changed. They're kids who like learning better than whatever other things the rest of the world does." Whatever the future holds, SCATS campers will be a part of it.





Julia with VAMPY students in 1993



The program has seen enormous growth since it began. In its first year, 31 campers chose from three classes; in 2017, nearly 200 students chose from 15 courses. Summer programming assistant Carolyn Hagaman recalls that “for the first few years my daughter helped put away the supplies at the end— she would organize about six big boxes, label what was in them, and shove them under a table. There they sat until the next year.” Now, the old auditorium in Tate Page Hall holds shelves, lockers, boxes, and bins full of materials. By 2017, almost 5,600 students from across the United States and from at least eight foreign countries had attended VAMPY.

Over the years campers have studied in a variety of areas. Some of their options have been consistent — for instance, VAMPY has always offered classes in the areas of physics, writing,

### VAMPY (THE SUMMER PROGRAM FOR VERBALLY AND MATHEMATICALLY PRECOCIOUS YOUTH)

The creation of new programming at The Center continued in 1984 with The Summer Program. In 1985, the program’s name was changed to The Summer Program for Verbally and Mathematically Precocious Youth — or, as everyone calls it, VAMPY. The camp’s origins trace back to Susan Leib, the gifted consultant at the Kentucky Department of Education. With more students interested in its summer camp than it could accommodate, Duke TIP was looking for an organization with whom to create its first cooperative program. The director contacted Susan, who then reached out to The Center, which already had an ongoing relationship with Duke TIP through our recognition ceremony for seventh graders.

Susan remembers, “Julia and WKU had always been ready to step up to the plate anytime I needed anybody,” and indeed, Julia and Donald Zacharias, then president of WKU, soon flew out to Duke for three days to look at its program. Julia recalls, “We came back and said yes, we could do that, and so for 34 summers we’ve continued to do that.” She also notes that the president’s involvement was crucial: “I was unwilling to get involved if the university didn’t support it. That’s kind of been my message all the way along: if we do something, it’s got to be important to the university, too. And it always has been.”

A three-week residential camp held in June and July, VAMPY offers students who have finished grades 7–10 the chance to focus on one course during six class hours each weekday plus a nightly hour-long study hall. Classes are taught by highly motivated WKU faculty and area high school teachers who are thrilled to have equally motivated students. Other WKU faculty, school teachers, and college students assist in the classes as teaching assistants (TAs). As with SCATS, the camp is self-sufficient, with tuition covering operating costs, and with financial assistance available for campers for whom the tuition might be cost-prohibitive.



VAMPY students in the 1990s

math, and chemistry. Early offerings included German, Computer Science, Latin, Psychology, Movies and American Culture, and Genetics; more recent offerings include Revolutions, Astronomy, Pop Culture, Presidential Politics, Arabic, Problems You have Never Solved Before, and Ancient Civilizations.

Tracy Inman’s course in the Humanities is the longest-running, with Ron Skillern’s Nazi Germany and the Holocaust not far behind. Another teacher noted for his longevity is John Hagaman, husband of Carolyn, who taught Expository Writing for 21 years. Courses and teachers demonstrate continuity in other ways: Doug Jenkins, for example, taught Physics for many years, and the latest iteration has been taught by his former TA, Kenny Lee, since 2002. Other TAs, including Bruce Kessler and Madison Moore, have also gone from TA to instructor. Dennis Jenkins, meanwhile, son of Doug, began as a residential counselor, became the head counselor, and eventually began teaching the course Presidential Politics — as he puts it, “I’ve spent almost every summer since 1991 working at VAMPY.”

Katie Wick (V 1994-97; Coun; TA) has also contributed to VAMPY from several perspectives. She attended as a camper from



1994-97, worked as a counselor for two years, and was a teaching assistant for the Humanities class twice: “It’s very valuable from each of the different perspectives. It’s very different being a TA and a counselor versus a camper. When you’re a camper, it really is all about you. Everything is handed to you — activities, the time that you need to be places — and when you’re on the other side, you’re making all of that happen. It’s of course a lot more work, but it’s also very rewarding.”

In addition to the classes mentioned above, other offerings over the years have included Shakespeare, The Civil War, Field Ecology, Medieval Literature, Chinese, Sustainability, Molecular Cell Biology, and many others. Learning has always taken place inside and outside the classroom, with trips both nearer — the South Union Shaker Village, Lost River Cave in Bowling Green, Sri Ganesha Temple and an Arabic market in Nashville — and farther — the U.S. Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville, Alabama; the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. Whatever class they chose, VAMPY campers were sure to be challenged and inspired.

Some students find the knowledge gained lasts a lifetime. Matt Beasley (V 1991-4) took Tracy’s Humanities class and comments, “There are things I learned in that class that I relied on ten years later in college, and Pachelbel’s Canon in D, which I learned about in Humanities, was the song my wife marched down the aisle to at our wedding.” VAMPY also lets students explore intellectual areas they might not otherwise have focused on. Katie says, “Humanities really challenged my thinking. I’ve always been more of a math-science girl, so to have that special time to really read stuff that I wouldn’t normally have read, to dig deep into plays and into art, was very special.” For some students, the value of the educational experience is not only the topic studied but the way they are taught. Drew Curtis (V 1987-8) says what was most important was that “the teacher left you alone and gave you the responsibility for your learning, rather than giving you worksheets to do and standing over you. That experience made me realize that this was what college would be like — if I could make it through middle school and high school, then in college I’d get to learn on my own.”



A VAMPY science class in the early 2000s



The VAMPY fountain run in 2012



VAMPY campers post-fountain run in 1996

As much as the students appreciate the teachers, the teachers appreciate the students. Dennis Jenkins, who has taught high school history at Warren County Public Schools in Bowling Green for 24 years, says, “My dad always told me it was the greatest teaching job ever because he got to have 16 students who really wanted to be there, ask questions, and cover as much material as fast as they could. And now I find myself each year telling Dr. Roberts, ‘This is the best class I’ve ever had,’ and then the next year I tell her, ‘No, this is the best class I ever had.’ That speaks so highly of the kids.”

The practice of using teaching assistants also provides additional chances for learning, as junior faculty benefit from working with the more experienced teachers. Katie says, “Being a teaching assistant was probably my favorite role — not just getting to know the students and encouraging them, but also being mentored by the teacher — in my case it was Tracy — and seeing more of the future I wanted to have as a teacher. It really helped me see more of the path that I wanted to take through college and grad school.”

The learning experience is central to VAMPY, but the camp is not solely about academics. Dennis notes: “Had I not been

a counselor before I became a teacher, I might not have realized how extremely important the other part of the camp is — the social



side.” When he was a counselor, Dennis was involved in helping to organize one of the essential components of VAMPY (and SCATS), the Optionals, evening activities planned by the counselors for which the campers sign up knowing nothing more than the name. Optionals make sure campers don’t take themselves too seriously, and the counselors work hard to surprise and engage the campers with pursuits like Camp Rocks, Antiques Roadshow, CSI: Bowling Green, and Star Wars: Episode 6.5. No matter what the name or stated goal of the activity, if everyone is laughing by the end, it’s a success.

Counselors are central to VAMPY in multiple ways: for its daily functioning of the camp, its special events, and its atmosphere of inclusivity. Whether meeting students when they return from classes and asking what they learned, or encouraging group dances and card games during hall time in the evenings, the counselors are constantly at work making sure each camper gets the most out of VAMPY. For traditional events, counselors’ organizational skills and creativity are key. For instance, if rain washes away plans for outdoor events at the VAMPY Olympics, the counselors regroup and create a day of indoor events. For VAMPY Convention, or V-Con (modeled



VAMPY students Savanna Simons and Lekha Challappa in 2014

Schmoos (Big Red pins), the Fountain Run after the last class, VAMPYstock, Paper Theatre, and claiming a counselor’s “coo pun” (nametag) on the final day. Past traditions, such as trips to Opryland and Mammoth Cave and singing Michael W. Smith’s “Friends Are Friends Forever,” are echoed in current ones like attending a Hot Rods baseball game and singing “VAMPY Pie.”

Dick Roberts, who as a permanent volunteer has been integral to the camp since the first year, explains, “With the nature of kids, there is an ethos that has nothing to do with the classes but has everything to do with the community. I’ll always remember, after we did Paper Theatre for five or six years, we decided the campers must be getting tired of it, so we didn’t put it in the schedule the next year. Well, before the kids went to bed the first evening they were here, there was a rather irate petition signed and presented to Julia that Paper Theatre

had to be put back into place.” It was, and it remains on the schedule to this day.

These traditions persist because the campers get something special out of them. Katie Wick says, “My favorite was the dance. Dances in high school and middle school were very awkward, but the dances at VAMPY were very fun. It’s that environment where everybody feels encouraged and known for who they are. It’s a time to let go with your new friends.” As Carolyn Hagaman says, “When everybody else is doing what you’ve been a little afraid to do, you do it.” She remembers a parent who, when she was told about the evening activities at VAMPY, said, “Oh, my daughter won’t dance.’ But by the night of the dance, her daughter was never off the floor — she was in motion the whole night.”

Together, the academic challenges and the camp traditions create a unique place for gifted kids. It is, according to Matt Beasley,

## VAMPY Marriages



**Bruce Kessler (TA; Instructor) and Heather Webb Kessler (Coun) married in 1992**

**Tonya Gray Merriam (V 1999-2001) and Tony Merriam (V 1999-2000) married in 2004**

**Wake Norris (V 1989-92; Coun) and Elizabeth Zimmerman (V 1992-93; Coun) married in 2004**

**Ross Clatterbuck (V 1997-99) and Christin Hartung Clatterbuck (V 1997-2000) married in 2006**

**Anna Hitron (V 1996-99; Coun) and Thomas Johnston (V 1999-2000; TA; Coun) married in 2009**

**John Jenkinson (S 1997-98; V 1998-2000; Trav) and Sarah Noel (S 1998-99; V 2000) married in 2016**

off of popular fan conventions like Comic Con or Dragoncon), they invest days and days of secret planning for the big event on the second Saturday of camp in order to ensure that each year’s theme is new, surprising, and exciting. The counselors also take responsibility for developing the culture of care and respect that makes VAMPY so valuable for everyone, modeling in their own behavior what they want to see in their campers. Carolyn Hagaman recalls, “For the dance one year, we had a counselor who told his group, ‘It’s nothing but moving around in time with the music,’ and he got scared kids on the floor dancing.”

Counselors, along with the older campers, feel a great sense of responsibility for making sure the camp traditions continue because they help to pass on the VAMPY experience year by year. These traditions are big and small, including making friendship bracelets, the talent show, the end of camp banquet, the dance, collecting

“a support group for nerds. It’s a great environment at a critical time in young people’s lives where they can come together and be with like-minded people and realize that though in their schools back home they may not always be celebrated for being smart or being good at school or making good grades, at VAMPY it’s your price of admission to this neat club where you belong.” Katie explains, “When you’re very successful in school, sometimes you tend to become a target — people make fun of you. When you go to VAMPY, you enjoy the people you’re with who are also going hard at learning and enjoying the experience. Nobody’s being picked on or made fun of. It makes this very beautiful, cohesive environment of really enjoying people for who they are.” Drew Curtis calls VAMPY “a refuge.” He is still in regular touch with the friends he made because at camp he found “a peer group where everyone was smart. I grew up in the ‘80s, and I gave a talk to VAMPY campers a few years ago where I said, ‘You’ve all seen ‘80s movies — you know what it was like then for smart kids. Is it still like that?’ I was glad that they told me that it’s gotten better — it’s not all the way there yet, but it’s better.” Camps like VAMPY are part of what has made it better.

Carolyn puts it this way: “The kids get to see the world is full of other interesting people.” She saw the changes VAMPY can make in her own son, Eric (V 1989; Coun): “My son wouldn’t have anything to do with VAMPY until the last year he was age-eligible. Up until that point he had spent most of his life practicing trumpet or lying on the bed reading. But I twisted his arm to go to Doug Jenkins’s physics class. He didn’t want to stay in any ‘stupid dorm,’ so I agreed, but I had to go out of town the first weekend, so he would need to stay in the dorm just for those days. There was a physics class kid without a roommate, so he stayed with him, and he told me to call him the minute I got back into town to ‘get me out of there.’ But when I did, he said, ‘Will you bring me some towels and bathing suit? This is great — I want to stay!’ So he had a turning point. It was a real growing up time for him.”

Many campers agree that the impact of VAMPY lasts long after the three weeks are over. Dennis Jenkins credits his VAMPY experiences as a big part of why he became a high school teacher: “I’m so grateful for that one opportunity that I had many, many years ago to be a counselor — I had no idea what path it would lead me to.” Others have formed relationships that have lasted their whole lives [see inset]. Kate Hinkle, parent of Rebecca Hinkle (V 2003) and long-time Advisory Board member, believes VAMPY gave her daughter the ability to be independent; she recalls that Rebecca



VAMPY campers enjoying a concert in 2012

“was terribly homesick, but because she stuck out the time and was supported by the counselors and friends, she was able the next summer to go to an out-of-state program for two weeks and then went away to college and was a Fulbright scholar in Turkey. VAMPY really launched Rebecca in some life skills, and I have been eternally grateful.” Drew’s experiences at VAMPY led him to send his own son, Storm, to camp in 2017. When asked what he hopes Storm will get from the camp, he says, “I don’t have any expectations because what I want is for him to do his own thing and find his own way, just like I did.”

Matt Beasley identifies several significant impacts on his life because of VAMPY. First, he says, “Burns, Tennessee, where I grew up was pretty homogenous, but at camp, I got to meet a lot of different cultures, a lot of different backgrounds, a lot of different people. It helped me when I went on to live in London, other cities in Europe, and in Tokyo because I had an expanded world view.” It also helped him succeed in school, not just in terms of grades but in terms of his outlook: “I transferred to a high-pressure private school during tenth grade — which was a difficult time to transfer. All of a sudden I went from being the Big Man on Campus to being the new kid at a private school where everyone had known each other since birth. I relied on the VAMPY experience to help me make the transition

but also to remind myself that it was cool to be good at something — it was cool to be smart, it was cool to excel.” Overall, he says, VAMPY “made me realize the responsibility of my potential. I had a great opportunity to do something with my life, but when you’re caught up in the day-to-day pressures of adolescence, you don’t often get that perspective. VAMPY gave that to me.”

Matt and Drew were part of a group of alumni led by Wake Norris (V 1989-92; Coun) and Hank Zimmerman (V 1990-92; Coun) who created the Alumni Association in 2005 along with Sarah Hoagland (S 1989; V 1990-91), Raymond Kim (V 1991-92; Coun), Justin Jones (V 1990-91), Sara Lind (V 1994-97), Sarah Jo Mahurin (S 1990-94; V 1993-96; Coun; TA), Deepa Mokshagundam (S 1999-01; V 2002-03; Coun), Joe Napier (S 1983; Instructor), and Scott Nass (V 1988-91; Coun). Among the Association’s goals is setting up the Alumni Fund to provide scholarships for summer programming. There could be no greater tribute to the impact of VAMPY than for former campers to pass along the chance to other kids to share the experience.





Winter Super Saturdays students at the regional airport with Bob Pitchford in 2017

## SUPER SATURDAYS

In the early 1990s, Center staffer Mary Evans asked Julia what she could do to help. With the success of SCATS and VAMPY, parents had begun approaching Julia and asking when she would start a program for younger kids, so she told Mary, “I’d love to do something for elementary children.” After looking into options available at other universities, Mary proposed what became Super Saturdays, which was first held in 1992, when over 300 children in grades one through six attended.

Organized and directed by Mary for its first five years, by Heather Kessler (Coun) from 1998-2002, and by Gail Hiles since then, the program offers enrichment classes at WKU for four Saturdays in a row. The essential design of the program has remained the same for 25 years, with a few changes. In 2002, it expanded from offering one sequence in early winter to a second sequence in late fall. From 2003-06, The Center offered Owensboro Super Saturdays. Seventh grade classes were added in 2004, and eighth grade classes in 2010. The Kentucky Science Center sponsored some Super Saturdays classes in Louisville from 2010-17. Finally, the original format of five Saturdays of two-hour classes changed to four Saturdays of two-and-a-half-hour classes in 2006. Since it began, almost 26,800 children have participated in Super Saturdays.

Mary remembers that in those early years the program “was small enough the first day that we had everyone, parents and kids alike, in the auditorium at Tate Page Hall. We had an orientation like

on the first day of school, but it has grown and grown and grown so that there’s no way we could do that now.” In fact, in the winter 2017 program, 419 kids chose from 30 classes.

From the beginning, Super Saturdays prioritized quality instruction. Explains Mary, “We looked for creative teachers in all areas — science, art, math, music, drama — that we knew from reputation in the community. We looked for people who were great with kids and could think outside of the box to develop classes that would be different from what the kids were learning in their regular classes during the week. We wanted teachers who loved to learn and think and who would challenge kids to think.”



A Fall Super Saturdays art student in 2012

Over the years, we have drawn instructors from exceptional teachers in the Bowling Green area and beyond, WKU faculty, undergraduate students, and graduate students in gifted studies. The program has also strengthened its teaching through coordination with entities like WKU SKyTeach, WKU Art Education, the Corvette Museum, and

the Aviation Heritage Park Board. Gail says, “I scout for teachers all year, often finding them through recommendations through former teachers. I’ve developed a feeling for who will make a good Super Saturdays teacher.” In addition, to help teachers develop strong classes, Gail provides a lot of support: “I scour other programs for class ideas. I give the teachers reams of paper with ideas, suggestions, and class descriptions.”

This attention to teacher-selection and course ideas has led to classes in Improvisation, Castle Mechanics, Kitchen Chemistry,



Crazy for Coding, Record Makers and Breakers, Aviation, Carnival Ride Camp, Technology-Poetry Mashup, Secrets of Mystery Writing, Pinhole Photography, The Medieval World, French, German, and Spanish. Sometimes, ideas originated with the kids themselves. Mary remembers, “We asked kids what they would like to have courses about, and law kept coming up. I was skeptical that such a course could work for elementary kids, but I spoke with an attorney, and she got super excited, saying, ‘I could do this, and I could do this, and I could have a mock trial —’ though I was still wondering if it could really work. Eventually, I walked into her class one Saturday, and the kids were very involved, and she enjoyed facilitating it so much, so I thought, ‘Yes, elementary kids really can learn about law!’”

Besides arguing court cases, students have, among other activities, toured the WBKO television station, created a newspaper from reporting to lay out, painted acrylic murals, shot fuel-powered rockets into the air, learned computer modeling, and used thin layer chromatography to identify an unknown poison in a mock crime scene.

One feature of the program that Mary believes is integral to its success is the teacher orientation held before every Super Saturdays



Super Saturdays students in the late 1980s



sequence begins. Mary explains, “Even though these are top-notch, highly recommended teachers, we still take time to bring them together for a session on working with high-ability kids. We talk about the importance of challenge, being responsive to the needs of children, and doing some preassessment to determine what the children know about the subject.” Even for experienced Super Saturdays teachers, this orientation is a helpful reminder of who their students are.

Another key aspect is the contributions of WKU students as volunteers. They arrive at Super Saturdays through a variety of sources including the HonorsToppers, the Office of Scholar Development, Omega Phi Alpha Service Sorority, The Gatton Academy, SKyTeach, the Elementary Education Teacher Education program, or past experiences with The Center. These young people bring enthusiasm, expertise, and dedication to the classrooms each week.

With all these features in place, Super Saturdays would not succeed without one other component: family members. Some parents travel for hours and devote their whole day to bringing their children to the program. Many of them also attend the Parent Seminars offered during the first three weeks of Super Saturdays (see chapter three). Mary comments, “One thing I’ve always been so amazed by is how far parents will drive to find a high-quality experience for their children.” That commitment by parents has played a big part in ensuring the longevity of program.

Ultimately, however, Super Saturdays would not have lasted 25 years if the students were not excited by the learning taking place. Gail reveals that whenever she runs across someone who attended the classes or whose child attended, she follows up with questions — “What did you take? What did you like?” Whatever information she acquires she stores up for future use, working to make every session memorable. When asked what gives her the most satisfaction from working on Super Saturdays, she answers without hesitation: “When I’m out in the hall when the kids are leaving and I hear a child tell her parent, ‘Look what we did today!’”



Fall Super Saturdays students in 2007



Fall Super Saturdays students in 2011



## THE CAROL MARTIN GATTON ACADEMY OF MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE IN KENTUCKY

By 1997, The Center had successfully been offering educational programming for gifted and talented students outside of school for fifteen years. However, there was a clear need to provide more. Therefore, Julia and WKU physicist Charles McGruder submitted a proposal to the Kentucky Council on Higher Education (later renamed the Kentucky Council for Postsecondary Education) for a residential math and science high school. The school would offer students throughout Kentucky the chance to challenge themselves in their junior and senior years by taking courses and engaging in research at WKU while living in a uniquely dedicated residence hall and earning college credit. Julia and Charles argued that this Kentucky academy, inspired by similar schools that existed in 12 different states at that time, would benefit both the students by providing opportunities beyond what their local schools could offer and also Kentucky itself because its most promising young citizens would develop the kinds of skills that could later contribute to



WKU professor Keith Philips and Gatton students Justin Bunch, Hannah Rodgers, and Patrick Osterhaus during the 2014 Costa Rican Biodiversity Studies research study abroad trip

the Commonwealth's economy. Moreover, providing these gifted students with the education they needed here in Kentucky would make them much more likely to stay in their home state as adults — or return after school if they went elsewhere for college.

Then-WKU president Gary Ransdell provided early support for the concept of the school. In addition to working with the Council on Postsecondary Education, he joined Julia and Sam Evans, future dean of the WKU College of Education and Behavioral Sciences; Blaine Ferrell, dean of WKU's Ogden College of Science and Engineering; Karl Miller from the WKU Office of Development; Bruce Kessler, WKU math professor; Jody Richards, Kentucky state representative; and John Settle, superintendent of Bowling Green City Schools on a trip to Denton, Texas, to visit the Texas Academy of Mathematics and Science at the University of North Texas, the school that would serve as a model for Kentucky's academy. Julia recalls that she was concerned about getting superintendents on board with the plan for a Kentucky school, but after the trip to Texas, John

said that if he could be principal of a school with kids like the ones at the Texas Academy, he'd go back and be a principal immediately; he subsequently followed up with the state education commissioner.

Regarding his memories of the trip to Texas, Gary says, "I asked a thousand questions." He also firmly believed that the proposed school would benefit WKU: "I wanted it to be fully engaged in the university's academic community because I wanted the intellectual value that these students could bring to be a strong and positive intellectual influence for all the rest of our students." He notes that



Gatton students Jae Lee and Brittney Howard outside Schneider Hall in 2010



Julia looks over the Schneider Hall renovation plans with Corey Alderdice and Tim Gott in 2007



WKU was the right site for the new academy because “Julia and her team had already established it as a center for gifted and talented education. We could demonstrate that WKU was the only university in Kentucky already positioned to do this.”

The primary challenge to establishing a Kentucky academy was financial: supporters of the concept needed to persuade the General Assembly to commit funding. Fortunately, another early advocate for the academy was Jody Richards, then the Speaker of the House; his influence and energy made sure that the Academy stayed on the radar of the legislature. Julia notes, “As Speaker of the House, Jody was in a role of influence that made lots of difference.” She recalls that the year the Academy received funding, the governor did not mention it in his State of the Commonwealth address or include it in his proposed budget; it took leadership in the legislature to secure the funding by placing it in the final budget.

The Center’s Advisory Board also worked hard to secure the legislature’s attention. Board member Bill Hamilton recalls that “it took a lot of grass roots effort by the board to get legislators involved.”

For example, board members held receptions in Frankfort during the legislative session, inviting legislators to attend as well as others they knew in state government.

The proposal’s many advocates worked tirelessly and creatively, displaying exhibits at conferences for superintendents, principals, and counselors, as well as for educators in math, science, and gifted education. Advocates also reached out to the P-16 Council, the Kentucky Board

of Education, the Professional Education Standards Board, the Kentucky Department of Education, and the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents. The efforts achieved initial success in the 2000 session of the Kentucky legislature when start-up money was designated in the 2000-02 budget to plan an academy for Kentucky.

Meanwhile, we kept working. Julia was designated executive director of the future school, and The Center hired Renee Watkins of Bowling Green to be Facilitator for The Academy. Among many other accomplishments and advancements, Renee connected us with the National Consortium of Early College Entrance Programs, an advocacy and resource association from which we could learn, and with The National Consortium of Secondary STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) Schools, which provides a forum for specialized secondary schools focused on STEM disciplines to exchange information and program ideas. The Academy still belongs to both organizations. We also sought out governmental advocates by inviting the two candidates in the 2003 Kentucky

gubernatorial race to speak at VAMPY and to submit statements to *The Challenge* and the KAGE newsletter, *The KAGE Update*, on the proposed academy and on gifted education in general — though only one candidate, eventual winner Ernie Fletcher, responded to the invitations. The concept of the academy achieved further support from such influential people as Richard Sinclair, director of the Texas Academy of Mathematics and Science, and Colonel Terry Wilcutt, the first Kentuckian to be an astronaut and commander of four shuttle flights.

In addition, Gary Ransdell understood that the university needed to show its commitment to the academy, so it took steps to create a physical space for the school. He explains, “When WKU was in the process of creating the Student Life Foundation and renovating all of our residence halls, we transferred 17 of our 18 halls from the university to the Student Life Foundation, but we excluded Florence Schneider Hall because that’s the place we had selected for the academy.” However, funding was needed to renovate Schneider Hall, the oldest residence hall on campus, because, as Gary puts it,

“It was more than tired — it was in really, really bad shape.” Fortunately, in the summer of 2005, the plan for the academy scored a major victory: the Kentucky General Assembly passed and Governor Fletcher signed a budget that included funds to start the renovation of Schneider Hall for the academy. WKU supplied the remaining support from capital construction funds, and the work on Schneider Hall began in April 2006.



Julia, Bill Gatton, and Lynette Breedlove celebrate the rededication of Schneider Hall in 2016

In reflecting on the creation of Gatton, Gary notes that a lot of it depended on the timing: “The university was growing dramatically, and state funding was in a much better position than it is now. If we hadn’t done it then, in another few years, the window could have closed on us.” It also made sense to pursue a new academic program: “It was a pretty easy sell on campus because it absolutely was part of growing our academic quality and demonstrating to faculty that we were serious about upgrading WKU’s intellectual heartbeat.”

Several events in 2006 brought the proposal ever closer to reality. After supporters continued advocating for the funding for the school’s yearly operating costs, the legislature provided the additional monies in its budget for that year. In November, Tim Gott was named director. Most significantly, Kentucky native and businessman Carol Martin “Bill” Gatton presented the school with a \$4 million gift, which primarily funds summer research for Gatton students. His generosity secured the future of the academy, and so the school was named in his honor.



Reflecting on his decision, Mr. Gatton comments, “The success of The Center for Gifted Studies provided the impetus for the establishment of The Carol Martin Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science. Dr. Roberts was, and is, the driving force that made the gifted studies program so successful, and she along with Dr. Ransdell deserves all the credit for the creation and success of the Academy. The Academy is a great institution. It has been great for the students who have attended and, in turn, great for the community and the Commonwealth of Kentucky. It will yield benefits to the Commonwealth for decades to come. I have been involved with a number of very worthwhile charitable and educational endeavors, such as the Gatton College of Business and Economics at the University of Kentucky and the Bill Gatton College of Pharmacy at East Tennessee State University, but The Carol Martin Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science has been the greatest of them all and has given me the most satisfaction.”

Other key early donations included a \$100,000 gift from Toyota to promote the Academy as well as math and science education in Kentucky; a \$50,000 gift from the RBG Foundation, which comprises employees of the Glasgow Electric Plant Board, to name the school’s fourth-floor assembly area for the late Jama M. Young; an AT&T contribution of \$35,000 for a leadership program; and a \$10,000 gift from Ashland Inc. to establish the Academy to Community Program.

Even with major funding secured, The Center had a lot of work left to do to bring the dream of the academy to fruition. One priority was reaching out across Kentucky to find the students who would benefit from the program. We hired admissions coordinator Jonathan Lanham (S 1995-99; V 1997-99; TA) and planning coordinator Corey Alderdice (Coun) — who later became the first assistant director of the school — to recruit the first classes. Jonathan, Corey, Tracy, Julia, and Tim Gott traveled around the state from the fall of 2007 to the spring of 2007, working individually and in teams to spread the word. Tracy remembers, “We had no programs yet to talk about and no pictures of dorms to show them, but we had to get people interested and let them know what the opportunities were. We went to civics clubs, schools, districts — whoever would have us, we went to them.”

Our efforts were successful, and on August 23, 2007, renovations of Schneider Hall complete, The Carol Martin Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science in Kentucky was dedicated, and its

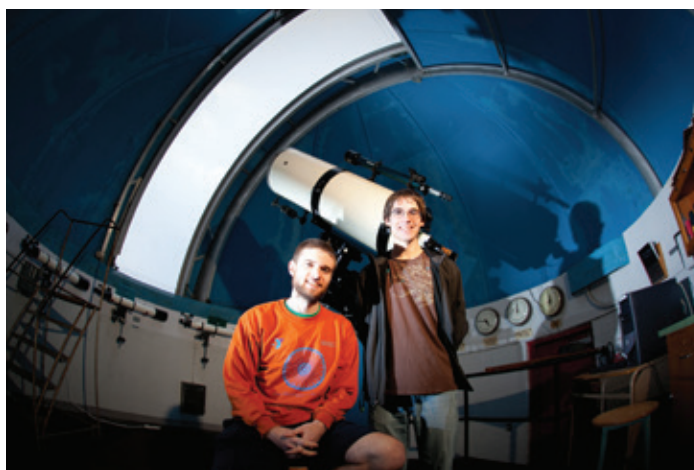
doors were opened to the first group of 120 students — 60 juniors and 60 seniors, representing 61 of Kentucky’s 120 counties. Thanks to Renee Watkins, The Academy chose as its symbol the Sierpinski triangle, a fractal formed from triangles in a potentially infinitely repeating pattern. This simple concept, with its vast number of connections and applications, represented how bringing together young people in an intellectually rigorous environment creates infinite possibilities for connections and applications in their lives.

In 2008, the Kentucky General Assembly established The Gatton Academy in statute. This action meant, among other things, that the academy had the authority to grant diplomas and that students could earn Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarships.

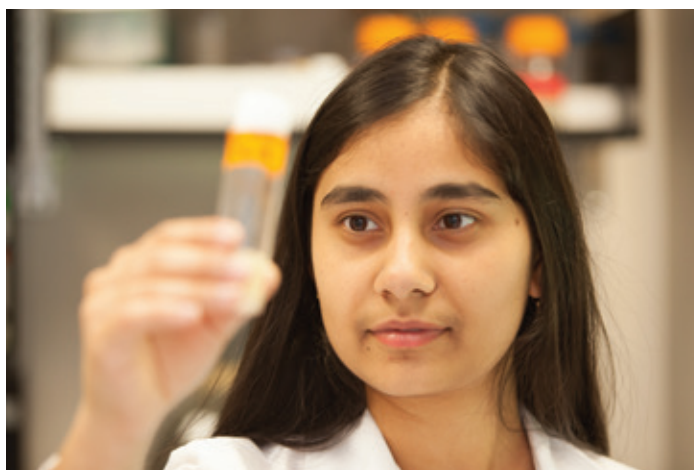
Jennifer Robinson (V 2003-06; Trav; Gatt 2008) was in the inaugural class at The Gatton Academy, spending one year there before graduating in 2008. She notes that from the start, The Academy experience was not only about the quality of the education provided: “I’m closer with my friends from The Gatton Academy than I am with friends I’ve grown up with my whole life. Our year in particular made this huge leap of faith to go and be part of this school that we’d never seen — that first year bonded us in a way that is really special because we were all being brave and scared together, and I think we’ll always be bonded because of that.” She also noted that what she learned went beyond what she gained in the classroom: “A lot of the way I go about managing people, making business decisions, I learned at The Gatton Academy. It did a really good job helping me to think critically about problems and how to work through some complicated situations, and that’s

definitely carried over into my career and helped me be successful. Tim Gott was great at mentoring us — I remember to this day advice he gave us, and I really live by some of that advice.”

In 2014, The Gatton Academy went through two significant changes. First, following the departure of Tim Gott, Lynette Breedlove was named the new director of The Academy. Next, funding was received from the legislature and from private donors that would allow Gatton to expand. The size of Schneider Hall had limited the number of students who could attend to 120, but a \$10 million gift from Mr. Gatton funded an expansion project, allowing class size to increase so that the school could serve 200 students each



Gatton Academy alumni Andrew Gott and Aaron Bell received the Chambliss Astronomy Achievement Student Awards at the American Astronomical Society’s meeting in 2012



Gatton Research Internship Grant recipient Ananya Sharma works in the lab of WKU professor Ajay Srivastava in 2014

year. The legislation approved additional funding to support the increased number of students.

When construction began in the summer of 2015, The Academy moved into Bates-Runner Hall (the offices for The Center also moved, to Tate Page Hall and Gary Ransdell Hall); when it returned to Schneider Hall in August of 2016, it had additional living quarters for students, new office space, and the student-named Great Hall, a grand common room large enough to hold the entire expanded student body. The two renovated wings were named after Mr. Gatton's parents, Harry W. Gatton, Sr., and Edith Martin Gatton. Additional donors for the expansion were Sue and Brown Badgett, Ben Cundif, Janine Cundiff, the J. Rogers Badgett Sr. Foundation, Bill and Sue Hamilton, Lydia Latham, Daksha and Prabodh Mehta, and Mike and Julie Muscarella.

Since its first year, The Gatton Academy students have embraced their numerous opportunities. In addition to taking courses at WKU in the sciences and humanities, they have participated in university activities like marching band and the campus activities board,

I'm here, I'm struggling every day to make it, and I'm really enjoying that challenge." That challenge is also what brings him together with his peers: "I really enjoy that people here collaborate. It's not just, 'I need help in this class: can I sit beside you and look at your paper?' Instead, people actually collaborate and try to help each other. People struggle together — you make some of your friends through the fact that you both have to put up with a certain class, and you have to do well in that class."

Not surprisingly for a community where challenge is embraced, The Gatton Academy has been recognized for its excellence many times since its founding. *Newsweek* named it a public elite high school in 2009 and 2010, the fifth best high school in the nation in 2011, and the country's top public high school in 2012 and 2013. *The Daily Beast* then named it the top public high school in 2014. It was named one of five finalists in Intel's Schools of Distinction Awards for excellence in science in 2012, and *The Washington Post* has named The Gatton Academy a top performing public school for the last eight years. In addition, among their many accomplishments,



WKU professor Keith Philips and Gatton students Nathan Serpico, Henry Uradu, Will Bickett, Alison Jones, Eva Gray-Jennings, and Lori Lovell at Cloudbridge Nature Reserve in Costa Rica in 2012

created their own chapters of organizations such as National Beta Club and the Student-Y Club, traveled in the school's January and summer study abroad programs, and done scholarly research. Many Gatton Academy graduates have gone on to attend WKU, while others have matriculated at other public schools as well as private schools in Kentucky and at top-notch institutions throughout the country.

No matter where they end up, the students of The Gatton Academy are given opportunities to push themselves that they would not have had otherwise. Jacob Bowen (S 2013-14; V 2015-15; Trav; Gatt 2016-18) says there is a clear difference between his Gatton experience and that of his previous high school: "At Gatton I have to actually try. I'm taking college courses, I'm actually excelling, I'm actually going forward — at my high school it was like, 'Oh wow, you're really excelling — you're in these hard classes,' and I was like, 'Yeah, but I don't have to do anything for those classes.' Now that

The Gatton Academy's students have been National Merit Finalists, U.S. Presidential Scholar candidates, and Siemens Competition Semifinalists; they have won Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, State Department Language Scholarships, and Barry M. Goldwater Scholarships; and they have competed in the National Science Bowl.

More than any extrinsic recognitions, how the students feel about The Gatton Academy makes the years put into creating it worthwhile. Jennifer Robinson says, "Going to Gatton felt like coming home in a way that I'd never felt before because it was place where I could truly be accepted for who I was. It helped me grow into who I am as a person. It gave me a place to see better who I was — and who I wanted to be — in a safe environment where I was accepted. I'm so lucky that it came about when it did and that I was able to be a part of it. I feel so fortunate for the opportunity." Jacob Bowen, too, is thankful The Academy exists: "I'm very grateful. This is the best place on earth, and it's the best opportunity I've ever had."





Caitlyn Wimpee and Neha Reddy race water droplets in science class during Camp Explore in 2015



Destry Miller, Christian Kantosky, and Anthony Counts at Camp Innovate in 2016

## THE SUMMER CAMP, CAMP EXPLORE, AND CAMP INNOVATE

The Center was able to meet another identified need by beginning a summer day camp for high-ability and gifted elementary school students in 2012. Initially, The Summer Camp offered a week-long enrichment experience for 40 students entering grades 1-3. In 2013, the age group was extended to fourth graders, and 52 campers attended. In 2015, the program split into two camps: Camp Explore for grades 1-3 and Camp Innovate for grades 4-5; Camp Explore had a total of 115 campers in 2015-16, while Camp Innovate had 79. In 2017, third graders could attend either of the two camps; 40 campers went to Camp Explore and 59 attended Camp Innovate.

The approach is interdisciplinary. In both camps, students study a single big idea across a variety of disciplines like language arts, math, science, social studies, and art. The theme changes from year to year in Camp Explore — past themes have included “patterns” and “change” — while at Camp Innovate, each year the teachers find new ways to get students thinking about the theme of innovation.

Throughout the week, students participate in activities differentiated for their particular needs and advanced levels. The day often begins with the whole camp reading a book together. In their classes, campers might make soap bubbles, paint like Van Gogh, turn plastic bags into jump ropes, or extract DNA from strawberries. They also could build anemometers, create a class mural, or learn about T-charts through a Barbie bungee-ing project. Additionally, campers improve their self-confidence and social skills with acting or clowning classes focused on creativity and resilience. Throughout

the week, teachers provide students with more than one way to complete a task and multiple tasks from which to choose.

Emma Ahmed (SS; Sm Cp 2012-14; S 2017) attended The Summer Camp for three years. She liked how challenging the classes were because, she explains, “I love challenges.” At school she often finds she has to wait for classmates to catch up on mastering concepts she gets quickly, but at the camp she could learn at a pace better suited to her abilities. She also liked how the kids were divided into different groups, making it



Konnor Andrew at Camp Explore in 2017

easier to get to know a set of campers. As for her mom, Karol Kirby Ahmed, she could tell how much Emma enjoyed camp because “in the morning it was easy for her to get up and go, and then she would come home really excited, talking about what she had learned.”

Julia says, “The Center’s summer is somewhat like a Christmas stocking: it doesn’t have room for one more thing, yet we fit more in.” The students like Emma who have attended the camps over the last five years are certainly glad The Center decided to do so.



## LITTLE LEARNERS, BIG IDEAS

In the last five years, two ongoing educational opportunities were created through the Innovate Kentucky initiative, originally called i<sup>4</sup>, which was established when the James Graham Brown Foundation awarded The Center a \$500,000 challenge grant (see chapter five). The first of these opportunities is Little Learners, Big Ideas, begun in 2014 with a series of six videos funded by a \$150,000 grant from PNC Bank as part of its Grow Up Great initiative.

The videos, created by project coordinator Allison Bemiss with support from WKU-PBS, were designed to guide the parents and educators of very young children in how to encourage the skills necessary for learning. They cover “Wonder and Curiosity,” “A Thinker’s Toolbox,” “An Environment for Exploring,” “Growing Young Minds,” “Little Learners and Literacy,” and “Learning on the Go.” The Little Learners website features all six videos as well as infographics on each topic and lesson plans with low- or no-cost activities like making butter in a mason jar and creating instruments by wrapping rubber bands around boxes.

Initially, Allison made training presentations to educators at the regional and state levels which allowed her to discuss the learning concepts and distribute the videos on thumb drives. However, three factors told her she needed to broaden her approach. First, although she was reaching a lot of teachers, she also wanted to connect with families. Second, she needed an effective method to target not only elementary school and preschool programs but also private childcare centers. Third, she found that the teachers embraced the message of the videos so much that they wanted more: “Teachers would say, ‘I believe kids need to learn from failure, and I believe we need to encourage them to wonder, but now you need to show me what that looks like.’”

Allison found the answer at the bookstore — but not by doing research: “I happened to be taking my son to a lot of story times at the library and at Barnes and Noble, and when Barnes and Noble staff member Jen Bailey found out about Little Learners, she asked me to do a story time for them. I agreed and decided we should use the event

to get into the community, to invite the preschools to come in, and to let the community watch us model the activities so they could replicate them. But what was supposed to be one big kickoff event was so successful, with over 100 children present, that I knew we had to continue doing it.”

Thus, from a video series, Little Learners has grown into a partnership with Barnes and Noble and Warren County Public Libraries. The special events, held up to three times a year, involve area educators and build lessons around books like *Llama Llama Red Pajama* and *Pete the Cat and His Four Groovy Buttons*.

The program also continues to do training and presentations for school districts, educational cooperatives, and state teachers conferences, as well as for libraries and library associations and for the National Science Teachers Association Conference. Allison herself has written a curriculum manual based on the Little Learners lesson plans, *Hands-on STEAM Explorations for Young Learners: Problem-Based Investigations for Preschool to Second Grade*, published by Prufrock Press.

Allison previously worked with The Center in the GEMS Academy (see chapter five), a one-day-a-week enrichment program with problem-based



A Little Learners, Big Ideas event at the Warren County Public Library in 2017



A Little Learners, Big Ideas event at the Bowling Green Barnes and Noble in 2015

learning in math and science for elementary school students. She found a lot of overlap with her work on Little Learners: “When Julia talked to me about this grant she said, ‘We need to think about what third to sixth graders needed to be able to do when they reached you at GEMS — what would that look like in much younger children?’ What I found is they really need a lot of the same things.” She also believes the content of the program benefits all types of learners because she works with speech and occupational therapists to design her workshops and creates tasks that children can apply at whatever level of readiness they are, regardless of age. As Allison explains, “When we do trainings and events, we say this is how to approach

the activity for our children who are high potential, this is how we do it for our children who are twice-exceptional — and just like removing the ceiling and adding choice, all the things we need to do for gifted learners makes for a better experience for everyone.”





Social entrepreneur and WKU graduate Alex Kimura speaks at IdeaFestival Bowling Green 2017

### IDEAFESTIVAL BOWLING GREEN

The second program that came from the Innovate Kentucky initiative was IdeaFestival Bowling Green, an annual celebration of ideas whose inaugural event was held in 2014. Josh Raymer, who organized the initial three festivals, explains that Innovate Kentucky was looking for a way to do a speaker series. He had been to the original IdeaFestival in Louisville twice, and he knew Lexington had recently held a spin-off event. Seeing the success of those events, he felt The Center could do a good job creating our own spinoff, so in agreement with IdeaFestival, The Center created a one-day event held in the spring on the WKU campus, featuring speakers who were innovators in such fields as sustainability, entrepreneurship, music, the automotive industry, computing, media, community outreach, and education. The goal was to bring together presenters and audience members in a variety of disciplines to inspire new ways of thinking.

The first two festivals looked to provide an event for the whole community, but it became clear, as Josh says, that “students were the biggest and most enthusiastic component of our audience.” Starting in 2016, the

festival targeted regional middle and high schools, reaching out to gifted and talented coordinators to identify students in their programs as well as other curious and passionate students who would benefit from attending. It also increased its minds-on, hand-on activities component so that the day was about applying ideas as well as learning about them. Over the first four years, almost 2000 participants have attended the festival.

Erika Solberg, who took over as organizer of the festival in 2017, sees the event as a way for young people to “learn about and share new ideas, make connections across fields, envision opportunities for their future, and see the world in a different way.”

In 2017, over 600 festival-goers listened to speakers in such fields as music video direction, nonprofit creation, and podcasting talk about their work and about their journeys following their dreams. Participants also tried out 3-D printing pens, created their own smartphone microscopes, explored a makerspace, wrote poetry, and painted a mural celebrating the festival. Erika says, “One of the most exciting parts of the 2017 festival was witnessing participants talk one on one with the speakers during our afternoon activities time.”



Participants at IdeaFestival Bowling Green 2015



IdeaFestival Bowling Green participants work on Andee Rudloff's mural in 2017

The festival's success has come in part from the support of sponsors in the Bowling Green and WKU communities, including AT&T, the Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce, The Gatton Academy, the Kentucky Innovation Network, the WKU Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, the WKU Honors College, and the WKU New Business Accelerator.

Josh believes IdeaFestival Bowling Green is “such a nice complement to everything The Center does because it provides opportunities that kids can't get at school. That's why they look forward to it, and that's why schools have come back four years in a row. It gets them thinking about the possibilities for their futures when they are on the cusp of some very transformative years.”



SCATS clowns walk the campus in 2009

MICHAEL LEWIS

## FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Center is proud to be financially self-sufficient, and even happier that the self-sufficiency includes financial aid for our programs. Throughout our history, we have depended on generous gifts from friends of The Center to provide financial assistance to students who would not otherwise be able to participate. Whether ten dollars or \$10,000, these gifts open up access for students to the opportunities offered by The Center. The aid is often generous because the need is so great. For example, close to \$68,000 in assistance was provided in 2015, and over \$66,000 was provided in 2016. In addition to yearly gifts, we also have specific scholarships established by individuals:

**The Cann Scholarship:** Dann and Kathi Cann of Leitchfield established a full scholarship for two students who live in Grayson County to attend VAMPY. Their daughter, Amber Cann, attended SCATS from 1988-90, was a counselor, and also traveled with The Center.

**The Doctors Mody Minority Scholarship:** Doctors Bharat and Bharati Mody of Glasgow, Kentucky, have established a scholarship for minorities, who “do not get the same exposure and opportunity as others,” to attend VAMPY. Both Mody daughters attended SCATS — Bhavana in 1991 and Bhavini in 1993-94.

**The Highland Scholarship:** Friends who wish to remain anonymous donated this scholarship to support a student from Louisville, Kentucky, to attend VAMPY. The donor requested that the scholarship be made available to a student who “would never in a million years have the opportunity to experience VAMPY due to the financial condition of the family.”

**The Lynne Elizabeth Hamlett Memorial Scholarship Award:** This scholarship is awarded annually to help qualified McCracken County students who require financial assistance to attend summer programming. In memory of a teenage relative who died in a tragic car accident, Jackie, Bill, and Lauren Capp (S 1996-97), formerly of McCracken County, established the fund in 1997.

**The Mahurin Scholarship:** This scholarship is awarded annually

to two students from Grayson County Middle School to participate in SCATS. These scholarships are made possible through an endowment established for this purpose by Pete and Dixie Mahurin whose daughter, Sarah Jo, attended SCATS and VAMPY.

**Margaret “Meg” Gatten Memorial Scholarship:** This scholarship for students to attend VAMPY honors Meg Gatton, who was a mother to, a teacher of, and an advocate for gifted children. Her children — Olivia (Gatt 2007-08, Gatt RC), Elizabeth (V 2008-11; Gatt 2011-13), and Samuel (SS; V 2014-15, 2017) — all participated in programming through The Center and/or attended The Gatton Academy.

**The Riley Jane Lawrence Memorial Scholarship:** In 2008, VAMPY alumna Sarah Markham Lawrence (V 1988-90) and her husband, David, lost their only child, four-year-old Riley Jane. VAMPY friend Melissa Middleton Bilter (V 1988-90) honored her life by initiating a scholarship in her memory for a student who could not attend VAMPY without assistance.

**The Stephanie D. Woodward Scholarship:** Dr. James and Virginia Woodward established a scholarship in memory of his daughter, Stephanie Woodward (V 1984-86), who died in 1987. It is awarded to a VAMPY student who exemplifies high ethical and scholastic standards and has a need for financial assistance in order to participate.

**The William Gladstone Begley II Scholarship:** This scholarship is awarded to gifted and talented students from eastern Kentucky to attend SCATS or VAMPY. Drs. Dick and Julia Roberts wished to memorialize Dr. W. G. Begley, an ardent supporter of excellence, by perpetuating one of his missions in life: the love of learning.

Additionally, we are grateful to the Kentucky Association for Gifted Education Foundation which has provided scholarships since 1985 to students from Kentucky to attend summer programming for gifted and talented students at public institutions of higher education in Kentucky. Many of their recipients have attended our programs, and their generosity allows us to support more students than we would otherwise be able (see chapter four).



## CHAPTER TWO

# Educational Opportunities and Resources for Educators of Gifted and Talented Students



History teachers at the 2018 AP Summer Institute

The nurturing of educators is a thread that weaves throughout The Center’s history, from the summer workshops on gifted education offered in 1981 to the National STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) Scholar Program begun in 2016. The professional learning offered by The Center has taken many forms and targeted many kinds of audiences, but whether it is our annual five-day Advanced Placement (AP) Summer Institute, a series of webinars, or a one-time workshop offered to a school district requesting assistance, Center staff have sought to provide the opportunities, research-based knowledge, best practices, and tools educators need to better identify and serve high-ability and gifted students. Through The Center’s efforts, teachers, counselors, and administrators have challenged themselves, cultivated their creativity, and reached higher: exactly the habits that they then go on to encourage in their own students.

### **WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY GRADUATE PROGRAMS**

When J. T. Sandefur, former dean of the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences at Western Kentucky University (WKU), recalls one of the conversations he had with Julia Roberts that launched the work of The Center, he remembers a very straightforward process: “Julia came in to my office and had some ideas about some courses in gifted education, and they all sounded very good to me. She was so enthusiastic that you couldn’t help but agree with her, so I said, ‘Good, Julia, go do it.’ And she did — she went so far that no one would have believed it back then, but all she needed was a little encouragement.”

The conversations with J. T. occurred after he had brought together a group of parents and educators to talk about what gifted

students most needed; according to Julia, “the overwhelming response was courses for teachers.” She then began in 1981 an annual one-day summer workshop for gifted education professionals. These workshops ran for 10 years and featured such speakers as John Feldhusen and Ann Robinson, nationally renown innovators in the field of gifted education.

In 1982, Julia began teaching graduate courses in gifted education at WKU, one of the first universities in the state to offer such courses. Two years later, in 1984, Kentucky offered the endorsement, or area of specialization, in gifted education. Because of Julia’s work, WKU was ready to offer the endorsement, and it has been the only Kentucky school to continuously offer the entire sequence of four required graduate courses as a one-year program.

More than 400 educators have earned this endorsement at WKU, and the university is currently one of seven in the state to offer it.

More recently, bolstered by The Center’s advocacy, WKU has expanded its gifted education offerings. In 2015, WKU began offering a Master of Arts in Education (MAE) in Gifted Education and Talent Development. The MAE can either lead to certification or take a research focus. In 2017, the university announced it would also offer an Educational Specialist (EdS) in Gifted Education and Talent Development. WKU is the only university in Kentucky to offer these two degrees, and it has more coursework in gifted education than any other university in the state. In addition, the coursework from the MAE and EdS makes a concentration in teacher leadership with a focus on gifted education available for students in the Educational Leadership doctoral (EdD) program. A perpetual strength of all the programs has been their faculty; in addition to Julia, professors have included Janet Tassell, Nielsen Pereira, and Antonia Szymanski.

The Center’s leadership and support have enabled these advances in gifted education at WKU. J. T. notes, “It’s very obvious that Julia has been a remarkable influence on gifted education. She’s influenced the state, and there’s been great progress. The Center was Julia Roberts’ creation. She was the inspiration, she was the initiator, and I give her all the credit.”

## ADVANCED PLACEMENT SUMMER INSTITUTE

In 1984, the same year that the gifted endorsement was first offered at WKU, Kentucky initiated the Commonwealth Diploma program, which recognized high school students who completed particularly rigorous coursework that included at least four AP courses. Recognizing that this program would increase the need for outstanding professional learning for AP teachers in Kentucky, The Center cooperated with the College Board to supply weeklong summer workshops that prepared teachers to teach AP courses. Since



An AP Summer Institute workshop in 2001



1984, over 9,000 teachers have come to the AP Summer Institute at WKU to learn content, strategies, and pedagogy in everything from biology and human geography to English literature and studio art, with many courses available at both novice and experienced levels.

The institute has grown from offering fewer than ten courses in its first years to 27 subject areas in 2017.

The continuing success of the institute begins with the quality of the teachers we have recruited to serve as instructors — known as “consultants.” Some of these consultants have worked with us for years, setting a high standard and providing a model for new teachers to follow. Gene Pickel taught U.S History for us from the very first year until 2012. Benita Albert also began in 1984, teaching Calculus, and she was still on the roster of consultants in 2017.

Larry Treadwell, who teaches AP European History at Fort Lauderdale High School in Florida, initially came to AP Summer Institute in the 1980s because he was going to teach his first AP class and, he says, “I had no idea what I was getting into, so I wanted to get the best instruction I could.” He was eventually invited by Julia to return to the institute as a consultant in 1993. The 2017 AP Institute marked his 24th year in that role.

One of the most interesting sessions Larry taught was for the AP European History redesign in 2015, when changes to the AP curriculum “put veteran teachers back to infancy level because it was all new.” With so many teachers needing the new training, his workshop was unusually large, but “it was amazing how well it blended together — the different backgrounds and questions made it a most memorable workshop.” Likewise, some very small classes



have also proven notable because they “allowed me to make unique connections as I spent a lot of time with each teacher — the size made it a personal workshop, and I could give individual attention for days at a time.”

Larry teaches at other AP institutes, but every year The Center’s is the one that he puts on his calendar first, and “everything else has to work around it.” The main draw for him is that “of all the workshops I go to, this one has amassed the best set of instructors — truly amazing people — and has kept them for multiple years. People come because they want the best they can get, and so they have great attitudes. It makes the workshop an experience.”

There are many features of our AP Institute that can’t be replicated anywhere else, he notes. One feature is Julia, who “inspires him” — and hosts memorable Monday night dinners. There is also a strong sense of camaraderie; former summer programming assistant Carolyn Hagaman recalls having dinner with the consultants in one of her first years with the program: “Julia and I took them for dinner at a family-style restaurant where we all fit around one table. At the next table there were some teenagers celebrating someone’s birthday. Well, Gene Pickel jumped up and gave the birthday boy a quarter!”

Larry points out that even when conditions were challenging, teachers have been drawn to the program: “There have been fire drills in the middle of the night, water leaks in the dorms, and lunches eaten in trailers, yet it worked because participants came for the value of the Institute — they wanted to be a part of it.” Much like students who come to our programs, the teachers who come to the institute discover their people. Larry says, “We can be voices crying in the wilderness at our schools, wondering if we’re doing the right thing, making the demands we do on our students. Then we get to WKU with amazing people, and we get validation that what we’re doing works because others are doing it too.” This bringing together of like minds to pursue excellence is a hallmark of the AP Institute — and of all The Center’s professional learning efforts.

## LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

At The Center’s 1996 Symposium on Kentucky’s Children Who Are Gifted and Talented (see chapter four), participants discussed the need for cultivating leadership in gifted youth. Spurred by that discussion, months later The Center held our first Leadership Institute. The Center has hosted nineteen institutes, bringing in experts from around the country to guide more than 650 teachers, counselors, and administrators in developing leadership skills in young people with an eye towards the educational standards of Kentucky schools.

Presenters have included leadership expert and award-winning author Mariam MacGregor, education coordinator at WKU’s Center for Leadership Excellence John Baker, award-winning author



Psychologist Ed Amend speaks at the Berta Seminar for educators in 2015

Barbara Lewis, youth motivational speaker Ed Gillis, and Toyota executive Jim Wiseman. Topics have covered encouraging leadership in youth, leadership philosophy, service learning for youth, leadership in conjunction with Kentucky’s educational standards, and developing leadership activities.



John Hagaman, Joel Veitschegger, and Carolyn Hagaman at the 2004 VAMPY check-in

## VERTICAL TEAM TRAINING

Starting in 1996, The Center began collaborating with the College Board to hold Vertical Team Training institutes in a variety of areas to help teachers who teach middle school, pre-AP, and AP courses coordinate their curriculum and instruction. Our first institute was for English teachers and was a pilot program for the southeastern region. We also piloted two programs for the

southern region: in 1997, we held the area’s initial “Building Success in Social Studies Team Institute,” and in 1998 we piloted an institute in math. In 2007, we conducted the national pilot program for world languages. We also held several institutes in science.

More than 450 teachers participated in the program. The team training enabled educators to align their courses so students could progress successfully from year to year in preparation for AP courses, thereby closing any gaps in curricula. The training meant students could reach higher standards, and more students were encouraged to take AP classes. Teachers came from throughout Kentucky and other states to receive the training. The last institute was held in 2009.

For more information, see the Appendix.

## THE BERTA SEMINARS

In 2004, we began holding the Berta Seminars, with nationally- and internationally-known experts offering evening sessions for parents and a daylong professional learning experience for educators

and other interested parties. These seminars focus on the social and emotional needs of gifted students and are funded by the Berta Fund for Excellence, created in 2001 with a \$100,000 gift from Vince and Kathleen Berta. All the seminars are free to participants. See chapter three for a full description.

### ADMINISTRATORS' INSTITUTE

Held for three years — in 2006, 2007, and 2009 — The Center's Administrators Institute provided a day-and-a-half of practical strategies geared towards helping school and district leaders meet the needs of gifted and talented youth. Participants learned about the latest research and how to apply that research to their policies and practices. In addition to Julia and Tracy Inman, presenters included Mary Evans, then-principal at Cumberland Trace Elementary School; B. J. Henry, gifted resource specialist in Elizabethtown; and Dale Brown, former superintendent of Warren County Schools. Close to 100 administrators benefited from this program. Because of the importance of the institute, starting in 2009 The Center partnered with the Kentucky Association for Gifted Education (KAGE) to host an administrator strand during KAGE's Annual Conference; it is still going strong.

### TWICE-EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT SEMINAR

In September 2011, The Center held our first seminar on the topic of twice-exceptional (2e) learners, initially supported by the Arts Education Task Force established by Flora Templeton Stuart. The yearly Twice-Exceptional Student Seminar provides information and strategies on supporting these learners, who are defined as having at least one exceptional ability and disability. Although educators have often made up the bulk of the audience, parents and students themselves are invited and welcomed too, and participation is free to all. Speakers have included Dr. Elizabeth Nielsen and Dr.

Dennis Higgins on practical strategies and theory, Dr. Susan Baum of the International Center for Talent Development and professor emerita at the college of New Rochelle on diagnosing and helping 2e learners, and educational consultant Daphne Pereles on the importance of a team approach. All presenters are world-renowned experts on the topic.

Dr. Mary Ruth Coleman, senior scientist emerita at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina, collaborated with Julia on a special issue of *Gifted Child Today* devoted to 2e learners and presented at the seminar in 2015. She sees the 2e seminars as important because “the central thing about 2e kids and their services is that if we get it right for students with these kinds of complex blendings of a need for support and a need for enhancement, I can almost guarantee you that we'll be getting it right for the other kids. Serving 2e learners requires a flexibility in thinking and in understanding that each child is unique, with a different set of strengths and a different set of challenges that will require teamwork, so if we're getting it right for 2e children, then the system as a whole is flexible, is honoring individual strengths and needs, and is working collectively as a team. And that's what we want for all kids.”

She adds, “One of the things that is truly impressive about The Center is that the audiences it brings together are so diverse, and, because of that, the dialogue is really rich, and the exchange of ideas is really relevant. The range of respondents to any given workshop or program represents multiple stakeholders which allows us to see an issue from a 360-degree walkaround, and it also allows us to bring together research and practice in a way that is going to be very sensible for implementation. As a presenter, I always walk away from a Center event having learned something from the conversations and the questions from the particular mix of individuals there in that room. It's very helpful and encouraging when you've presented to have learned something as well.”



Researcher Mary Ruth Coleman speaks at the Twice-Exceptional Students Seminar in 2015



## WORKSHOPS THROUGH RACE TO THE TOP

The Center joined forces with the Green River Regional Educational Cooperative (GRREC) in 2014-16 to create two workshops for teachers through kid-FRIENDLY, a program that focuses on strengthening “educator effectiveness” and was funded through a U.S. Department of Education Race to the Top educational grant. English teacher Angie Gunter, then Dean of Liberal Arts at Daviess County High School and past-president of the Kentucky Council Teachers of English, designed and facilitated the project with assistance from Tracy and from Jamie Spugnardi of GRREC.

The first workshop, AP English Instructional Strategies for All Students, hosted about 30 mostly middle school teachers at a four-day training with follow-up days in the spring and fall. Each participant received a stipend, more than 30 resources, and an iPad mini. They also gained access to a lesson bank and a cohort of educators from whom they could seek support.

The goal, says Angie, was to “build some skills and stamina in pre-AP teachers so that they could build it into their courses and to give teachers some strategies to help their kids become successful in preparing to take AP and other advanced classes in high school.” A website generated by the workshop can be found at [preapeng.weebly.com](http://preapeng.weebly.com).

The second year of the project was called The Kentucky Student Growth Project. After an application process, 47 middle and high school English teachers attended a two-day training in the summer and another two-day training during the school year. They also had a monthly online collaboration and attended the 2016 Kentucky Council of Teachers of English Conference; many participants

presented at the conference as well. The program also utilized Twitter chats and peer observation. In addition, all participants received a stipend for the work they produced, over thirty resources, whatever independent resources they needed for their projects, and an iPad mini.

Angie explains, “The idea was that the participants would determine why their students were not successful in particular areas and then do a formalized study of the aspects of their teaching, classroom, communities, or anything else that negatively affected student performance.” A website generated by the project can be found at [www.studentgrowthky.weebly.com](http://www.studentgrowthky.weebly.com).

Angie has seen concrete results from the project: “The students have embraced it, and most of the teachers have changed their thoughts about teaching. One of the participants and I presented at a national conference, and she and I are teaming to do some district-level training in her district.” In addition, two teachers from the project, Melody Wallace and Amber Hall, each went on to win a Stephanie Kirk Classroom Learning Grant, a state-level award from the Kentucky Council for Teachers of English, based on the work they did in the project.

## NATIONAL STEM SCHOLAR PROGRAM

The newest professional learning initiative began in 2016: a five-year \$500,000 grant from the National Stem Cell Foundation established a partnership with The Center and The Gatton Academy to create the National STEM Scholar Program, designed to inspire the creativity and passion of middle school science teachers. Beginning in 2016, each June a cohort of ten exceptional middle school science



Tracy at the Kentucky Student Growth Project in 2015

teachers has arrived in Bowling Green from across the country to spend a week engaging in hands-on, minds-on science activities led by Rico Tyler, education professor and master teacher in the SKyTeach program at WKU, and Kerrie McDaniel, WKU biology professor.

Networking is integral to the program. In 2016 and 2017 the week began with an opening dinner during which scholars worked together on a puzzle to help them get to know one another and model effective ways to get students thinking about science.

Throughout the week, scholars developed their own creative Challenge Projects for classroom implementation. Other activities have included rocket engineering, spider web design, creating iPad microscopes, an escape room challenge, and working with genetic code and Ozobots. They rounded out their weeks with shared meals, a trip to Mammoth Cave, and talks by experts — in 2016 and 2017, Paula Grisanti, CEO of the National Stem Cell Foundation, shared updates in the field of regenerative medicine; 2016 also featured astronomer Chris Graney of Jefferson Community and Technical College, while Julie Schell, Director of TEXAS OnRamps and Strategic Initiatives at The University of Texas at Austin's Office of Strategy and Policy, spoke in 2017.

After their time together, the scholars remained in touch virtually, and they regathered in person at the National Science Teachers Association Conference to share their progress and ideas.

Santosh Zachariah, an eighth grade science teacher at the Evergreen School in Seattle, Washington, was one of the scholars who participated in 2016. He says, “The week as a whole was very intense. From when we woke up in the morning to when we went to bed, we were thinking middle school science. It was also my first time in Kentucky, and I was quite blown away by the hospitality.”

The value of the experience lasted long past the initial week. Santosh explains, “The cohort itself is quite closely knit. We ask people how they're doing things and get and give feedback, so it's an ongoing collaboration. It helps to have people who are interested in teaching the way you teach and teaching the things you teach. It's enlarged my professional network. Spending a week with people building trust with them makes it easy to have those conversations.”

Santosh feels that the program offers something unusual and crucial for science education: “My sense is this program is one of the few opportunities in middle school science for professional learning. As a middle school teacher, I feel that my job is to get kids going into high school excited about the subject that I teach. If kids decide between fifth grade and eighth grade that they don't like a subject, when they get to high school they decide they're not good at that subject, and that then closes off very large areas of professional growth. So much of middle school is keeping up the excitement that

this is a fun subject, and you can enjoy it and you can be good at it.” The National STEM Scholar Program will help him and other participants to keep that excitement going.

### FACILITATED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The Center has a tradition of facilitating professional learning offered by other organizations. Highlights include the following:

- The Center hosted multiple trainings for the Junior Great Books program in the 1990s and 2000s. These trainings instructed educators on Shared Inquiry discussions in order to promote critical thinking; the instruction revolved around a series of readings for grades one through 12.

- With its committee chaired by Julia, the Wedge Visiting Scholar Presentations, a free evening lecture and all-day workshop for edu-

cators and the public sponsored by WKU's College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, has been presented each year since 2003 through a gift from Carol and Denny Wedge. Presentations have included Dr. Carol Tomlinson on “Defensible Differentiation: What Will It Take to Get It Right?,” Dr. Donald Treffinger on teaching children to think critically and creatively, Dr. Jonathan Plucker on excellence gaps, Dr. Bronwyn MacFarlane on “Curriculum for Every Student to Succeed: Integrating Best Practices from Gifted Education in the Content Areas,” and Dr. Barbara Kerr on “From Imagination to Innovation: Encouraging Students in STEM.”

- The 2017 Torrance Test Figural Scoring Workshop, held in conjunction with the KAGE Fall Workshop in Lexington, prepared 34 educators to administer, score, and interpret the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking, Figural.



Kiki Contreras, Val Pumala, and Angela Gospodarek at the 2017 National STEM Scholar Program



Participant Santosh Zachariah and instructor Rico Tyler during the 2016 National STEM Scholar Program



## IN ADDITION ...

Other notable work in educational opportunities and resources for educators by The Center includes the following. For additional information on each item, see the Appendix.

- Julia and Tracy have produced four books together for educators of the gifted. The latest is a textbook, *Introduction to Gifted Education*, published by Prufrock Press in August 2017. Julia and Tracy edited this book along with Jennifer Robins, director of publications and professional learning at William & Mary School of Education. Tracy and Julia contributed a chapter on differentiation, Julia a chapter on advocacy, and Mary Evans a chapter on professional learning. The textbook is designed for both graduate programs and professional learning and covers a variety of approaches

on a broad range of topics such as acceleration, the characteristics of gifted learners, and enrichment. Their other books are the award-winning *Strategies for Differentiating Instruction: Best Practices for the Classroom*, first

published in 2007 by Prufrock Press and now in its third edition; *Assessing Differentiated Student Products: A Protocol for Development and Evaluation*, first published in 2009 by Prufrock Press and now in its second edition; and *Teacher's Survival Guide: Differentiating Instruction in the Elementary Classroom*, published in 2013.

- An essential part of The Center's work is to provide professional learning experiences to school districts, individual schools, school counselors, and other groups of educators. Julia and Tracy have presented workshops for approximately 100 different school districts in Kentucky alone, as well as for schools and school districts in dozens of states. Two of Tracy and Julia's books mentioned above, *Strategies for Differentiating Instruction: Best Practices for the Classroom* and *Assessing Differentiated Student Products: A Protocol for Development and Evaluation*, have served as the basis for much of this work.
- Julia and Tracy have done consultations throughout Kentucky and across the country. These consultations are specific to the district, such as program evaluation or a differentiation initiative.
- Julia has also written books for educators with others. With Julia Roberts Boggess, Julia wrote *Teacher's Survival Guide: Gifted Education*, published in 2011 by Prufrock Press; and *Differentiating Instruction with Centers in the Gifted Classroom*,



The 2016 STEM Scholars

published in 2012 by Prufrock Press and for which Tracy wrote a chapter on language arts. With Jennifer Jolly, Julia wrote *A Teacher's Guide to Working with Children and Families from Diverse Backgrounds*, published in 2012 by Prufrock Press.

- Professional learning has been an integral part of the four grants we have received from the Jacob K. Javits program and for the Raising Achievement in Middle School Science project (see chapter five). For example, during the first two years of the latest Javits grant, Project RAP (Reaching Academic Potential), our staff conducted more than a dozen professional learning sessions.

- Between 2011 and 2013, Julia and Tracy were invited to give four presentations on differentiation for the National

Association for Gifted Children's (NAGC) Webinar on Wednesday series. Each one covered a topic related to differentiation: "Making Differentiated Products Powerful," "Instructional Strategies for Differentiated Assessments and Products within the Classroom," "What Does an Effectively

Differentiated Classroom Look Like?" and "Differentiation Toolkit: Simple Strategies That Work." According to the NAGC, these webinars are "highly-acclaimed," and two of them became part of the NAGC e-Learning archives. The webinars "are heavily used and have helped the archives secure more than 8,000 unique views by NAGC members since January 2016."

- The Center has been able to offer professional learning by involving graduate students and junior faculty at WKU in research. Most of these students have been studying in the department of psychology with the goal of becoming school psychologists. Three of these students assisted with the Javits Grant-funded Project GEMS (see chapter five). Tracy notes that "they were totally responsible for handling the data, and you've got to be really with-it to do that successfully. They were also wonderful in assisting with the testing — they were incredibly conscientious, responsible, terrific young women." Julia also has had graduate students and junior faculty assisting her on various projects. Educational psychologist Anne Rinn, for example, did research on gifted students and summer programming when a faculty member at WKU.
- Julia and Tracy have done many professional learning workshops for elementary and secondary education students at WKU, such as Teaching Gifted Children, Differentiated Instruction: A Workshop, Challenging All Children, and Differentiating for the Gifted and Diversity: The Gifted Child.

# Educational Opportunities and Resources for Parents of Gifted and Talented Students

For all parents, the realization that they cannot provide everything their child needs can be scary. For the parents of gifted children, those unmet needs may be intellectual, social, emotional, academic, or all four. Therefore, along with our other goals, The Center’s vision includes providing support for parents. This work has come in many forms, such as a staff member talking on the phone to a parent worried that his or her child is underperforming in school, a seminar given by an expert in a particular aspect of giftedness, or an article about advocacy written for a national publication. Although the method of delivery can vary, the philosophy is always the same: parents are their children’s best advocates, and our role is to support them as they determine what their children need in order to thrive.



Teacher Justin Mitchell with a parent and student during the 2017 VAMPY move-in

## PHONE CALLS, EMAILS, AND MORE

Often, the first interaction the parent of a gifted child has with The Center is by contacting us to ask for advice. Each year we field hundreds of phone calls, answer emails, meet in person with family members, and distribute printed materials.

Tracy Inman and Julia Roberts have been the first contact point for many families. Tracy sees her role as empowering them: “The more information they have, the better they can help their child. I find a lot of parents don’t even have the basic information, such as what it means to be gifted in the state of Kentucky — the regulations, rights, and responsibilities. Other parents don’t understand the basic characteristics of gifted kids. But typically when I get a phone call from a parent, it deals with social-emotional issues. It could be something like ‘my child’s great at home — she’s watching the Discovery channel, and she’s doing experiments at home — but

when she gets to school, she’s in trouble all the time.’ So parents are typically very hungry for resources. They’re sometimes very emotional and fragile, because oftentimes they’ve tried everything, and we are one of those things on the list that they’re trying. I’ve found that just providing basic information and resources, answering specific questions, and listening help so much.”

Catherine and Bruce Poteet of Bowling Green have two children, William (SS; V 2013-15, 2017) and Piper (SS; SmCp 2012-16; S 2017), who are profoundly gifted. When William was a toddler, Catherine sought out The Center for help: “He was speaking early, doing basic addition at two years old. I knew Tracy, and so I called her to say, ‘I need help — what do I do? I have no idea what’s going on with

my child!’ She was able to give us some hints and suggestions early on and later gave us contact info for a psychologist who frequently deals with gifted students to get William tested. The Center was very instrumental with resources: whom to contact, what to do — and they never told us what we should do with our son but gave us the resources and told us, ‘You know your child better than anyone else.’”

Catherine later needed advice about whether or not to accelerate William. She and her husband felt acceleration — speeding up his progression through the school curriculum and, ultimately, grades — was right for him academically but were worried about him socially: “The Center helped alleviate our concerns, and one of the pivotal moments was when they said, ‘School’s going to have to be for school, and you’ll have to find another outlet and resources for the socialization. School for most kids is the socialization and the academic, but William’s path will just be different.’ That piece of advice early on with William was very helpful.”





Scholar Virginia Hays Burney and a participant at the 2009 Berta Seminar

Tracy says, “Perhaps one of the things that helps more than anything is when parents realize their child is not alone, that there are a lot of other children out there who share those same characteristics, and that it’s all good. It also gives parents hope if their child hasn’t been able to form friendships that there are other people out there like him, and there are programs available where he can be with other kids like him and have friendships and meaningful relationships.”

Parents also sometimes call needing help in advocating for their child within the school system, often when a district sees a change in leadership and no longer provides the kind of services it once did. Tracy explains, “We won’t have any calls from a certain area because things are really going well, and then there’s a new superintendent or principal, and we start getting lots of calls. Typically those parents are calling more for advocacy tips — it’s not ‘what do I do with my child?’ but ‘Gosh, we used to have this great service, and we don’t have it anymore. What can we do?’ I put them in touch with the Kentucky Association for Gifted Education or their local state organization — we have people call from all over the U.S. asking questions, and we help them learn how to go about effecting change in their area.”

From that first contact parents may find reassurance, access an essential resource, enroll a child in a Center program, or find a way to advocate for what their child needs. No matter what the outcome, The Center has always been willing to reach out.

## PARENT SEMINARS

Since its early years, the Super Saturdays program (see chapter one) has presented an opportunity to educate parents and answer their questions through the Parent Seminars. These ninety-minute sessions support our belief that “education is strongest when parents, educators, and students work as a team.”

Mary Evans, who created the Super Saturdays program, explains, “We realized that lots of parents were sitting in the hallways at Tate Page waiting on their children during Super Saturdays, and we saw this as a great opportunity to educate parents and prepare them to be advocates for their gifted children. We selected the topics based on common questions that parents asked: How are gifted students identified? How do I work with the school so that my child’s learning needs are met? What do I need to be doing as a parent to support my gifted child? What opportunities are available outside of school?”

Presenters are drawn from The Center’s staff, the WKU College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, and other experts. Recent topics included Truths and Myths, Acceleration and Enrichment, Advocating for Your Child: How to Collaborate with Teachers, How Do I Work with My Child’s School?, and Underachievement in Gifted Children.

Mary notes that parents do a lot more than listen passively at the seminars: “I’m always impressed by the great desire that parents have for more information about giftedness and their struggles to

find appropriate educational opportunities to address their children's needs. Parents will wait in line for a long time to have a few minutes to talk to a Parent's Seminar presenter about a specific issue with their child. And, besides that delivery of information, one of the outcomes of the seminars is the connections and friendships that form among the parents."

## THE BERTA SEMINARS

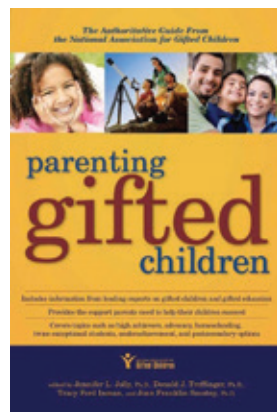
As mentioned briefly in chapter two, in 2001, a \$100,000 gift from Vince and Kathleen Berta created the Berta Fund for Excellence to support the social and emotional needs of gifted students. From this gift The Center established the Berta Seminars in 2004; nationally- and internationally-known experts have since provided evening sessions to more than 725 parents of gifted children and daylong professional learning to 825 educators and other interested parties. All the seminars are free to participants.

The Berta Seminars, as parent Catherine Poteet puts it, "help parents know how to support your kid in the day to day." Topics have included The Well-Being of Gifted Students, The Social and Emotional Aspects of Growing Up Gifted, Understanding the Social Emotional Issues that Lead to Gifted Achievement, Giftedness as Both Asset and Burden: An Educator's Perspective, and Underachievement in Gifted Children.

Psychologist Sylvia Rimm, director of the Family Achievement Clinic in Cleveland and a former *Today Show* educational consultant, presented at the Berta Seminars in 2005 and 2014. She believes the seminars are important because "we in gifted education know that identifying a gifted child is only a beginning. Of course, these children require an appropriate curriculum, but that too is not enough. The social and emotional pressures that pair with gifted intelligence and creativity can lead children to motivation or can lead them to avoid challenge for fear that they are not perfect, smart enough, popular enough, etc. Many gifted children do not fulfill their potential, and families and children themselves are sad and disappointed. I have successfully guided parents and educators in understanding the important social emotional needs, and it is the Berta seminars that have allowed me to reach so many gifted students indirectly. Both teachers and parents have shared with me how important these workshops have been for their leading, teaching, and guiding their gifted children and students."



Tracy Inman at the Differentiation Workshop in 2016



One of the most memorable features of the seminars, like so many of The Center's programs, is the commitment of those involved. Sylvia says, "What I remember most is the enthusiasm and interest of both the parenting and educator groups in attendance. There were always plenty of questions."

Catherine agrees that the seminars attract highly interested and active participants; she notes that coming together for the events facilitates networking among the parents of the gifted: "When our kids were younger, we were the ones hunting down parents afterwards saying, 'How did you do this? How did you do that?' And now that our children are 12 and 13, we're the ones they're coming up to, asking, 'How did you do this?'"

## IN ADDITION ...

Other notable work in educational opportunities and resources for parents by The Center includes the following. For additional information on each item, see the Appendix.

- Julia and Tracy have written extensively for parents of gifted children. Their work includes a series of articles written from 2006-2011 for *Parenting for High Potential*, the magazine of the National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC). Some of the articles became chapters in *Parenting Gifted Children: The Authoritative Guide from the National Association for Gifted Children*, edited by Tracy, Jennifer Jolly, Donald Treffinger, and Joan Smutny, and published by Prufrock Press in 2010. Tracy also co-wrote *Parenting Gifted Children 101: An Introduction to Gifted Kids and Their Needs* with Jana Kirchner for Prufrock Press in 2016. Both of these parenting books were winners of the Legacy Award for the Outstanding Book for Parents in Gifted Education by the Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented. For additional information, see the Appendix.

- Tracy has been an active supporter of parents through the NAGC, which aims to support families and educators who work with gifted and talented children. Her work has included serving as chair of the Parent and Community Network, chair of the Advisory Committee for Parenting for High Potential, chair of the Parent Editorial Content and Advisory Board, and a member of the Tri-Alliance for all parenting groups. For additional information, see the Appendix.



# Communication and Advocacy for Gifted and Talented Students

“Gifted children need all of us to advocate for them,” Julia Roberts says, and indeed in the last 35 years the staff and the many friends of The Center have spoken out for and supported gifted and talented youth. Like our other activities, advocacy often overlaps with other aspects of The Center’s mission, such as in the creation of The Gatton Academy. No matter the focus of the advocacy, however, communication is central. The Center reaches out in many ways: through our writing, through public presentations, through building relationships and networking, and through programs like The Victoria Fellows, which gathers key decision-makers together to share ideas. The ultimate goal of communication and advocacy is to grow and strengthen the group of people who care about and work for gifted and talented youth.

## **SYMPOSIA ON KENTUCKY’S CHILDREN WHO ARE GIFTED AND TALENTED**

In 1987, Western Kentucky University (WKU) received a grant from the Richardson Foundation that enabled The Center to hold a Symposium on Kentucky’s Children Who Are Gifted and Talented. Recognizing that it was, as Julia notes, a “terrific model to carry on,” we have made the dissemination conference a regular event, holding a total of 26 so far. A grant from the Kentucky Advisory Council on Gifted and Talented Children funded the event through 2016; in 2017, it



Aaron Collins, superintendent of Fulton County Schools, at the Symposium on Kentucky’s Children Who Are Gifted and Talented in 2015

was supported by The Center in cooperation with the Kentucky Association on Gifted Education (KAGE). The goals of the symposia are “to examine current research and practice on gifted children and their achievement; to discuss and recommend appropriate learning opportunities for Kentucky’s gifted children in light of national goals and state reform; to discuss economic and policy considerations for educating highly able young people in the Commonwealth; and to develop policy guidelines to ensure optimum development of Kentucky’s gifted children.”

Julia explains that when the Kentucky Education Reform Act was passed in 1990, gifted education was mentioned only once, in the very last amendment — its inclusion was the result of the dedicated effort of state representative Jody Richards. Given the little interest shown by the legislature, Julia says that “it became very apparent that we needed to win friends and influence people, so we started an annual symposium bringing together decision makers and talking about what people needed to know about gifted children in order to support them.”



Students speak on a panel at the Symposium in the late 1990s

Educators, state and national leaders in gifted and talented education, and gifted and talented youth themselves have all made presentations to participants, who are made up of community and governmental leaders and other decision-makers in Kentucky education. Held at Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, the two-day event (shortened from two days to one in 2017) provides an environment away from day-to-day distractions



Members of KAGE, including Center staff member Laura Freese, far right, at the KAGE conference in the late 1990s



Lynette Baldwin and Jennie Horner at the Kentucky Gifted Education Week proclamation Ceremony in Frankfort around 2000

and allows participants to find out what gifted and talented youth need so that they can bring that knowledge back to their own communities.

Houston Barber, superintendent of Frankfort Independent Schools, attended the symposium in 2016 as part of his role as a Victoria Fellow (see below). He sees several key benefits of the program: “One is awareness — an understanding of the data. Number two is the chance to share local viewpoints and norms that exist in Kentucky and understand what has or hasn’t worked in school districts to help our gifted and talented population. We can take that knowledge and apply it to our school districts. The third thing is thinking about how can we impact policy — it’s an opportunity to create and develop an influential action plan that you can approach step by step, like a surgical procedure.”

In Houston’s district, his involvement in the symposium has led to concrete changes: “We changed how we identify students in terms of using various measures, we are going from a half-time to a full-time gifted and talented coordinator/teacher next year, and we

are offering more opportunities for our students and trainings for our teachers.”

Another direct result of the symposia was the creation of the Bullitt Advanced Math and Science Program in Bullitt County, proposed in 2010 after superintendent Keith Davis heard a panel on The Gatton Academy at a symposium. Such actions are just a few examples of how the sharing of information has led to real benefits for the gifted students of Kentucky.

## KENTUCKY ASSOCIATION FOR GIFTED EDUCATION (KAGE)

The Center’s remarkable impact on and presence in Kentucky comes in part from the long relationship we have enjoyed with KAGE, which seeks to expand and support educational opportunities for the state’s gifted youth. Doris Mills co-founded the organization in 1979 with Lounette Steenrod and ran it out of her basement for many years. Julia was involved with KAGE “from the get-go,” Doris says. In 1990, the offices of KAGE were moved to The Center, where it has been ever since. Not only do we support KAGE logistically by doing such things as paying the phone bill and providing office space, but Center staff member Gail Hiles has served as the office manager for KAGE since 1999.

The arrangements have proved to be mutually beneficial, explains Doris: “The Center became very important to KAGE, and KAGE became important to The Center.” Sheila Cruse Johnston, the executive director of KAGE from 1989-1999, describes the relationship between The Center and KAGE as “a marriage.” She saw KAGE boosted by The Center’s support as we shared resources for the KAGE newsletter and in planning conferences.

Lynette Baldwin took over as director in 1999 and still serves in that position. She and Julia have spent countless hours in Frankfort and Washington, D.C., advocating for children with gifts and talents. She believes one of the most successful collaborations of KAGE and the Center is the yearly Symposium on Kentucky’s Children Who Are Gifted and Talented: “The Symposium has been very successful because we’ve reached out to leadership across the state over a period of years.”

Another way KAGE and The Center work together is with the KAGE Foundation scholarships, which since 1985 have provided financial assistance to qualified Kentucky elementary and secondary students to participate in the summer gifted programs offered by the state’s public universities. Potential recipients often apply both to the KAGE Foundation and to The Center for scholarships to attend our summer programs like SCATS and VAMPY, and when the Foundation is able to give only partial funding, we are often able to make up the difference (see chapter one).

Both Lynette and Sheila see KAGE and The Center as partners with similar goals. Sheila says, “Advocating for the gifted will always be a difficult job to do. Everybody’s got to work together for the common goal, which is providing appropriate services for gifted kids. Both KAGE and The Center are working toward that.” Lynette adds, “KAGE and The Center each has a common passion.” She believes the relationship between KAGE and The Center works because



“It’s everyone pulling together to get the job done — The Center is a home place for KAGE.”

Julia has served on the KAGE board since 1982 and has organized its Update on Gifted Education Workshop since 1993. Tracy Inman has served on the board since 2008 and is the chair of the KAGE Foundation. Both Julia and Tracy have served as the organization’s president and have won the KAGE Service and Advocacy Award, Julia in 1991 and Tracy in 2009. In addition, they have made regular presentations at KAGE’s annual conference, including Parent Nights, and have presented at its Summer Workshop. The Center has also regularly had an exhibit booth at the annual KAGE conference.

From her perspective as the person who coordinates the collaboration between the two organizations, Gail Hiles says, “There would not be a KAGE if it were not for The Center.”

## THE CHALLENGE

Julia has long held that “an opportunity isn’t an opportunity unless someone knows about it.” With The Center involved in so many different aspects of gifted education, it became clear in the 1990s that we needed an effective way to inform the community about our work. A big part of the solution was our magazine, *The Challenge*, whose inaugural issue was published in 1998. For 43 editions it has been edited by Tracy and designed by Marcus Dukes of the WKU Division of Public Affairs with the goal of appealing to an audience of students, educators, and parents. The magazine shares the opportunities offered by The Center, recounts our accomplishments and events, describes our hopes for the future, and provides information about gifted education. Initially published twice a year, *The Challenge* added a third annual issue in 2013 and is currently sent to 21,800 homes across the country and throughout the world.

Some features of the magazine have evolved over time. For example, the cover of the first 11 issues of the magazine featured photographs taken from various angles of a statue in the Galleria dell’Accademia in Florence: the Monument to Elisa Bonaparte Baciocchi, The Magnanimity of Elisa, Grand Duchess of Tuscany. Starting with issue 12, the cover has instead included photos of everything from happy campers to Duke TIP medals to Kentucky governor Ernie Fletcher to Schneider Hall to Center staffers in Denmark. Other elements of the magazine have stayed the same, such as the Letter from Julia, the Alumni Update, and annual articles on programming such as our summer camps.

*The Challenge* reflects the mission of The Center by including in each issue articles that focus on our three main audiences: gifted youth, their parents, and their educators. We have explained important topics like differentiation and cluster grouping, profiled

first-time Super Saturdays teachers and Center volunteers, covered talks by noted gifted educators like Jonathan Plucker, reported on the World Council’s Biennial World Conferences, and followed up on the lifelong friendships of Center alumni. During the campaign to start the school that became The Gatton Academy, our magazine detailed each challenge and victory. We have also regularly encouraged advocacy through articles like “The Importance of Joining Your State Gifted Association,” and kept readers updated on upcoming events. And in every issue, we have the engaged, exuberant faces of young people served by our programs.

Over the years *The Challenge* has received a number of awards. In 1999, the Blue Pencil Award of Excellence from The Kentucky Association of Government Communications was awarded to Marcus Dukes and Tom Meacham, also of WKU’s Division of Public

Affairs, for their work on the magazine. Its other recognitions include several from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education Kentucky, such as its Graphic Design Periodical Award of Excellence for the #34 (March 2014) issue.

As a complement to the magazine, The Center also established a website in 1998, and the page for *The Challenge* includes links to every issue, all of which are archived online.

## WHITE PAPER

In the early 2000s, a task force representing multiple stakeholders in gifted education drafted a white paper entitled “Kentucky’s Future: Mining Untapped Treasure – Children and Youth of the Commonwealth Who are Gifted and Talented.” Julia and Tracy served on the task force.

The document advocated for increasing funding for gifted education to \$25 million “so that the state’s gifted students get the important educational opportunities promised them” through three methods: first, ongoing professional learning for teachers; second, comprehensive identification of gifted students; and third, appropriate services for gifted students. The superintendents of Kentucky schools presented it to the Kentucky legislature in 2006.

Julia notes, “Although there were no legislative results regarding the white paper at that time, it raised awareness, and it was the first time that we had spoken out boldly on raising the funding amount for gifted education.”

More information can be found in the Appendix.

## CHALLENGE AWARDS

Drawing attention to the advocacy work of others is important to The Center. In 2002 we created the Challenge Awards to honor individuals for their tremendous impact on gifted education for



Tracy Inman, Marcus Dukes, and Julia Roberts in front of the statue in Florence featured on the early covers of *The Challenge* in 2017

children and youth. We repeated that recognition in 2004. The Challenge Awards were given to the following people:

**Dr. Larry Laird.** 2002 recipient Larry Laird came to WKU in 1967 to teach in the Psychology Department and immediately recognized the lack of research, resources, and opportunities concerning gifted learners nationwide. He instituted the first class ever focusing on gifted education at WKU, Psychology of the Gifted Student, and went on to lead many teacher workshops to help educators meet the needs of the gifted. He realized, too, that once young people were identified, they needed services, so he provided those as well, including a summer program at WKU in the late 1970s for gifted young women. Larry also focused on national needs; he became ardently involved in the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) and served as NAGC president from 1972-1974. He also wrote many articles published in national journals that pertained to the gifted.

**Ms. Doris Mills.** 2002 recipient Doris Mills first developed an interest in gifted education when her gifted child was not receiving the school services he needed. As a middle school teacher she developed a program to challenge gifted students, and eventually she developed a county-wide program for gifted students in Daviess County. In 1978, she worked with parents and educators to urge people all over Kentucky to speak to their legislators about funding support, resulting in the first competitive funding grants to districts and eventually categorical funds for all school districts for gifted student programs. This gathering of gifted education advocates formed the nucleus of KAGE, which operated for its first ten years from Doris's basement. The organization's achievements include the establishment of Advanced Placement classes; the Commonwealth Diploma; statewide academic competitions; the Governor's Scholars Program; The Kentucky Advisory Council for Gifted and Talented; legislation that provides mandated identification, services, and funding for every Kentucky school district; and, most importantly, a significant improvement in the understanding of the needs of children with great potential. Doris was also present at the initial 1981 meeting held by Dean J. T. Sandefur that eventually gave birth to The Center.

**The Honorable Jody Richards.** The Kentucky state representative from the 20th district from 1976 to 2018, 2002 recipient Jody Richards has always been a valuable advocate for gifted education. He sponsored the very first legislation for gifted education, took a leadership role in securing funding for gifted education, and established the Advisory Council for Gifted and Talented Education. During the birth of the Kentucky Education Reform Act, under his guidance, gifted and talented children were included under the umbrella of "exceptional children," thus requiring schools to provide



identification and services for all exceptional children — including the gifted and talented. This change set the groundwork for much of the legislation that ensures the rights of gifted children. Thanks to Jody's vision and determination, other states look to Kentucky for benchmark gifted legislation. In addition, as Speaker, he was a strong proponent for a state-funded residential school and worked to get funding included in the state budget that eventually led to establishing The Gatton Academy. He has also spoken at the Duke TIP recognition Ceremony and served on the Advisory Board since its founding.

**Dr. Susan Leib.** 2004 recipient Dr. Susan Leib, long-time Director of the Kentucky Education Department (KDE) Professional Standards Board, served as the State Director of Gifted Education for the Kentucky Department of Education. She was important in helping develop and promote the Summer Program for Verbally and Mathematically Precocious Youth at Western Kentucky University, calling The Center to see if we would be interested in creating a

program after the Duke Talent Identification Program (TIP) contacted her. During the many years she worked for KDE, she attended the Duke TIP Recognition program regularly and was active in KAGE. Julia, who communicated with her on an almost daily basis, says, "She was a wonderful person to have at KDE."

**Dr. J. T.**

**Sandefur.** 2004

recipient Dr. J. T. Sandefur, former Dean of the WKU College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, deserves credit for green lighting opportunities for gifted children in Kentucky throughout

the 1980s. Through his leadership and support, he helped Julia begin The Center for Gifted Studies. Julia says, "He absolutely was the key to getting us started. He suggested that we call together a group to see how we would begin programming in gifted education, and out of that meeting it was determined that what we needed to do was offer graduate work in gifted education." Advocating to the university for what Julia and the others in the group wanted to do, he opened the door for all that has since been established for gifted education at WKU (see chapter two).

**Dr. Donald Zacharias.** 2004 recipient Dr. Donald Zacharias, former President of Western Kentucky University and Mississippi State University, helped realize the dream of a summer program for gifted students during his years at WKU. In 1983, he traveled with Julia to Duke University to examine their summer programs. She returned with a commitment from him to establish this type of program at WKU (see chapter one), support that was essential to get the camp underway. Due to illness, Donald was unable to attend the awards ceremony in 2004, so Julia and Dick Roberts drove to Starkville, Mississippi, to present him with the award in person.



## THE VICTORIA FELLOWS

The Victoria Fellows program was founded in 2011, thanks to a gift from Linda and John Kelly and their daughter, Victoria, a long-time volunteer at The Center. The Kellys wanted their gift to be used for an initiative that would “make a difference,” and so The Center established an advocacy group to support young people who are gifted and talented in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. John says his family “really appreciated the fact that Julia and her team embraced Victoria,” who has autism, and “we thought it would be a nice way of recognizing what the program has done for our daughter, who in our mind is a special and gifted person, and also for the many gifted students in the state.”

The resulting Victoria Fellows is composed of superintendents and assistant superintendents from throughout Kentucky. They meet two to three times a year to learn from national speakers, network, and share ideas. Past experts have discussed the Excellence Gap, how to revamp gifted and talented programming, acceleration, and creating academies for gifted students. Keith Davis, superintendent of Bullitt Country Schools, has been a fellow since Victoria Fellows began; he sees the day-and-a-half meeting structure as a great benefit: “One of the best things about the program is that it’s off the grid. I come to Bowling Green to a quiet conference center setting, and we’re focused. The outside world doesn’t intrude, so we have time to focus on professional learning with real experts in a setting that is dedicated to that.”

John Kelly believes the benefits of the program are readily apparent: “Being able to put together the most influential, engaged, and supportive educators across the state to work as advocates who recognize the need for resources for gifted and talented students is very important, especially in a state like Kentucky.” Keith Davis sees great potential in the group because “you can educate teachers all day long about the need for cluster groups or for any manner of gifted education strategies, but if they go back home to a district that’s not interested and engaged with it, not much is going to happen. When the strategy is to make sure that we as superintendents understand there are issues we can deal with, there can be real changes.”

Another strength Keith sees is that he and the other Fellows are in a position to disseminate important information. First of all, they are often able to get issues in front of legislators. In addition, several Fellows are on the Superintendents Advisory Council, giving them the ability to talk directly to the Kentucky Commissioner of Education. He says, “We’ve talked about the accountability system,

for example — that we need to involve gifted kids in at least the reporting part of the accountability system so they’re not just ignored.” Finally, Fellows talk to their peers: “On a local and an educational cooperative level, having some of us educated enough to speak about gifted education helps spread the word on policy issues like acceleration, cluster grouping, and specialized learning environments. There have been several superintendents from our co-op who’ve gotten involved in Victoria Fellows because they heard me be excited about it. As superintendents, we really don’t know where the influence stops: just like with teachers, we never know if our audience is listening to us, but maybe they are, and it sure couldn’t hurt.”

Both John and Keith agree that The Center’s leadership is essential to the Victoria Fellows program. Says Keith, “Julia is interested in individuals, and that’s her particular power: she gets to know

us as people. She’s engaged with people, and I think that gives her a lot of influence.” John explains, “We know that because the program is passionately managed by Julia and her team, it will have a serious, positive, and productive influence on these kids, their families, and, ultimately, the state.”



Education specialist Steve Coxon at a Victoria Fellows meeting in 2007

### IN ADDITION ...

Other notable work in communication and advocacy by The Center includes the following:

- The Center, through Julia and Tracy, has provided years of support to the NAGC, which aims to support families and educators who work with gifted and talented children. Among other positions, Julia has been a member of the board of directors and co-chair of a search committee for executive director. Tracy has written a chapter for an NAGC e-book and was an invited speaker in its Presidential Series Session. Both individually and together, Julia and Tracy have made countless presentations at NAGC conferences and been appointed to NAGC special task forces. The organization has recognized our work in a number of ways, but one of the most significant was when in 2001 it presented Julia with its inaugural David. W. Belin Advocacy Award. For additional information, see the Appendix.
- The Association for the Gifted (TAG), a division of the Council for Exceptional Children, is “the leading voice for special and gifted education.” The Center has offered support to TAG by hosting bi-annual meetings and conferences. Individually, Julia and Tracy have served in many organizational positions, given presentations, and written columns for the *TAG Update*. Additionally, Gail Hiles has designed its newsletter. For more information, see the Appendix.

- Julia and Tracy have made numerous presentations on advocacy, and much of their writing has centered on this issue. For example, they co-authored a column on Advocacy for the NAGC's magazine *Parenting for High Potential* from March 2006 to June 2011, and Julia presented on "Advocacy and Educational Strategy" at the 21st World Conference of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children in Odense, Denmark in 2015. For more information, see the Appendix.
- Julia has served on the Advisory Board of The National Center for Research on Gifted Education at The University of Connecticut since 2014.
- Gifted Education Week in Kentucky was first declared in March 1994. In 2015, it was transformed into Gifted Education Month in Kentucky. Each year The Center together with KAGE has celebrated the signing of a proclamation in February at the state capitol. We have also sponsored local celebrations and proclamations.
- Julia has traveled to Washington, D.C., regularly to advocate for the needs for gifted education. This work began when she

Winners included Blane Clark of Brandon Middle School in Brandon, Missouri, who won first place in the slogan category, middle school division with "Giving kids with big dreams the chance to chase them"; and John Starks of Russellville Middle School in Russellville, who won second place in the slogan category, middle school division with "Harry Truman once said, 'C students run the world;' I say G-T kids change the world." The winning entries were incorporated into a public relations campaign. We conducted a similar contest for our 25th anniversary in 2007.

- The Center collaborated on the first NASA webinar series on gifted education on January 9, 2014. Presenters included Julia; Rick Courtright of Duke TIP; and Denise Zigler, gifted educator and Tennessee NASA Solar System Ambassador Master Teacher. Technological support was provided by Dr. Russanne Low of the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies/NASA Earth Science Education and Public Outreach (E/PO) Forum and Zack Ryle of WKU. Tom Nolan, Critical Instrument Operations Engineer, NASA-Jet Propulsion Laboratory, hosted. Participants included NASA science E/PO personnel who are at NASA



Julia (front row), Tracy (third from left, back row), and Lynette Baldwin (fourth from left, back row) at a TAG board meeting in 2017

was the political action network chair for TAG from 1988-93. She was also chair of the Legislative Liaison Task Force for the NAGC from 1998-2007 and has been a member or chair of its Legislative and Advocacy Committee since 2009. Her work has been essential, such as when she spoke with Congressman William H. Natcher, chair of the House Appropriations Committee, to secure the deciding vote to establish the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act in 1988.

- As part of the celebration for our twentieth anniversary in 2002, The Center conducted a public service announcement contest, garnering over 400 entries from 15 states in the categories of radio PSA, slogan, and TV PSA. When college students asked to be involved, a division was created to accommodate them alongside students in grades 4-6, middle school, and high school.

Centers, universities, and other educational organizations located across the country.

- The Center also communicates through TV and radio. We underwrite WKYU, allowing us to broadcast messages about The Center throughout the year, and have had speakers for our Parent Seminars (see chapter three) and workshops appear on some of its talk shows. We use public radio stations across Kentucky and Tennessee to promote our programming. We frequently have staff members appear on WBKO news shows to inform the public about upcoming events and programs, and in July 2017, Tracy appeared on radio shows in Australia to talk about parenting gifted children: Breakfast with Robbie Buck and Talking Lifestyle, both on ABC Radio Sydney.



## CHAPTER FIVE

# Research on Gifted Education

Many gifted students and their families first come to know The Center as a place that runs SCATS, VAMPY, and Super Saturdays — in other words, programming that supplements what goes on during the regular school year. However, a key component of The Center’s work has been to conduct research that has an impact on gifted and talented students year round. In order to meet these goals, we have sought out funding from and cultivated partnerships with a range of nonprofit organizations, government programs, and local businesses. The Center has welcomed these collaborations because they promote the spread of the knowledge gained and benefits uncovered by our initiatives, all the better to serve gifted and talented students. Furthermore, our work in research and curriculum has enabled us to nurture participating educators, thereby creating leaders in the field whose impact remains long after any single project.

### **ENHANCING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR GIFTED MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS PROJECT**

As part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the federal government passed the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act in 1988. The law established the only funding at the national level devoted solely to gifted students, funding intended to “carry out a coordinated program of scientifically based research, demonstration projects, innovative strategies, and similar activities” to support the education of gifted students, with a special

emphasis on “serving students traditionally underrepresented in gifted and talented programs.” The Center has been fortunate to receive four grants from the Javits program to conduct research that has benefited students in Kentucky and throughout the country.



Students work during Project RAP in 2016

We received our first grant in 1990, one of only seven funded nationally that year. The three-year grant of \$722,805 for the Educational Opportunities for Gifted Middle School Students project was done in coordination with the Kentucky Department of Education and seven school districts throughout the state — Bullitt, Fayette, Mason, McCreary, Pendleton, Trigg, and Warren.

The initiative focused on identifying gifted students who might otherwise be overlooked, providing professional learning to teachers to create theme-based units of study across disciplines, piloting these units during the school year and in The Center’s summer programs, and enhancing the teachers’ abilities to provide services to gifted students.

One of the chosen schools was Pendleton Middle School (now called Phillip Sharp Middle School) in Pendleton County, where no gifted coordinator then existed. The district’s superintendent chose social studies teacher Pam Harper to lead the team of five educators, which included teachers of language arts, math, and science plus a librarian. Pam recalls, “One year we used the big idea of ‘power,’ and we integrated that theme throughout our seventh grade curriculum, so with social studies I emphasized the power of personality when I was teaching about historic figures. The students chose historic

figures from Kentucky, and they had to research their people, dress up as them, and do a presentation to the class and then to the whole school representing the people they had chosen. They did quite a bit of research, and we had some really good things come from that.”

Pam appreciates the assistance made available to her and the other teachers: “They provided us with an opportunity to come to WKU and work on our curriculum there, and we had the support of Dr. Roberts and the Kentucky Association for Gifted Education (KAGE) executive director Sheila Cruse Johnston. The teachers from the other districts were also great.” The program resulted in benefits to the students during the school year and beyond. Pam comments, “The greatest thing that came out of the grant was the opportunity to expose some of our children to higher level thinking because we worked to incorporate that into what we were teaching. I was also able to send at least two students to SCATS for three years. These were students who were very bright but whose parents couldn’t have afforded to send them. It had a great impact on them, opening doors and putting them where there were other students who were very intellectually bright and stimulating. One of those students got her doctorate in history from the University of Kentucky and is now teaching for us back in our county. Another one is an elementary teacher here and has one of our model classrooms.”

The grant also had a significant impact on Pam herself: “It made me a better teacher. It forced me out of my comfort zone and made me teach in a different style. It gave me a lot of experience in writing curriculum as well, and, because of that, I was chosen to be the first teacher for gifted students in our district and served students from K-12 for several years. I was also the gifted coordinator, and then I moved on to be an instructional supervisor, so the program

really helped my professional career.” Not only did it assist Pam, but she was then able to assist the cause of gifted education by taking on leadership roles: “The experience allowed me to become more involved in gifted education in KAGE. I became the representative for District 4 for many years, and then I served as president twice and was treasurer for several years. I had the opportunity to go to Washington, D.C., a couple of times and speak with our congressional representatives concerning funding for gifted kids and be an advocate for them. I’m still very active with KAGE and very supportive of everything it does, and I’m a member of the KAGE Foundation Board.”

## RESTRUCTURING PRIMARY EDUCATION PROJECT

Our second Javits grant, for \$744,874, was awarded in 1993 for Restructuring Primary Education: Responding to Kentucky’s Educational Reform. The three-year project compared gifted students at “ungraded” primary schools in Kentucky to those at “graded” schools out of state.

One of the key tenets in the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990 was to establish multi-age, multi-ability, ungraded primary education: rather than placing students in kindergarten or in first, second, or third grade classrooms according to their age, students were grouped and regrouped according to what they were ready to learn. The Restructuring Primary Education project investigated the potential of these ungraded classrooms by providing professional learning to selected primary schools in Kentucky and comparing the progress of these students to similar students who were in schools in other states that did not have ungraded primary



Second graders at Gilmore Lane Elementary School in 2015 during Project RAP



classes or the same professional learning opportunities. Julia saw the Javits project as targeting an appropriate place where professional learning was needed because the ungraded primary component of KERA was “one of the best parts of the act, but one that had the least chance of success” due to the lack of preparation or support for this structure. KERA was passed in the spring of 1991, and the ungraded primary program started in the fall of 1991.

In order to create a reliable data set for the project, three schools in Missouri and one school in Indiana were established as control schools where students identified as high-ability were tested in order to follow their progress over five years. Three schools in Kentucky — Kyrock Elementary in Edmonson County, T. C. Cherry Elementary in Bowling Green, and Warren Elementary in Warren County — were targeted to receive ongoing professional learning, and their high-ability students were also tested and followed. All seven schools had a majority population of low-income students. Center staff members Mary Evans and Laura Freese worked with Julia on the project, and gifted educators Jim Curry and John Samara were brought in as outside consultants to provide teachers with a curriculum unit development model with broad-based themes like “patterns” and “change.” Mary notes, “It was a really great time for the teachers from different schools to get together and plan these units that took kids’ thinking to higher levels.”

Part of the professional learning involved a summer program where the broad thematic units could be piloted in an intensive two-day training. Teachers from the grant-targeted schools as well as from other area schools came together to learn how to integrate language arts, math, science, and social studies into a thematic unit. One summer program used the theme “structures.” Mary recalls, “When the teachers first heard that theme, they said, ‘What do we do with that?’ And then they came back and said, ‘This is amazing — the rich learning we were able to pull out of it.’ One of the things we did as part of the math portion was to study different shapes and what shapes are strong. They built a lot of structures out of toothpicks and popsicle sticks, and, for one of the culminating projects, we made a big, child-sized geodesic dome out of wooden struts.”

The overall goal of the project was to remove the learning ceiling. Mary explains, “We tried to provide really rich literature that the teachers could use, and we worked a lot on how to ask higher level questions, how to give open-ended assignments, and how to let kids explore their interests. We had them develop tiered learning centers where all the kids in the class could go but where there were activities that would really challenge kids who were ready to learn more.”

Such open-ended learning was highly compatible with ungraded education, and the study’s results showed that students at the ungraded schools were indeed able to reach higher levels than the students at the control schools. In order to continue the work of the project, Julia and Roger Pankrantz, associate dean of WKU’s College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, applied for and received a three-year grant from the United States Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement in 1996.

Unfortunately, multi-age primary education in Kentucky was not a success, perhaps because the state had not mandated and funded the professional learning required to make that kind of innovative approach effective. Mary, who went on to be principal at Cumberland Trace Elementary in Warren County, where ungraded primary was used, estimates that after the first strong push from 1990-1995, more and more schools backed away from the concept, and by 2000 few schools were using it.

Although ungraded primary education did not last in Kentucky, the grant still yielded enduring results. Center staff presented their results at conferences, and KAGE published *Developing Units for Primary Students*, a guide to using thematic units written by consultants Samara and Curry. Most importantly, Mary has seen the enduring impact on the teachers involved: “Every one of the teachers without exception would say that it changed the way they taught, that

they saw all kids, but particularly high-ability kids, in a different way, and that it changed them from being really directive, with everything coming from the teacher, to being more of a facilitator looking at kids’ needs and trying to develop curriculum and lessons that addressed those needs. A month ago, I ran into one of the teachers from Kyrock Elementary, and she told me that it was that experience of working with this project that changed her philosophy of teaching and that she looked at students differently afterwards.”

## RAISING ACHIEVEMENT IN MIDDLE SCHOOL SCIENCE PROJECT

In 1998, The Center received the first of five one-year grants from the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education’s Dwight D. Eisenhower Mathematics and Science Program for the Raising Achievement in Middle School Science (RAMSS) project. This initiative aimed to lift the learning ceiling in middle grade science classes and to raise students’ scores on state tests to the level of proficient or distinguished. Each year, new schools were added while participants from previous years joined the leadership team.



Rico Tyler works with teachers in 2016

Physics teacher Rico Tyler was on loan to the Kentucky Department of Education's Region 2 Service Center from Franklin-Simpson High School the first year that he assisted in delivering professional learning to teachers from four area districts. He recalls the aims of RAMSS as straightforward: "We were trying to change practice with teachers and make them comfortable with the content and expectations they were dealing with. Part of that process has to do with the science of it, part has to do with practice, and part has to do with instilling confidence in teachers that they can change their practice and do things in new and different ways. They learn they can take some risks — they can be inventive and creative."

A central part of the project was helping teachers develop mini-units. Rico explains, "The mini-units focused on thinking about instruction not in terms of day-by-day — 'I do this today; I do something else tomorrow' — but in terms of bigger things: units that put ideas together. And the units had the kind of credibility that only a unit written by teachers for teachers can have because they had to pass muster with their peers, not with some third-party external evaluator. They had to show to their peers that this was an example of what they could do, and then they looked at what their peers could do, and then they shared that work. I still see those units being used in the field to this day."

RAMSS also sought to help teachers align the science curriculum with new core content: in 1998, Kentucky had passed educational reform that included the Kentucky Core Content Test as part of the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System. This change altered what math and science teachers were instructing. Much of RAMSS focused on physical science because teachers had less experience with it than with biological sciences.

Rico, who went on to be a master teacher in WKU's SKyTeach program and one of the leaders of our National STEM Scholars Program (see chapter two), also returned each year, and he remembers many of the RAMSS mini-units, which stressed hands-on, active lessons. One example was cooking a comet: "You started with the basic ingredients like dry ice, water, and organic compounds, and cooked a comet as if you were baking one in a kitchen." Another involved answering the question, "What does it mean to be alive?" Rico recalls, "The teacher used a certain type of clear acrylic glue, and she'd set a petri dish on an overhead so you could see the tray

projected, and she put a drop of this glue in water. A little round thing that looked for all the world like a tiny microorganism would actually walk around and divide. She'd ask if the students would call it a living thing, and none of them would if they knew what it was, but if they just watched what it did, they all thought it was living. That started a whole conversation of what makes a living thing alive."

In addition to the longevity of some of the units that teachers created, RAMSS also helped start a focus on middle school science in WKU education programs. For Rico, the need for that focus is clear: "Those years are the linchpin because if students don't develop an interest in science by their middle school years, it's very unlikely it'll happen. There's a lot of study data showing that." RAMSS started "a thread of targeting middle school science. WKU's Science Circle

developed it, the middle school program we currently have at SKyTeach followed, and The Center's National STEM Scholar Program is continuing it. That's a very linear thread that we've had for the last 19 years."

### PROJECT GEMS (GIFTED EDUCATION IN MATH AND SCIENCE)

The Center received our third Javits grant, in the amount of \$2,000,000, in 2008. The five-year Project GEMS (Gifted Education in Math and Science) was done in partnership with Warren County Public Schools in Bowling Green. The Center's grant was one of only seven awarded that year.

Project GEMS aimed to create a model for increasing the number of elementary students, especially underrepresented students, in advanced science and math that other school systems would be able to replicate.

The model would also encourage high-ability students' interest and achievement in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields.

The project had two main goals. The first was to find these students, in part by creating nontraditional measures. Gifted educator Jennifer Sheffield, who joined the project in its last two years, explains that using more diverse identification protocols helped reach important populations that could be overlooked: "There's a tendency to refer kids to gifted programs who are teacher-pleasers or look like the teacher's experiential idea of what gifted is, rather than what the research says it is. We had a chance to involve kids who may or may not have been typically identified, such as twice-exceptional learners, second-language learners, and students from low-income backgrounds."



Project GEMS

JENNIFER SMITH



To improve the identification of gifted students, the project created protocols for teachers to use. Teachers in grades 2-5 for each of the two subject areas, math and science, would meet together and list students in their classes under various categories, such as “Which students demonstrate the most positive affect (enjoyment or excitement) towards math?” and “When confronted with difficulties (i.e., challenging problems), which students are most likely to continue working on the science problem?” Teachers were encouraged to list up to five students for each category and were asked for suggestions about how to improve the identification process.

The second goal was to increase the students’ interest and achievement in science and math. GEMS used problem-based learning (PBL), where students are presented with problems or challenges



Project GEMS in 2009

with no set answer or way to proceed; by investigating and exploring, students find a way to address the problem, thus mastering key concepts. For instance, students might design and build computer-controlled robots or use forensic science to solve a fictional crime.

In order to measure the effects of PBL, six elementary schools in Warren County participated in the project; each of the schools had a large majority of low-income students; several had large minority populations or large populations of students who did not speak English as a first language. Schools were divided into three different treatment groups: two schools received professional learning in gifted education and PBL and had identified students in grades three to six attend a magnet school (GEMS Academy) one day a week; two schools received the same professional learning but students did not attend the Academy; and two schools carried on as usual, serving as a control group so that comparisons could be made. Each year of the program, the assessments in math and science for each group of children were compared to determine the impact of the program.

GEMS Academy was a highlight of the project. Jennifer, who taught there, explains that one of its main strengths was the freedom to structure the day in a way that worked best for the students: “In the mornings, the kids would have a critical-thinking or lateral-thinking creativity challenge, and then we would do content — often math or sometimes science. In the afternoons we would do

Special Interest Labs: from a list of choices we had created, the kids would pick classes that were of high interest to them.” This format allowed the students to approach learning at school from a new perspective: “A lot of gifted kids love to learn and love to think, but they don’t love school. GEMS was a place to be where there wasn’t a lid on learning — you were never told, ‘Don’t read ahead,’ or ‘We’re not working on that right now.’ It was a place where your ability and interests were celebrated. There was also no strict time structure, so if we were working on a project and the kids were into it, then we’d push lunch an hour later — the learning determined the schedule.”

In addition, the Special Interest Labs gave students access to a broad range of challenging and fascinating material. Jennifer says, “We did so much fun stuff! We had things like flight rocketry, an anatomy kit with clay like the kind used in medical schools, a makerspace creativity lab, Lego robotics, and bridge building.” One project continued over multiple years involved students writing their own books, laying them out using an online publishing site, and submitting them to an authors contest sponsored by the Southern Kentucky Book Fest. Jennifer says,



Project GEMS in 2009

“We did classes that were project-based, hands-on, and different from what they could usually do in school — something highly engaging and challenging.”

The teachers at GEMS Academy began by using pre-created curriculum: problem-based science units from Javits projects at The College of William and Mary Center for Gifted Education and problem-based math materials from the Javits project Mentoring Mathematical Minds, or M3, developed at the University of Connecticut. However, the schools were also using some of this curricula; therefore, to better differentiate the results of the academy from those of the schools, in its fifth year GEMS created its own materials.

Together, the features of GEMS Academy created a place where students wanted to be. Jennifer recalls, “The kids would get upset if a snow day fell on their day to come to the Academy. Parents would email or call and leave messages: ‘My kid is crying his eyes out — he’s so upset — he can’t believe they canceled school today.’ They’d want to know if they could come in anyway, or maybe come in on Saturday and make up the day.”

Even as those involved in Projects GEMS could see the participants' enthusiasm, however, we needed data that showed the model worked. In fact, the Project GEMS results showed significant gains in science achievement for students who received PBL instruction, with those attending GEMS Academy showing the greatest gain. The math results were somewhat surprising: all treatment groups, including the control schools, improved significantly over the four years, with those attending GEMS Academy having the most growth. However, we noted that the control schools had participated in other math grants during the time in which professional learning was a strong component. Moreover, we discovered that those teachers' hours in professional learning were as much as three times the hours of our teachers. Therefore, although all students made significant gains in math, ours did so with a much more effective method of professional learning.

Mary Evans, who was at the time principal of Cumberland Trace Elementary, one of the schools involved in the grant, notes that "Cumberland Trace scores on the state assessment improved during the years of Project GEMS. The school's overall Academic Index in 2009 was 101 out of a possible 140 and grew to 110 by 2011. In 2012, when the test was changed and scores decreased across the state, Cumberland Trace's score of 69 ranked it in the 88th percentile in the state, and it was the top-performing school in the district. In 2013, 81% of its fourth graders scored proficient or distinguished in science, the highest in the district (fourth grade is the only grade where science is tested in elementary school). The school's score in mathematics was second in the district with 56% of third through sixth graders scoring proficient or distinguished."

Mary also saw teacher confidence increase: "Shortly after the new Common Core Standards were rolled out, we were examining them closely at a faculty meeting. Teachers said, 'We've been teaching these for two years. Our students can do this — they're already doing this!' The first couple of math trainings teachers had done had been very challenging because they were requiring students to think and solve problems at much higher levels and requiring teachers to develop new ways of facilitating mathematical learning. However, the teachers had gained experience in guiding students to build conceptual understandings as opposed to teaching them a series of steps to follow to solve math problems, and their students scored very well in mathematics during the first cycle of the state tests that assessed the new standards."

The benefits of the program went beyond student test achievement. For instance, gifted students, accustomed to mastering material easily, were given the opportunity to develop the ability to keep pushing even when learning was harder. Lorie Richey, who has served as the gifted and talented supervisor for Warren County since 2010, says, "One of the main positives that came out of GEMS was teachers were able to see the high standards that gifted kids could work to — it helped to see hard data showing the different kinds of learning that these kids are able to handle."

Jennifer notes that students also received tremendous social benefits: "The GEMS Academy kids got to be with others who were like-minded and of same ability. Some of these kids at their schools were very isolated — they had different interests from the others in

their class — they didn't always feel like they were okay and normal. Then they came to GEMS, and the other kids were wired more like they were. We gave kids the ability to socialize and spend the day with peers who got super excited about dinosaurs or wanted to discuss current events and not feel ashamed about being intense or having high interests in things. One parent emailed me to say that her son told her, 'I found my tribe — I finally found some other kids where I fit in.'"

The project has had long-term success as well. A main goal for any grant is replication, and Project GEMS served as inspiration for Celtic Academy in the Glasgow Independent School District. Moreover, Warren County gifted fifth and sixth graders are still benefitting — Project GEMS morphed into 212<sup>o</sup> Academy, which currently serves all the county's elementary schools.

Lorie believes the effectiveness of GEMS came in part from The Center: "It truly was the support that Dr. Roberts and The Center gave to Warren County that kept it sustainable for five years. They kept the professional learning and the engagement of our teachers at a high level, and they made sure the board and I were informed. You could not ask for a better partner." Federal funding for the grant stopped in the third year of the five-year project, but Julia cobbled together monies from various sources to continue professional learning and GEMS Academy for two more years.

Above all, those involved in the project were rewarded by the responses of the students. According to Jennifer, "We'd hear students say all the time, 'I wish school was always like this — why can't this be my real school, or my everyday school?' You knew that they really loved to come."

## **i<sup>4</sup>/INNOVATE KENTUCKY**

In 2011, the James Graham Brown Foundation awarded a \$500,000 challenge grant to The Center, The Gatton Academy, and the WKU Honors College for the i<sup>4</sup> Initiative, later named Innovate Kentucky, to promote a culture of innovation through a series of outreach and programming opportunities that instilled a sense of the importance of STEM education. Innovate Kentucky focused on encouraging children, young people, and adults to combine their innovative ideas with an entrepreneurial spirit. WKU was one of four higher education institutions to receive a grant in the foundation's first-ever Higher Education Competitive Grant Program. The Center met the challenge grant by raising a matching \$500,000 from individuals, organizations, and foundations.

In addition to a website, podcasts, and various social media accounts, Innovate Kentucky sponsored several VAMPY classes from 2012-2016, co-sponsored two events related to girls and STEM in October 2012, partnered with the Mary Wood Weldon Memorial Library in Glasgow for Engineering Tomorrow in 2013, created a Winter Term course for students from The Gatton Academy and the WKU Honors College on Capturing the Innovative Spirit in 2013 and 2014, and helped start Innoplexx, the WKU Student Incubator in 2013. The initiative also generated two long-term educational projects, Little Learners, Big Ideas and IdeaFestival Bowling Green (see chapter one). For more information, see the Appendix.





## NAZI GERMANY AND THE HOLOCAUST MURALS EXHIBIT



Ron Skillern

Since 1992, Ron Skillern has taught the VAMPY course Nazi Germany and the Holocaust. One of the highlights of the class has been the creation of a mural using images and text to focus on certain aspects of what the students have learned. Each year the students decide what to include and how to execute their ideas. Although a few were lost in storm

damage to Bowling Green High School and one disappeared, 20 murals now stand as a testament to decades of thoughtful study of this tragic time period.

In 2015, a grant from the Jewish Heritage Fund for Excellence enabled the murals to be a valuable learning tool not only for VAMPY students but for others as well. In October and November of that year, all eighteen of the murals then in existence, each measuring 8.5 or 9.5 feet wide and 83.5 inches tall, were displayed at WKU's Kentucky Museum in newly-constructed frames that allowed them to travel safely. Ten of the murals were then displayed in early 2016 at the Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts in Louisville. For both exhibits, the murals were used to spark discussions about the Holocaust.

Jeff Jamner, Senior Director of Education and Community Arts at the Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts, worked with

the traveling exhibit. His first contact with the murals produced a profound reaction: "Ron arranged for me to see all of them, which he had on display around a long, curving hallway. My parents are Holocaust survivors, and so, when I encountered the murals, I was spontaneously pointing to things, and out came family stories. Ron said to me, 'You really should think about using these murals as a way in to sharing these stories.'"

Jeff works with Bearing Witness, an arts-integrated approach to studying the literature and the history of the Holocaust, and "the next school that invited me to come talk, I brought images of five of the murals with me. I used them to engage the students, to connect with the history through personal stories of my mother and father. Fortunately, the murals cover such broad avenues to look at the Holocaust. One mural is specific to Kristallnacht. Another is about Jewish resistance. Another is a depiction of Auschwitz in a panoramic way. The texts that they use are also really varied, so I'm able, with a handful of the murals, to do either a very rich introduction or a deepening of their understanding and engagement with this history."

Jeff's approach is to use mural images to spark discovery in secondary students: "It's about engaging with the murals — not just looking at them, but really studying them and spending time with them. It becomes a way of connecting emotionally into this history in a safe way. There is one mural that shows a group of prisoners with their heads shaved. I ask, 'What's the first thing you notice about these prisoners?' Soon somebody says, 'They have no hair,' and I say, 'Yes, exactly. Can you tell which ones are men and women?'



And they can't. I then tell them, "Think about your own hair and the amount of choice that you have made with it. Does your hair say you want to fit in? You want to stand out? Or "Leave me alone?" They all kind of chuckle, but I ask them to look around the room at each other's hair, and then I say, "That's one of the first levels of individuality and humanity that prisoners were stripped of." They get that idea because it's personal — they've been thinking about their own hair and how it's part of who they are.

"Then I tell them the story that my mother, at nine years old and a new prisoner in Auschwitz, appealed to a Nazi soldier to let her keep her hair, and she found the humanity inside him: he let her be different, and he let her keep her hair. Right there, the story of the Holocaust becomes more complex because it's not just one side good, the other side evil, one side victim — my mother stood up for herself, and there was a moment of humanity in the soldier, and that's what I want to start to help them understand. And it's also personal because standing right in front of them is the son of that nine-year-old telling them this story."

In 2017-18, supported by a second grant of \$73,700 from the Jewish Heritage Fund of Excellence and through a partnership between The Center and the Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts, the murals were displayed again in Bowling Green, Louisville, and Danville. In addition, the organizations worked with Kentucky Educational Television to create a documentary on KET and online resources for PBS Online Media, making the lessons of the murals available to students throughout the country and the world. In September of 2017, an exhibit of the murals and a reception were held at the Jewish Community Center in Louisville; many alumni of Ron's class attended.

Jeff notes, "It is particularly powerful for students to view the artistic creations of other students. There's something about the fact that they're looking at something that kids in grades 7-10 made that brings another layer of relevancy to them. They can tell that for the students who made these murals, this history matters to them, and so that becomes a model for the students who are now encountering these murals."

### PROJECT RAP (REACHING ACADEMIC POTENTIAL)

In 2016, The Center received our fourth Javits grant, partnering with the Kentucky Department of Education, Jefferson County Public Schools, and the University of Louisville to create Project RAP (Reaching Academic Potential). The \$360,000 grant was one of 11 grants awarded that year.

The project had two main goals. The first was to identify and serve underrepresented populations of gifted students — some minority students, twice-exceptional students, English Language Learners, and students from poverty. The second was to disseminate information about the Excellence Gap so that educators and policy makers could work to reduce it; the Excellence Gap is the gap at the advanced level of student achievement: lower socioeconomic groups, English language learners, and African-American and Hispanic students are underrepresented at the highest levels of academic achievement.

Ten elementary schools participated; five served as control schools. The other five incorporated the Young Scholars Model in order to identify and serve more high-ability, underrepresented primary children. Primary teachers were trained to use Open Response lessons that encouraged creative and critical thinking for identification in addition to more traditional testing. The Gifted Behaviors

Response Scale (GBRS) helped pinpoint characteristics. Schools cluster grouped children, putting all students from one grade who scored high on GRBS into one class. Each cluster teacher received intense professional learning; principals, counselors, and parents were trained as well. Each school had a lead teacher whose coursework for a gifted and talented endorsement was paid through the grant. Mary Evans, Tracy, and Julia provided the professional learning. The students also

attended a two-week summer camp, once again mirroring the Young Scholars Model.

Project RAP also worked to raise awareness about the Excellence Gap: so far, Center staff have created print materials, as well as "Give Excellence a Chance," the first in a series of three videos. These resources have been distributed widely throughout the state.

LaTonya Frazier-Goatley, Advance Program Coordinator of Jefferson County Schools, can already see positive outcomes: "We've actually been able to change the trajectory of the schools we are working with. A lot of these schools were focused on intervention work, not necessarily on gifted and talented students, and they have a lot of other concerns that they work with as well, but now they are actually speaking 'gifted' — they are looking at those kids and making a lot of modifications, differentiation plans, and lessons based off of some of the professional learning experiences they've had with The Center." She has directly observed teachers making changes: "They've begun to implement a lot of these ideas, so you can see it in the classrooms in terms of what they expect from their students.



VAMPY instructor Jonathan Vaughn and alum Andi Dahmer at the Kentucky Museum mural exhibit in 2016



A lot of them are also taking on leadership roles within the school building, wanting to explain the ideas in their professional learning communities. They say, ‘Let’s not just look at it from this angle — let’s look at it from the enrichment angle as well.’”

Tracy comments, “I’ve loved tailoring this professional learning for the teachers’ exact needs: it’s not ‘We want differentiation for everybody,’ but something more specific like, ‘We’re really having difficulty bumping up our lessons in centers — what can we do to make a difference with that?’ So Mary and I simulated seven centers, which are learning experience stations where teachers can adapt activities according to the child’s ability or readiness level. It is so exciting to watch the teachers’ growth because they’re fine-tuning their skills — it’s not the basics — it’s ‘this is how far we are, and now what can we do?’ It’s like taking them from a proficient to a distinguished level, and that takes very specific advice and feedback. It’s been thrilling to watch some of those teachers shine.”

Tracy has also enjoyed observing teachers watch their students excel: “I’ve loved going into classes and doing response lessons with the kids and watching them come up with these creative and incredible ideas. I make eye contact with the teacher who is thinking, ‘What did my student just say? I haven’t seen anything like that from him!’ It’s fun to see the wider lens that teachers and principals have now that we’ve worked with them to be able to spot that talent that doesn’t look like typical talent.”

LaTonya has seen the impact on the students as well: “You can see that the kids are making progress. A lot of them who went to the summer camp the first year talked it up for the kids to come the next year. During the summer they enjoyed working with the Project M2 mathematics activity. A lot of them spoke to their parents about that activity using vocabulary above their grade level.”

As with The Center’s other Javits-funded projects, the goal is that the work done in Project RAP will be replicated in other school districts and that it will have a long-lasting effect on the Jefferson County schools. LaTonya believes it will: “We are very hopeful that the district keeps this program because cluster grouping is a cost-effective way to work with and nurture gifted students. It’s a very wrap-around type program where not only are we working with the schools, but we’re also working with parents, so, for example, we’ve instilled the value of family night, and we’re hopeful that they continue that. We also have counseling services we’ve put in place for the social-emotional piece, so we’re also hoping counselors will continue to work with gifted students.” Already three schools have gone to total school cluster grouping.

The involvement of multiple organizations in this project demonstrates the conviction among many educators that expanding



Mary Evans at Project RAP summer camp in 2016

access to gifted education is crucial. As Tracy says, “Project RAP is all about potential talent — noticing it and developing it.”

### IN ADDITION ...

Other notable work in research by The Center includes the following:

- In 2013 and again in 2015, Julia and colleagues undertook a survey of services offered state by state to twice-exceptional students. Their work resulted in articles in *Gifted Child Today* and *Gifted and Talented International* and presentations at the national and international level. For more information, see the Appendix.
- For a forthcoming study on where young people get their interest in science, Julia and Neilson Pereira, a psychologist formerly at WKU and currently at Purdue University, interviewed students at The Gatton Academy about their experiences in early childhood, elementary school, and middle school. Julia, Neilson, and Fabio Andres Parra of Purdue University presented their work at the 2017 National Association for Gifted Children conference. They recommended several actions for educators and parents including that “Parental commitment and support in early years is essential to help students address their curiosity and need for understanding natural phenomena.”
- Project GEMS and Project RAP have resulted in a large number of conference presentations; Project GEMS also produced a number of master theses/specialist projects, a dissertation, and an article in *The Journal of Advanced Academics*. For more information, see the Appendix.

## CHAPTER SIX

# An International Center for Gifted Studies

Ever since we offered our first foreign language courses at the Summer Camp for Academically Talented Middle School Students (SCATS) and the Summer Program for Verbally and Mathematically Precocious Youth (VAMPY) and sponsored our first international travel/study tour, The Center has recognized the value of looking beyond the United States. Whether offering students the chance to learn about a foreign culture, welcoming citizens of other countries to our programs, or forging relationships with scholars around the globe, The Center has sought to make connections between gifted students and their advocates no matter where they call home.

### LANGUAGE STUDY IN STUDENT PROGRAMMING

Language classes have typically been a feature of SCATS, VAMPY, and Super Saturdays. Over the years, students have explored Spanish, German, Russian, Arabic, Chinese, and Latin.

Often the learning extends beyond the summer into a lifetime influence. Sarah Thomas (V 2013-14) is a student at the University of Alabama. She took Chinese with Winny Lin during her first summer at VAMPY between eighth and ninth grade, and decided as a first-year college student to minor in Chinese. She says that taking Chinese at VAMPY “let me be confident enough to take Chinese 101. It’s a scary language to sign up for your first year at college, but I’d already had my foot in the door — I knew the alphabet and the basic way the structure worked, so it let me make the jump.” Sarah took two semesters of introductory Chinese in her first year of college and will be taking an intermediate class as well as an



Arabic students on a field trip to Nashville during VAMPY 2017

upper-level Chinese literature class in her sophomore year. She plans to use her major in microbiology to go to graduate school for orthotics and prosthetics, and she is contemplating the possibility of someday going to poorer regions of China where her language skills would assist her in helping those needing braces and prosthetic limbs.

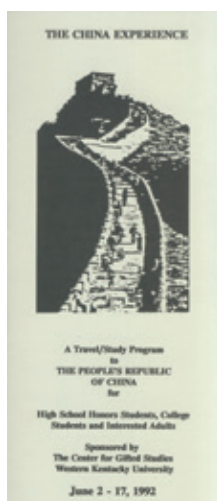
Sara Rastoder (SS; V 2013-14; Coun) has also found her course of study in college based on a VAMPY class. She studied Arabic with Lhousseine

Guerwane in 2014: “It was a small class — there were five of us. It was really cool because it was more than just going over language in a textbook. We went to a couple of mosques and got into cultural immersion.” As for her teacher, “He was one of the coolest I’ve ever had. Since he was from a part of the Arabic-speaking world, he had a lot of personal experience.” Sara, who is at the University of Kentucky, is planning on a double major in Arabic and International Studies, with a minor in Spanish. In her sophomore year she will be taking Arabic 101 and a course on Islamic civilization. After college, she hopes to go to graduate school and enter into the Foreign Service.

### TRAVEL/STUDY TOURS

Julia and Dick Roberts’ first international trip for WKU came in 1980 when they led a group of teachers on a four-week visit to England and Scotland for the Department of Teacher Education — Dick notes the date is easy to remember because “our oldest daughter had her tenth birthday in Hyde Park.” On this trip, participants stayed with local families rather than in hotels.





The Center's travel/study program has its roots in that 1980 excursion: not only has the United Kingdom been the most frequent destination, with 19 trips taken, but Raymond Cravens and Ralph Sutton, who planned that trip, still design many of the trips for The Center. Moreover, Julia and Dick's daughters — and later their granddaughters — have frequently accompanied the travelers.

In 1987, we created The Center's summer travel program: two- or two-and-a-half-week trips led by Julia and Dick to Europe for high school honors students (and eighth graders, beginning in 1994) taken before or after our summer programming had finished. These trips included the British Experience (England, Wales, and Scotland), the European Experience (Belgium, Germany, France, Switzerland and the Netherlands), and the Italian Experience (Florence, Rome, Pompeii, and Venice).

Besides Europe, there were summer trips to Russia in 1994-6 as part of a formal Russian/American educational partnership and summer trips to China in 1992 and 1993. These latter trips lasted 15 day and were made possible by Dr. Jianling Wang of WKU's Department of Education; Julia took a small group the first year, and Dick followed with a group the next year. The trips were different from The Center's others because both times, Dick explains, they traveled "under the auspices of the government." Stops included The Forbidden City and Tianaman Square in Beijing, the Terracotta Warriors in Xi'an, the river city Guilin, the commercial and industrial city of Guangzhou, and the harbor of Hong Kong.

Because school districts moved up their August start dates, making a late summer trip no longer possible, the last long summer trip was in 2003. However, in 1992, we had added a one-week trip during spring break, and these trips are still going strong, with interested adults (often family members of traveling students) also

joining the trips. The most common destinations in spring have been London and Paris, with Italy added into the rotation in 2011. A 2012 trip to England was pushed to the end of May to coincide with Queen Elizabeth II's Jubilee celebration, and a 2013 trip to France and a 2015 trip to England also began in late May.

Dick acknowledges that some people might think going to the same destinations and seeing the same major landmarks each time might "get old," but the point for him is that for the young people, "this is the first time they've been, so they need to see the 'biggies' — they need to experience them." He also notes that in addition to well-known places like the



Julia and Dick with participants on a trip to Belgium and The Netherlands in 2015

British Museum, the Louvre, and the Roman Coliseum, he and Julia also include less obvious sights that they feel are essential. For instance, "when we go to France, Normandy is a must, because we need to help them understand that place as significant."

In 2011, we added another one-week trip during fall break; these excursions serve as a complement to the spring break destinations and have included trips to Italy, Scotland, Germany and Austria, Spain, Belgium and The Netherlands, Ireland, and Greece.

Why is international travel one of the opportunities offered by The Center? Explains Julia, "It provides wonderful learning about

history, culture, and the arts in various locations around the world. Travel with The Center is the first global experience many young people have, and it often builds confidence for further travel to other countries.”

Dick adds, “It helps them realize that the United States is not the whole world. Even in England, the values of the English are very different — for instance, their newspapers are scathing with regard to American politics.”

Many students take multiple trips. Sara Summers went to Paris in 2009, London in 2010, Italy in 2011, and Belgium and the Netherlands in 2015. Her parents and her brother have also traveled with The Center. Sara says, “Educationally, I probably learned just as much, if not more, on one of these trips than I did in a semester-long class. You are immersed in the history and culture, and you get to see it with your own eyes. Walking through the Sistine Chapel is a remarkable experience that cannot compare to a textbook.”

Dick enjoys getting to see young people have their first encounters with history that adults sometimes take for granted: “I remember one time in Paris we were walking from the Eiffel Tower to Les Invalides, and a girl came running up behind me asking where we were going. I told her, ‘We’re going to the place where Napoleon is buried,’ and she said, ‘Oh, okay.’ I asked her, ‘Do you know who Napoleon was?’ She answered, ‘I don’t have any idea. But is it a neat place?’ And I said, ‘It really is,’ and she zipped off, happy.” He observes, “Everyone has something that they really zone in on. For some kids it’s art. For some kids it’s a church service. For some kids it’s a particular museum that they like. You get different levels of appreciation, so that’s what makes it enjoyable.”

The learning is not only about the particular places, however — it is also about life experience. Sara explains, “I gained confidence and independence because when you travel by yourself at a young age, you are put in positions that you aren’t normally in, whether it be stress, homesickness, or managing your Euros for the week, and, as a result, you are forced to react to those situations and grow.” In fact, one of Sara’s more vivid memories is from her first trip to Paris when she was 15, the first time she ever flew overseas. Her luggage was lost for the first three days, and, unfortunately, “I had ignored Dr. Roberts’ advice on packing an extra pair of clothes in my carry-on because I thought, ‘What are the chances of that happening to me?’ But the group I went with was so kind and helpful. People offered to lend me extra clothes and toiletries they had packed. Losing my luggage helped me to create bonds with people I had never met before — in fact, I still travel abroad with a few of the people from that trip.”

This kind of bonding is a result of the way the trip is set up, according to Dick: “One of the advantages we have is that we don’t take school groups; we take kids. Consequently, we don’t inherit cliques and clans, and so all the people who travel get to know each other — nobody is an outsider.”

With Julia and Dick leading the trips, Sara says, “You learn so much, and you have fun while doing it. Both Drs. Roberts dedicate themselves to making the best trip and experience for each of the participants.” Thus it is not just the destinations but the people involved — the trip leaders and the fellow travelers — that makes a Center trip truly special, no matter the destination.



Julia, Leslie Graves, Dixie Mahurin, Ken McClusky, Umit Davasligil, Klaus Ernst, Leonie Kronberg, Tracy Harkins, and Gary Ransdell at the Baker Museum in Bowling Green in 2012 in preparation for the 2013 WCGTC world conference in Louisville



Avebury, England, provides a good illustration of what a Center trip is like. Similar to Stonehenge in age but less well-known, Avebury contains three stone circles, one inside the other, and the outer circle is the largest in Britain. Although some of the stones no longer remain, it encompasses 23 acres and has a 45-foot-deep ditch surrounding it. Dick likes to ask students about the ditch: “You take a kid for a moment and say, ‘Just think about this. Look at this. Can you imagine digging that ditch?’ And he might say, ‘That’d take a big backhoe,’ so I answer, ‘It was 300 years ago. They dug it by hand. Look how big it is.’ And then the young man looks amazed. For me it’s the a-ha moments like that one that make traveling worthwhile.”

## RUSSIAN EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

The Center had a formal association with Russia from 1993–96 when we established a Russian/American educational partnership through United States Information Agency grants and the Citizen Exchange Council. For each of those three years, ten Russian students came to VAMPY, and we sent ten students to Rostov-on-Don in Russia.

Kristina Talbert-Slagle (S 1990, V 1991-4) was one of the students who went to Russia on a six-week trip in 1995 during the second year of the program: “I had a really neat Russian roommate at VAMPY, and then the next summer when there was an opportunity to go to Russia, I took it. The trip was an amazing, eye-opening experience.”

Despite it being over twenty years ago, Kristina easily recalls the trip: “One of the things that was done really well was exposing us to so many different aspects of what Russia is. We went to the town of Kizhi where they had a beautiful church made out of interlocking pieces of wood, without any nails. We saw icons in several different places that were sacred Russian Orthodox sites. We experienced the White Nights in St. Petersburg and went to the Catherine Palace, a great summer hall that’s a beautiful example of the European architecture that Peter the Great championed. We travelled for miles and miles down the Neva and Don Rivers, and there were many times when we would go into a lock, and we could watch them raise or lower the level of the water so that we could transition onto the next phase of the journey. There was also this rich history that all felt very alive, like a street in St. Petersburg where we could see signs from when the city was under siege that said to not stand on that side of the street because you might get hit by shelling. We also saw Mother Russia, a huge, amazing statue of this very powerful woman holding a sword and leading a charge. It’s a memorial to World War II, a place where many of the fallen soldiers were buried.”

The experience was also about connecting with the people: “My dad, John Talbert, came on the trip too, as a chaperone, and he and I stayed with a host family in Rostov. The mother was a teacher. The father didn’t speak English, but she did, so she would translate for us, and the father knew a lot of Russian history. My father was also a history buff, so we talked a lot about World War II. That was a special moment for all of us to bond over that mutual understanding and interest. In general, the people were so warm and welcoming. The Russian kids that we met were really good at chess

and very musical — a lot of them played musical instruments and sang beautifully. There were a lot of people who were multilingual and had such diverse areas of real capability. Overall, it was an incredibly enriching experience for a girl from a little Kentucky town.”

Kristina, now a senior scientific officer at the Global Health Leadership Institute, an assistant professor of medicine at the Yale School of Medicine, and a lecturer in the Yale School of Public Health, can also draw a clear line from that trip to her current work: “On that trip I didn’t speak Russian, but I really wanted to learn it. When I went to college, I studied biology and the molecular sciences, which I’d always been interested in, but I also majored in Russian so that

I could learn the language and go back. In my junior year, I lived in St. Petersburg for a semester with a host family and studied at St. Petersburg State University. The ruble had just collapsed, and while I was there, I started to have this realization that your health is in many ways a product of where you live. When I came back from Russia, I built bridges between my interests — between things that were happening at the molecular level, the individual level, and the social and political level. I realized that that is what global health is and realized I wanted to study it.”

Her experiences exemplify what The Center hopes to do: provide gifted young people with opportunities to challenge themselves, broaden their views, and find their passions.

## AN INTERNATIONAL FRIEND OF THE CENTER: MORTON HOLBROOK

One friend of The Center who has enhanced our international reach is Morton Holbrook, whose three children — Allen (V 1996-97), Stephen (V 1999-2001), and Kristen (S 2002-03; V 2004-05) — attended our programming. Morton, a Kentucky native from Owensboro, was a career United States diplomat and spent time in, among other places, China, The Philippines, and France.

In the early 2000s, he hosted The Center’s travel/study tour group at a beautiful chateau in the 16th arrondissement of Paris



VAMPY student Kristina Talbert-Slagle with her host brother in Rostov-on-Don, Russia in 1995

where the United States Mission to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is housed. Over lunch, he and United States Ambassador Connie Morella, an eight-time member of Congress who was appointed ambassador to OECD by President George W. Bush, spoke to the group about international careers.

Julia remembers, “Morton treated the students royally. One student asked him, ‘If I wanted to pursue a career in diplomatic work, what should I study?’ and he answered, ‘Be a good communicator. Write well and speak well.’”

The conversation also covered the work of the OECD, which is similar to a government-sponsored think tank. Its mission is to “promote policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world.” One of its accomplishments is to write an annual report about education around the world, ranking the educational systems of many countries. Julia recalls that during the meeting, Morton was “talking about data from that year’s report, and he asked the students who they thought would be first in education among the countries in that assessment, and very quickly they raised their hands and said of course the United States, which was not the case. It was a pretty big shock to them.”

Morton also stayed involved with The Center by speaking to a VAMPY class in the early 2000s about China, Mao, and other important Chinese figures. He feels it is important to expose gifted and talented youth to other countries: “I would say it’s certainly very valuable both in terms of exposing them to cultures and exposing them to possible career alternatives that have an international dimension — not just diplomacy but international business and other international occupations such as at international NGOs. It certainly broadens their horizons in every way.” He also notes that for his children, who grew up abroad, VAMPY provided them with the opportunity to learn about the United States: “I valued The Center for giving them an introduction to American reality, Kentucky reality.”

## THE SHANGHAI CONNECTION

On the recommendation of a friend, Elly Tanadi enrolled her oldest son, Jasen Tjahjadi (V 2005-08), in VAMPY in 2005. Unlike the other campers, however, Jasen had to travel 10,000 miles to get to the WKU campus because he lived in Shanghai, where his family had moved from Indiana in 2002. Jasen’s younger brother, Nathan (V 2009-11), later attended VAMPY as well. Students have arrived at SCATS and VAMPY from all over the world, but Shanghai, China, has produced the highest number of foreign campers.

Elly did not stop with her sons: she encouraged more students in Shanghai to attend the camp, establishing The Center’s “Shanghai Connection.” She explains, “Both Jasen and Nathan cherished their VAMPY experience. I started introducing the program to my friends, and they were interested, too. VAMPY provides a wonderful opportunity for those who would like to have a USA experience with traditional values. They learn so much, and it sets them up for success for the following school year. I formed a group of as many as 30 students attending VAMPY from Shanghai.”

Beyond the academic advantages, Elly saw many benefits to her sons’ time at VAMPY: “Both Jasen and Nathan learned how to live independently and take care of themselves, and they learned to be

more caring and considerate for others. They also had a lot of opportunities to share their own unique culture with their peers. They both participated in the talent show to showcase some Chinese culture.” In fact, as with all international campers, the sharing of culture occurred throughout camp, allowing American students to broaden their perspective on the world and proving that the Shanghai Connection benefitted both sides.



Sam Evans, Dean of the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, and Julia meet with Dr. Mohammad Rawas and another visitor from Saudi Arabia in 2012

## THE WORLD COUNCIL FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED CHILDREN

Part of The Center’s commitment to an international presence manifests in our support for and work with The World Council for Gifted and Talented Children, an international organization devoted to advocating for and supporting gifted and talented youth. Since 1975, the World Council has promoted the latest scholarship from around the globe by bringing scholars and experts together at its biennial conference, sponsoring awards for work in gifted education, publishing its journal and newsletter, and providing an online forum and job postings.

Julia has been active with the World Council since first attending its biennial conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, in 1987. She was an elected delegate from 2005-09, has served on its executive committee since 2009, and was elected its president starting in 2017. Tracy has also worked regularly with the Council, including making presentations at its biennial conferences.

Most significantly, in 2011, through a generous gift from Pete and Dixie Mahurin, the World Council moved its headquarters to The Center. The gift also provides the funding for its executive administrator, a position filled by Tracy Harkins from June 2011 to April 2015 and Tyler Clark (Gatt 2008) since May 2015. Pete, in explaining his family’s gift, says, “Housing the World Council at The Center adds attention and focus, and it is a center point to strengthen the overall program.” Leonie Kronborg, a gifted educator



in Australia and current vice-president of the World Council, comments, “We are extremely grateful to have such a constructive partnership between The Center with its wonderful contributions to gifted education and to be able to have our highly able World Council Headquarters maintained in such an effective manner on an ongoing and online basis in such a vital location.”

The World Council headquarters at The Center also hosted the 2013 Biennial World Conference in Louisville. The theme of the conference was “Celebrating Giftedness and Creativity.” The 550 participants listened to 10 keynote speeches, attended many presentations, viewed exhibits, connected with colleagues, and enjoyed Kentucky culture. The 2019 conference, also hosted by the World Council headquarters at The Center, will take place in Nashville, Tennessee.

Leonie fondly remembers visiting WKU for an annual Executive Committee meeting in 2012 to plan for the Louisville conference: “We had a delightful dinner at the Downing Museum in the Baker Arboretum where we met with Dixie and Pete Mahurin, who gave the generous gift that made the World Council Headquarters at WKU possible, and other members of The Center Advisory Board and the university.” She also appreciates the “conscientious work done behind the scenes” by The Center to hold the conference.

With the agreement between The Center and the World Council renewed in 2016 for another five years, this international collaboration should continue long into the future.

## SAUDI ARABIA VISITS

In October 2012, January 2013, and August 2017, The Center hosted delegations of educators from Saudi Arabia who came to WKU to learn about our programs in gifted education. Dr. Mohammad Rawas, director of the Department of Gifted and Talented for the Makkah Educational Zone in Saudi Arabia, says the ministry was attracted to The Center by our published research and “the unique support Julia Roberts has provided to the field.” The Saudi educators sought to familiarize themselves with The Center’s work as they prepared to construct centers of gifted education.

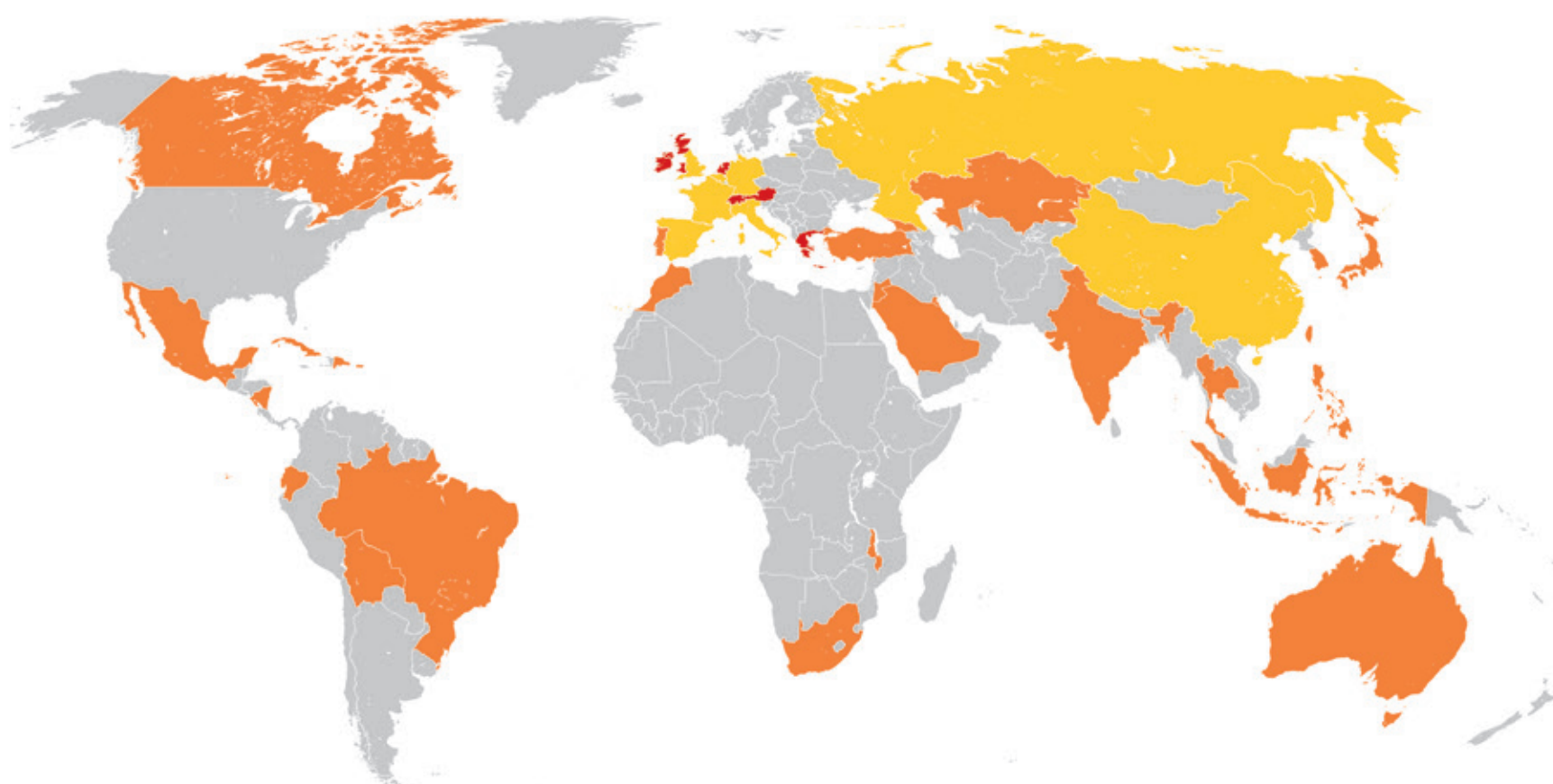
Accompanied by a translator from WKU, a total of 35 educators have visited and met with staff of The Center, The Gatton Academy, the GEMS Academy (see chapter five), WKU’s SKyTeach, and Cox’s Creek Elementary School in Nelson County. They also explored Mammoth Cave, Alltech, the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, and the U.S. Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville, Alabama. The 2012 and 2013 delegates enjoyed a dinner hosted by WKU president Gary Ransdell and his wife, Julie, with over 80 WKU Saudi students and staff from The Gatton Academy, the WKU International Student Office, and WKU’s English as a Second Language International.

Dr. Rawas comments that the visit to The Center “contributed to the development of a revised vision for the talented center in Makkah, Saudi Arabia.” Based on what the delegates learned, they plan to “schedule workshops and programs for teachers throughout the school year, translate a collection of books on differentiation into Arabic, and accelerate the opening of the talented school in the region, which is based on ... the principle of differentiation.” He also notes, “One aspect that cannot be forgotten during our visit to The Center is the good management of the team, the positive spirit they have, and their belief in the talented idea.”

## IN ADDITION ...

Other notable international work by The Center includes the following:

- Participants in The Center’s programs have come from 38 different countries and six continents. [See map]
- Julia and Tracy are both members of the European Council for High Ability (ECHA) which was founded in 1988 and aims to “act as a communications network to promote the exchange of information among people interested in high ability – educators, researchers, psychologists, parents, and the highly able themselves.” In addition, Julia, Tracy, and staff member Tyler Clark have made presentations at its international conferences.
- The Center has cooperated with organizations in Mexico several times, including in 2000 when Julia taught courses for the gifted endorsement at Tecnológico de Monterrey in Mexico City; her students came to SCATS the next year for their practicum experience. Julia also spoke at the Second International Conference on Giftedness in Mexico, held in Mexico City in 2017.
- As part of People to People International, in December 2005, Julia, Tracy, and Dick traveled to China where Julia served as the invited leader of and Tracy and Dick participated in a U.S.-China Joint Education Conference. At the gifted delegate meeting, Julia talked about the social-emotional needs of gifted children, and Tracy discussed the benefits of acceleration. Chinese delegates were presented with copies of *Methods and Materials for Teaching the Gifted* with a chapter written by Dick and Julia and copies of the 2004 report on acceleration by The Acceleration Institute, *A Nation Deceived*.
- Julia and Tracy have made a number of presentations at international conferences. In 2017, Tracy was an invited keynote speaker at the Talent Education Conference in Portorož, Slovenia, organized by MIB, International Center for Education and University of Primorska, the Faculty of Education (Slovenia); she spoke on differentiation. For more information, see the Appendix.
- Julia and Tracy have written for several international publications, such as *Gifted and Talented International* and *International Journal for Talent Development and Creativity*. For more information, see the Appendix.
- Four books written or edited by The Center’s staff and originally published by Prufrock Press have been translated into Arabic since 2011. For more information, see the Appendix.
- Starting in 2017, a grant of \$33,500 from Qatar Foundation International (QFI) has made it possible for ten students to study Arabic at VAMPY, which has offered a course in Arabic since 2013. QFI is a member of the Qatar Foundation which is funded by the Qatari government. It sponsors programs that promote Arabic education and culture in the United States. VAMPY Arabic teacher Lhousseine Guerwane assisted in applying for the grant.



## PARTICIPANTS AND TRAVEL/STUDY TOURS WORLD MAP

**Places from which we have had participants**

---

- |                    |                      |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| Australia          | Mexico               |
| Bolivia            | Morocco              |
| Brazil             | Nicaragua            |
| Canada             | Philippines          |
| Cuba               | Portugal             |
| Dominican Republic | Puerto Rico          |
| Ecuador            | Saudi Arabia         |
| Georgia            | Saipan               |
| India              | Singapore            |
| Indonesia          | South Africa         |
| Japan              | South Korea          |
| Jordan             | Taiwan               |
| Kazakhstan         | Thailand             |
| Korea              | Turkey               |
| Kuwait             | United Arab Republic |
| Malawi             |                      |

**Places we have traveled with travel/study tours**

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- Austria
- Greece
- Ireland
- The Netherlands
- Scotland
- Switzerland
- Wales

**Places from which we have had participants and where we have traveled with travel/study tours**

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- Belgium
- China
- England
- France
- Germany
- Italy
- Russia
- Spain



## CHAPTER SEVEN

# A Preeminent Center for Gifted Studies

What distinguishes The Center for Gifted Studies at Western Kentucky University (WKU) from other organizations devoted to gifted education?

Let's begin geographically: Certainly our impact in Kentucky stands out, including the creation of The Gatton Academy, our groundbreaking graduate programs in gifted studies, our long-time support of the Kentucky Association

for Gifted Education, and the participation of students and teachers from all 120 Kentucky counties in our programs. We also have a national presence — among other things, our Advanced Placement (AP) Summer Institute and our summer camps have attracted participants from fifty states plus Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C.; we have played a vital role in the National Association of Gifted Children and The Association of the Gifted; middle school science teachers from across the country have applied to be National STEM Scholars; and we have received four federal grants from the Jacob K. Javits Program. Internationally, as seen in the previous chapter, The Center has also achieved distinction. For example, we house the headquarters of the World Council on Gifted and Talented Children; have

hosted educational contingents from Saudi Arabia; have collaborated with organizations in Russia, China, and Mexico; and supported the European Council for High Ability. In fact, we have been active on six continents!

Beyond geographical presence, the longevity of our programs also makes us notable. At 35 years, The Center is one of the oldest gifted organizations in the country. Moreover, almost every program we have begun continues to this day. These include, from the 1980s, the Duke TIP Recognition Ceremony, SCATS, VAMPY, the AP

Summer Institute, the Symposium on Kentucky's Children Who Are Gifted and Talented, and travel/study tours; from the 1990s, Super Saturdays and *The Challenge*; from the 2000s, The Gatton Academy, the Advisory Board, the Berta Seminars, and the Update on Gifted Education Workshop; and from the 2010s, Little Learners, IdeaFestival Bowling Green, Victoria Fellows, Twice-Exceptional

Student Seminars, the National STEM Scholars Program, and Camps Innovate and Explore. The longevity of so many opportunities signals that our programs not only continue to be vital but that we have been able to maintain their quality continuously.

Perhaps what most makes us exceptional, however, is the breadth of our service. As the rest of this history makes clear, The Center serves a broad range of constituents, involves a broad range of decision-makers, and delivers our services through a broad range of formats. Collaborators from a variety of institutions and organizations have sought us out. We have not shied away from adding on to our services — but not at the expense of already-existing programs. We look for connections among stakeholders and utilize them to strengthen our offerings. In fact, there is a synergy among our programs

that makes the overall impact of The Center greater than that of any individual program — for example, the parent who attends a Twice-Exceptional Seminar and then enrolls his child in Camp Innovate, the graduate student in gifted education who teaches a SCATS class as her practicum, or the Victoria Fellow who works to make sure the students in her district are encouraged to apply to The Gatton Academy.

This well-roundedness has earned us recognition in a variety of ways, and that recognition, in turn, has enabled us to continue



A Duke TIP ceremony in the early 1990s

to strive to meet our mission successfully. The significance of The Center is reflected in the honors, funding, awards, and other recognitions we have received, but that importance only matters if The Center continues to support gifted youth, their educators, and their parents.

## ADVISORY BOARD

The Center strongly believes that we could not have achieved as much as we have without our Advisory Board, and that the members of our board are exceptional among those of similar boards. Since its creation in March 2001, the Advisory Board has been an integral part of The Center. Our board members hail not only from Kentucky but from around the country, and rather than coming exclusively from the fields of gifted education, they have brought expertise and talents in a variety of areas, thus extending the reach of The Center. Some board members first became involved with The Center through their children's participation in our programming, while we connected with others through their work in the community. Whatever the source of their involvement, all members share our mission and vision.

Founding board member Bill Hamilton of Pflugerville, Texas, whose two children attended VAMPY, has been involved with The Center for more than twenty years. He believes that what makes the board so strong is that members are "exceptionally creative, extremely well-connected, and very bright. Every individual brings good strengths and ideas." He considers one of the top achievements of the board to be its instrumental role in establishing and enlarging The Gatton Academy. Fellow founding board member Kate Hinkle of Shelbyville, Kentucky, agrees: "Gatton Academy is certainly a huge feather in our cap — probably a feather so large we can't really wear the cap!" Kate, whose four children attended SCATS or VAMPY, was a key figure in creating some of the events in Frankfort to seek legislative support for Gatton.

Bill identifies the board's other main accomplishment to be "the number of lives touched by The Center." For him, The Center is reaching a population of young people who often get ignored: "There are kids who come to The Center's programs, especially VAMPY, who may be the only gifted kids in their counties, and no one knows what to do with them. Teachers have to expend effort with gifted kids because they'll test you, and push you, and VAMPY teachers will do that. The kids find out being ahead of the game is a good thing. VAMPY goes after the whole person."

Kate also stresses the significance of The Center's programs: "Programs like SCATS and VAMPY that allow children to explore, get to know themselves, and be more comfortable in their own skin are exceedingly important. What The Center is doing is so critical both to the children it serves and to the state. The more we can do for our bright kids and the more we can nurture them, the more we can stop some of the brain drain that Kentucky experiences. It's crucial for the state that we support our best and our brightest and hope that they will give back to Kentucky, so from an individual standpoint and a more macro standpoint, The Center's work is really important."



An Advisory Board meeting in 2017

The following individuals serve or have served on the Advisory Board:

- Corey Alderdice of Hot Springs, AR (2016 to present)
- Sue Badgett of Hanson, KY (2010 to present)
- Dale Brown of Bowling Green, KY (2007 to present)
- Steve Campbell of Goshen, KY (2014 to present)
- Martha Neal Cooke of Louisville, KY (2001 to 2010)
- Ben Cundiff of Cadiz, KY (2001 to present)
- Eric Edds of Bowling Green, KY (2016 to present)
- Darlene Eisenstein of Boca Raton, FL (2001 to 2010)
- Katie Ellison of Bowling Green, KY (2007 to present)
- Brett Guthrie of Bowling Green, KY (2001 to present)
- Chris Guthrie of Bowling Green, KY (2012 to present)
- Bill Hamilton of Pflugerville, TX (2001 to present)
- Kate Hinkle of Shelbyville, KY (2001 to present)
- Dawn Hitron of Louisville, KY (2001 to 2014)
- John Hornsby of Mandeville, LA (2001 to 2006)
- Will Johnson of Franklin, KY (2001 to 2011)
- David Laird of Louisville, KY (2006 to present)
- Mary Ellen Lamar of Owensboro, KY (2001 to 2005)
- Fannie Louise Maddux of Pembroke, KY (2001 to 2012)
- Pete Mahurin of Bowling Green, KY (2001 to present)
- Carl Martray of Elberta, AL (2001 to present)
- Brian Mefford of Bowling Green, KY (2014 to present)
- Daksha Mehta of Elizabethtown, KY (2003 to present)
- Bharat Mody of Glasgow, KY (2001 to 2008)
- Sam Moore of Lexington, KY (2010 to 2016)
- Michael Muscarella of Paducah, KY (2010 to present)
- Mary Ann Pardieck of Columbus, IN (2001 to 2011)
- Bob Pitchford of Bowling Green, KY (2001 to present)
- Steve Reed of Louisville, KY (2007 to present)
- Jody Richards of Bowling Green, KY (2001 to present)
- Aileen Rose of Hendersonville, TN (2010 to present)
- John Talbert of Mishawaka, IN (2001 to 2014)
- Maynard Thomas of Catlettsburg, KY (2001 to 2005)
- Joe Wismann of Talent, OR (2001 to 2011)
- Charles Zimmerman of Louisville, KY (2001 to present)



## MAHURIN ENDOWED PROFESSORSHIP

A distinction of The Center that sets it apart from other programs at WKU as well as other programs in gifted studies is the the Mahurin Endowed Professorship in Gifted Education, one of the first endowed professorships at WKU and one of a handful in the country in gifted education. The professorship was created in 2003 by a generous gift from Pete and Dixie Mahurin, whose daughter, Sarah Jo Mahurin (S 1990-94; V 1993-96; Coun; TA) attended SCATS and VAMPY, worked as a counselor and a VAMPY teaching assistant, and also has served as a volunteer. The Commonwealth of Kentucky gave \$500,000 from its matching incentive fund to further secure the endowed professorship. Pete explains that he and his wife made the gift because “The Center had a big impact on my daughter as she was growing up, and we wanted to do something to perpetuate that opportunity for others.” Sarah herself notes that her parents have “a robust and global sense of the needs of The Center.”

Julia, the first and only scholar to hold the professorship, says, “What an honor it is to be the Mahurin Professor of Gifted Studies! I am grateful to Pete, Dixie, and Sarah Jo for creating this professorship, one of very few in the United States.”

## WKU CENTENNIAL

We are proud of our outstanding relationship with WKU and that WKU recognizes the quality of our contribution to the university. Although The Center is financially self-supporting, since our founding, Julia’s policy has been to build programming that is supported by and benefits the university. The Center’s importance to the university as a whole was made clear in 2006, the centennial year for WKU, when three of its recognized “one hundred gifts WKU gave the world” involved The Center. The first was The Center for Gifted Studies itself; the second was The Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science in Kentucky; and the third, in recognition of the work she has done for gifted education through the university, was Julia Roberts.

## PRICHARD COMMITTEE

The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence is arguably the most preeminent educational advocacy group in Kentucky, and The Center is pleased to have a longstanding association with it. The Prichard Committee, a private, non-profit organization, has been at the forefront of improving the Kentucky public educational system since the 1980s. Julia has served as an invited member since 2014 and was a member of its Achievement Gap Study Group for 2015-16. Mary Evans has been a member since 2015. In addition, in 2008, The Center partnered with the Prichard Committee on a special Governor’s Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership (CIPL)

that focused on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The partnership continued from 2009-2012 with the additional partnership of The Gatton Academy. CIPL is an initiative that seeks to educate family and community members on how best to support and advocate for improvements in the school system; the STEM institute provided leadership, planning, and strategic development training for those seeking specifically to advance STEM education in their schools.

## VOLUNTEERS

Committed to providing a superior set of services, The Center has always known we cannot do our work alone. Instead we have welcomed and relied on the time, energy, and talents of our many volunteers who have, among countless other tasks, stuffed envelopes, talked to legislators, worked tables and booths at conferences, served on the Advisory Board, spoken to VAMPY students, secured venues, and assisted with Super Saturdays classes. Volunteers have included parents of children participating in Center programming, WKU students, alumni of SCATS and VAMPY, education professionals, and community members. No matter their connection to The Center, these individuals have been central to our achievements.

Our original, longest-serving, and most dedicated volunteer is Dick Roberts, who has been helping us since the first summer workshop in 1981 (see chapter two). Longtime summer programming assistant Carolyn Hagaman notes, “Dick is an absolutely essential part of The Center’s history. He was always there, supporting whatever was going on — even moving around in the dining hall, just to be a friendly, adult presence. One year he even entertained at VAMPY with a solo skit at the talent

show. We could hardly have managed without him.”

Dick was particularly busy during our summer programming. Looking back, he appreciates that working at SCATS and VAMPY allowed him to get to know the students. In the early years, the camps did not have a head counselor, so he and Julia helped monitor the dorms in the evening: “One of the more enjoyable times was being the person there, in essence, to put the kids to bed. I was generally down at the dormitory — which at the time was Gilbert Hall or Rhodes — from after supper until recreation time was over.”

Dick was also the head chef for weekend cookouts for many years. In the 1980s, when our camps were often the only activity on campus on Saturdays and Sundays, we gave the cafeteria workers time off by cooking the weekend meals ourselves, with Dick in charge. Dick explains, “Gradually that evolved to where I had one student who was promoted to assistant chef. We cooked hamburgers and hotdogs. Anything that we had left over, we took home and put in the freezer, and on the last night of VAMPY we had another



Center alum Sarah Jo Mahurin speaks at the Duke TIP ceremony in 2008

cookout with them. That initially was something we did as soon as the dance was over, and then we would try to get the kids to go to bed. Well, we finally realized it was useless because they all wanted to try to stay up all night, so we ended up having hamburgers and hotdogs and s'mores on the lawn. The kids were out all over the grass trying to stay awake until three a.m. when we asked them to go inside."

Dick also played an important role for many years at SCATS and VAMPY dances: "I watched the door so that other groups didn't infiltrate, because people would hear the kids and try to come in." In those days, he also had to do his best to make the dance floor usable: "We used to have our dances in West Hall Cellar. It was a big, open space. It also had air conditioning that didn't work very well and inevitably broke down. There was only one person on campus who knew how to fix it, so we always gave him a heads up when we were going to be using West Hall, and he'd be on call, and he'd come in and hotwire the system when it broke down."

For camp trips to Opryland, Dick helped get the campers on the buses and kept track of them during the day. He and Julia also walked around the park with students: "Those were fun times because, again, you would get to know the kids better." He also recalls how their plan to keep track of the students backfired one year: "We gave them their tee shirts before they went to Opryland so you could look out into the crowd and see them easily. But one year, a large Baptist church was there that had the exactly same color shirt on, and all we could say is, 'If you see John 3:16 on the back, it's not one of our kids.'"

The AP Institute required a different kind of volunteer work: moving books. Dick recalls, "They arrived in our office at Tate Page and piled up, and then I would load them in my car and haul them to the different locations like Downing and Thompson North Wing." The first institutes had 8-10 classes, with 25-30 people per class, and some of the courses could have six or more books, adding up to over a thousand books per summer moved by Dick.

Another part of Dick's work for the AP Institute involved the unglamorous work of ensuring the living conditions were acceptable. He would clean the communal bathrooms in the residence halls as needed before the week began: "you would go to every restroom and walk in and at least scrub the basins out if they hadn't been done." One year, he found himself buying 160 blankets from Wal-Mart for participants who had arrived in a blazing hot July to frigid temperatures in their dorm rooms due to air conditioning that could not be adjusted. As he remembers, "I had two dollies full of blankets, and I rolled them through checkout — needless to say, attracting a big crowd. After, I'm rolling out into the parking lot, and a lady follows me to my little Ford hatchback. As I start stuffing blankets into the front passenger seat, she says, 'Young man, I just have to know — why in the world are you buying so many blankets in the middle of the summer?' I looked at her and said, 'You obviously haven't heard. There is going to be one heck of a cold snap tonight. I'm just getting ready.' She looked at me and sort of dismissed me with an, 'Awww', but I said, 'You remember, they laughed at Noah.' I got in my car, and as I pulled out, she was still standing there."

Along with Dick, we have had many exceptional contributors who, since 2003, have been recognized with WKU Summit Awards, which honor the university's volunteers. Recipients are as follows:

Pete and Dixie Mahurin, 2003 — they also received the WKU Distinguished Service Medal, awarded each year to the top university volunteers.

- Bob and Carolyn Pitchford, 2004
- Ben Cundiff, 2005
- John Hornsby, 2006
- Joe Wismann, 2008
- Dale Brown, 2009
- Warren and Darlene Eisenstein, 2010
- Kate Hinkle, 2011
- Victoria Kelly, 2012
- Patricia "Pat" Richardson, 2013
- John and Dawn Hitron, 2014
- Ron Skillern, 2015
- Rico Tyler, 2016
- Jonathan Vaughn, 2017



Dick in Paris in the late 1990s

## PARTNERSHIPS

Integral to our achievements are The Center's connections to many outstanding individuals and groups with whom we have cultivated valuable partnerships over our 35-year history. In addition to collaborations mentioned elsewhere in the history, we have partnered with others in these ways:

- We established a business-education partnership with Trace Die Cast of Bowling Green beginning in 2002 through the Bowling Green Chamber of Commerce.
- We supported programming at the Green River Region Educational Cooperative.
- We worked with numerous outside educational programs such as LEGO League and Kentucky's Odyssey of the Mind state tournament.
- We arranged with Governor's Scholars for one of its classes to work with the Summer Camp.



## GRANTS

For The Center, the receipt of a grant signifies recognition for what we have accomplished in the past and for the promise of what we will accomplish in the future. The total amount of grant money received in our 35 years is estimated at almost \$5,550,000.

Significant grants have been received from the Eisenhower Mathematics and Science Grant; the Hagar Foundation; the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act; the James Graham Brown Foundation; the Jewish Heritage Fund for Excellence; the Kentucky Department of Education; Laura Turner Foundation; the National Stem Cell Foundation; the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the United States Department of Education; PNC Foundation; WKU's Academic Affairs "Provost's Initiatives for Excellence" (PIE) grant, Qatar Foundation International; Race to Top Fund of the United States Department of Education; and the United States Information Agency.

For more information, see the Appendix.

## CELEBRATIONS

One of the great things about enduring for 35 years is the chance to celebrate over and over again with all the friends who have made our work possible. For our 20th, 25th, and 30th anniversaries, The Center held community-wide parties.

The twentieth anniversary featured two celebrations. First, in July 2001, over 500 guests attended a party on WKU's South Lawn. The day had something for everyone. Children were offered activities like Duck Pond, Ring the Chicken's Neck, Face Painting, and Spin Art. Volunteer Keith Stokes (Coun) created Challenge Games, where participants earned challenge stickers for competing in events like sack races, hula hoops, and Velcro target throws. Once ten stickers were earned, these winners were awarded tee shirts from past programs of The Center, meaning for the next two weeks VAMPY campers sported Super Saturdays, SCATS, and VAMPY shirts from the 1980s and 1990s. SCATS alum, instructor, and friend of The Center Joe Napier (SC 1983) organized volunteers to run the booths and dole out prizes. The day also featured an Old Fashioned Picnic in a large tent, Bingo, sno-cones, popcorn, and cotton candy, as well as watermelon- and cake-eating contests and inflatables. Participants could also browse an art exhibit, watch a continuously running slide show, or be entertained by musicians Kelsey Tamayo (SS, S 2000) and Jon Crosby (Travel, TA, Coun) or Broadway the Clown (also known as tireless volunteer and teacher Nick Wilkins). Finally, a silent and live auction raised almost \$7,500 for The Friends of The Center Scholarship Fund.

Linda Bandy, who served as the office associate for The Center from 1992 until 2008, remembers the day well: "It was a big turnout. My husband was the head of the cotton candy-making, and he loved it. He was so busy that we had to go out and get more supplies. Gail Hiles and I did the sno-cones — that's a funny story because she squirted syrup all over me — of all days to wear something white! We had such a good time that day. The kids did too — they really did."

Next, in April 2002, we held an evening event for over 160 people called 20 Years and Counting: The Sky's the Limit, with special guest Homer Hickman, author of *Rocket Boys*. The reception and dinner gathered together friends from many areas of The Center's work, such as parents of VAMPY's initial campers, parents of first-time Super Saturdays children, WKU faculty and administration, and SCATS alumni. Guests enjoyed the music of classical guitarist Andrew Winner and a presentation from Homer on his latest book, *We Are Not Afraid*. The evening was also a chance to recognize the

first three honorees of The Center's Challenge Awards, Doris Mills, Larry Laird, and Jody Richards, each celebrated for their dedication and devotion to gifted children in Kentucky (see chapter four).

For its 25th anniversary, The Center again invited many friends to celebrate. In July 2006, almost 300 guests attended a cookout on the South Campus lawn, enjoyed games and inflatables, and took hot air balloon rides above the WKU campus. Former



Our 30th anniversary celebration in 2011

VAMPY teacher Skip Cleavinger and his band The Rogues entertained the crowd with traditional Irish songs, and the crowd watched a slide show of our activities spanning all 25 years. Friends also had an opportunity to tour Schneider Hall for a sneak peek at the renovations underway to transform it to house The Gatton Academy and our new offices. The afternoon included the inaugural meeting of The Center's Alumni Association as well. The day finished with a fireworks display that captured the excitement of the day and the promise of more great years to come.

Five years later, in July 2011, The Center marked its 30th anniversary. The day kicked off with brunch and tours at The National Corvette Museum for over 300 guests. Later, Bob Pitchford, Advisory Board member and Aviation Heritage Park board member, gave personalized tours to guests at the park. In the afternoon, over 500 friends met up on the South Lawn for barbeque, cotton candy, and sno-cones. When they weren't eating, our guests took hot air balloon rides, thanks to the Hitron family, and enjoyed balloon animals courtesy of Broadway the Clown. The event also included a silent art auction, live music by Jon Crosby's band, and lots of sharing of memories. Both Wake Norris (V 1989-92; Coun) and Amber



Julia is honored at a 2005 WKU reception for being named one of the 55 most influential people in the history of gifted education by the NAGC

Cann (S 1988-90; Trav; Coun) addressed the crowd, and, to mark the occasion, the Alumni Association, led by Wake, announced an alumni-led endowment for The Center.

These many celebrations indicate our success over the long haul, but they are also indicative of why The Center has endured. The treats and displays and performances would not count for much without the spirit in which they were created: the sense of a community, of people who have connected and mattered to each other. As Linda says, “I just love The Center for Gifted Studies. It’s always part of my life. It’s always in me that I am part of The Center.”



Staff member Sam Oldenburg, gifted educator June Maker, Tracy, staff member Tyler Clark, Julia, and WKU professor Toni Szymanski at the 21st World Conference of the WCGTC in Denmark in 2015

### IN ADDITION...

Other notable areas of accomplishment and recognition for The Center include the following. For additional information on each item, see the Appendix.

- The Center and its staff have produced several award-winning publications including its magazine, *The Challenge* (see chapter four); the second edition of Tracy and Julia’s *Strategies for Differentiating Instruction: Best Practices for the Classroom* (Prufrock), which won the 2009 Legacy Award for Outstanding

Book for Educators in Gifted Education from the Texas Association for The Gifted and Talented; *Parenting Gifted Children: The Authoritative Guide from the National Association for Gifted Children* (Prufrock), co-edited by Tracy and Donald Treffinger, Jennifer Jolly, and Joan Franklin Smutny, which won the 2011 Legacy Award for Outstanding Book for Parents in Gifted Education from the Texas Association for The Gifted and Talented; and *Parenting Gifted Children 101: An Introduction to Gifted Kids and Their Needs* (Prufrock), co-authored by Tracy and Jana Kirchner, which won the 2017 Legacy Award for Outstanding Book for Parents in Gifted Education from the Texas Association for The Gifted and Talented.

- The awards and recognitions received by our staff reflect the excellence, impact, and longevity of our work in gifted education and advocacy. Julia’s recognitions include the 2001 National Association for Gifted Children’s David W. Belin Advocacy Award, given “to an individual or group that has successfully advocated at the state or federal level to incorporate gifted education, in a significant and meaningful way, into state or federal education policy”; being listed as “One of 55 Most Influential People in the History of Gifted Education” in *Profiles of Influence in Gifted Education: Historical Perspectives and Future Directions*, published by the National Association for Gifted Children in 2003. In honor of this recognition, The Center, WKU, and the WKU College of Education and Behavioral Sciences held a special reception that overflowed with people and laughter, a proclamation from the Governor, speeches from important dignitaries and dear friends, and, most importantly, more people learning about the needs of gifted and talented children.

- In addition to work mentioned elsewhere on the World Council (see chapter six) and with the Kentucky Association for Gifted Education (see chapter four), Julia and Tracy have served as leaders in multiple organizations connected to gifted studies. These positions signal the esteem in which their colleagues hold them and their faith in Julia and Tracy’s abilities to innovate, shape, and support the field at the local, state, national, and international level.

- Because of their achievements in the field of gifted studies, Julia and Tracy have been invited to write books for Prufrock Press and have often been asked to contribute chapters and journal articles to scholarly publications such as *Gifted Child Today*; the *Illinois Association for Gifted Children Journal*; *Tempo*, the journal of the Texas Association for Gifted and Talented; and *The Roeper Review*.
- In recognition of their expertise, Julia and Tracy have been invited to speak at local, state, national, and international venues.



# Conclusion

This project began as an article for the Winter 2017 issue of *The Challenge* in which we planned to list 35 memorable things about The Center in honor of our 35 years. That list felt incomplete, however, and so we planned a standalone issue of *The Challenge* that would recount the whole history of The Center. Staff members brainstormed topics to include, ideas for structuring the story, and a list of people to contact. Once we began gathering information, conducting interviews, and remembering so many projects, events, and people, it became clear that not only was undertaking a history of The Center essential, but the account was too rich and complex to be covered appropriately in an issue of our magazine. The final results of our work, which you have just read, serve as a commemoration of our past and an inspiration for our future.

When asked what they would like to see in that future, Julia and Tracy agree that we should have a counseling component. Julia says, “In our vision statement, we talk about being a counseling and testing center, and that’s the one piece of that vision that we haven’t touched. Tracy and I take calls from parents, but we don’t assess children.” Tracy adds, “I’d love to see a counseling center that includes identification measures, and assessments of behaviors and skills — along with counseling services where we specialize in gifted kids.”

In addition, Julia says, “I dream of having a large emphasis on creativity that would make a difference to educators. We can do that with kids through our programs, but it’s harder to do with others. I would also like to have a bigger emphasis on superintendents and principals — Victoria Fellows is a wonderful start. I dream as well of a doctoral program in gifted education. And I want The Center to be the place to come to — I love the international emphasis that we have through hosting the headquarters of the World Council. I would also love to keep and expand programming that we do, though the challenge is that there’s not much more time to do additional programming.”

For Tracy, the future would involve expanding while also playing to our strengths: “I think part of our appeal is that we have small class sizes — for example, all the kids in SCATS and VAMPY know Julia. So whatever we do, I want us to keep that personal touch where we handpick teachers and do what’s the best thing for the child. I do think there are niches that we haven’t filled yet, needs that we haven’t addressed yet.”

Moving forward, both Julia and Tracy see funding as the critical obstacle to overcome. Julia says, “I’m grateful for every gift that we get, and that we have a generous set of friends. That’s important.” Tracy notes, “Funding is difficult especially in a time where

excellence is not valued — we’re fighting against that at this moment statewide and nationwide. But I also think funding is where our creativity comes into play. We can be innovative when it comes to finding resources. Foundations and corporations oftentimes have their own goals, so we have to be willing to adapt. For example, when we looked at bringing in PNC to be part of our Innovate Kentucky grant, we were very open to working in early childhood even though it was a little out of our comfort zone.”

It is clear that The Center’s vibrant connection to our alumni is central to our future. Julia’s early decision to begin and scrupulously maintain a database of alumni of The Center’s programs will allow us to continue to reach out to those who care about The Center. Tracy adds, “Our alumni can be valuable resources. Think of the experience, the knowledge, and the networking! I would love to see us develop those relationships. Imagine a mentoring program or summer speaker series where alums talk to current campers — the possibilities are endless. Of course, we need personnel and resources to make that happen.”

Tracy also lauds Julia’s foresight in preparing financially. She comments, “One of the things that brings me peace and excitement is the fact that Julia listened to one of WKU’s first development officers, Ron Beck, who encouraged us to communicate with former participants and their families in order to make a concentrated effort on development. It was at that point that she hired me to create *The Challenge* and the webpage. I look at how savvy she has been as well with establishing our eclectic Advisory Board and how dedicated those board members have been. I see we really are well-established to be a center in perpetuity. We’re to the point now where we have second generations of students who are coming to our programs, and that’s what it’s all about: we want our first SCATS and VAMPY kids to have their kids attend, and ultimately their grandkids, and on and on.”

As Tracy points out, continuity is important to us, and this history is one component of maintaining the continuity. Any history is necessarily incomplete, of course — we have lost friends over the years whose voices we would have liked to include, for example, and there are moments of teaching and connecting that were important to individuals but could not be put into words. However, we hope this history has sparked your own memories about The Center, memories of what we may have made possible for you and of what you have given to us. We also hope the story will inspire you to continue to be involved in our work — to spread the word about the importance of gifted education and the value of gifted students.

Let’s do this again in another 35 years.



# Timeline

1981

The first summer workshop on gifted education is held at Western Kentucky University (WKU).

1982

The Center for Gifted Studies is founded.

The first graduate class in gifted education is taught at WKU.

1983

The first Summer Camp is held; it is later named the Summer Camp for Academically Talented Middle School Students (SCATS).

The Duke Talent Identification Program's (TIP) Kentucky State Recognition Ceremony is hosted by The Center for the first time.

1984

The first Summer Program is held in cooperation with Duke TIP; it is later renamed the Summer Program for Verbally and Mathematically Precocious Youth (VAMPY).

The first Advanced Placement Summer Institute for teachers is held.

1987

The Center organizes the first Symposium on Kentucky's Children Who Are Gifted and Talented with a grant from the Richardson Foundation.

The Center conducts our first summer travel/study tour abroad; these long summer trips continue through 2003.

The Gifted and Talented Endorsement is first offered by WKU.

1989

The Center for Gifted Studies becomes an official center at WKU through an enactment by the Board of Regents.



# 1990

The Center receives our first grant from the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act for the three-year Enhancing Educational Opportunities for Gifted Middle School Students project.

Kentucky Association for Gifted Education (KAGE) is housed at The Center.

# 1993

The Center receives our second Javits grant for the three-year Restructuring Primary Education: Responding to Kentucky's Education Reform project.

The Center establishes a three-year Russian-American educational partnership through the United States Information Agency and the Citizen Exchange Council.

The first Update on Gifted Education Workshop is held in partnership with KAGE.

# 1997

Julia Roberts and Charles McGruder propose the establishment of the Kentucky Academy of Mathematics and Science at WKU to the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education.

# 1992

The first Super Saturdays program is held.

The Center conducts our first travel/study tour abroad over spring break.

# 1996

The Center receives a three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement to continue the work of our second Javits grant.

The first Leadership Institute is held.

The first Vertical Teams Training Institute is held; these programs continue through 2009.

# 1998

The Center receives our first year-long grant from the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education's Dwight D. Eisenhower Mathematics and Science Program for our Raising Achievement in Middle School Science project, which eventually continues for five years.

The first issue of *The Challenge* is published.

We create our website.

1999

*The Challenge* receives the Blue Pencil Award from the Kentucky Association of Government Communications.

2000

The Kentucky legislature provides start-up funding in its budget for the planning of the Kentucky Academy for Mathematics and Science.

Tracy Inman is named associate director for The Center.

2001

We establish our Advisory Board.

Julia is presented with the National Association for Gifted Children's (NAGC) inaugural David W. Belin Advocacy Award.

A gift from Vince and Kathleen Berta creates the Berta Fund for Excellence.

We hold the first of two 20th anniversary celebrations: in July, over 500 guests attend a party on WKU's South Lawn.

2002

Super Saturdays begins offering a fall sequence.

The Center holds a public service announcement contest in honor of our 20th anniversary.

We honor three individuals with Challenge Awards in recognition of their tremendous impact on gifted education for children and youth: Larry Laird, Doris Mills, and Jody Richards.

We hold the second of two 20th anniversary celebrations: an evening event called 20 Years and Counting: The Sky's the Limit.

2003

The Mahurin Professorship is endowed with a gift from Pete, Dixie, and Sarah Jo Mahurin; Julia is the first to hold the professorship.

Super Saturdays in Owensboro is held for the first of three years.

Julia is recognized by the NAGC as one of the most influential people in gifted education in its *Profiles of Influence in Gifted Education: Historical Perspectives and Future Directions*, published in recognition of the 50th anniversary of the NAGC.

2004

The first Berta Seminar is held, supported by the Berta Fund for Excellence.

We honor three more individuals with Challenge Awards in recognition of their tremendous impact on gifted education for children and youth: Susan Leib, J. T. Sandefur, and Donald Zacharias.



# 2005

The Kentucky legislature provides funding in its budget to create the Kentucky Academy for Mathematics and Science.

The Alumni Association is formed.

The Center travels to China through People to People.

The first international student attends VAMPY.

The Center is part of a task force that drafts a white paper entitled "Kentucky's Future: Mining Untapped Treasure – Children and Youth of the Commonwealth Who are Gifted and Talented."

# 2007

The Gatton Academy opens its doors.

The Center moves to our new home in renovated Florence Schneider Hall.

The Center holds a public service announcement contest in honor of our twenty-fifth anniversary.

Our Vertical Teams Training Institute in world languages serves as a national pilot program.

# 2009

The second edition of Julia and Tracy's *Strategies for Differentiating Instruction: Best Practices for the Classroom* (Prufrock) wins a Legacy Award from the Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented.

Julia is elected to the Executive Committee of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children.

# 2006

The Kentucky Academy of Mathematics and Science is named The Carol M. Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science in Kentucky after a gift from C. M. "Bill" Gatton; the school also begins renovation of Schneider Hall and names a director, Tim Gott.

The first of four Administrators Institutes is held.

We hold a 25th anniversary celebration on WKU's South Lawn.

# 2008

The Center receives our third Javits grant for the five-year Project GEMS (Gifted Education in Math and Science), done in partnership with Warren County Public Schools in Bowling Green.

The Center partners with The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence and The Gatton Academy for the first of four Commonwealth Institutes for Parent Leadership focused on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) disciplines.

The Kentucky General Assembly establishes The Gatton Academy in statute.

# 2011

The Center adds a week-long educational tour during fall break to complement the tour we offer during spring break.

The headquarters of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children moves to WKU.

*Parenting Gifted Children: The Authoritative Guide from the National Association for Gifted Children* (Prufrock Press), co-edited by Tracy, wins a Legacy Award from the Texas Association for Gifted and Talented.

The James Graham Brown Foundation awards a challenge grant to The Center, The Gatton Academy, and the WKU Honors College for the i<sup>4</sup> Initiative, later renamed Innovate Kentucky.

Through a gift from John, Linda and Victoria Kelly, the Victoria Fellows are formed and meet for the first time.

The first Twice-Exceptional Students Seminar is held, supported by the Twice-Exceptional Foundation, which is initially funded by the Arts Education Task Force established by Flora Templeton Stuart.

Julia receives the Acorn Award for Faculty Excellence Education from the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education.

# 2014

The Gatton Academy receives funding for an expansion of Schneider Hall and appoints a new director, Lynette Breedlove.

Through Innovate Kentucky, The Center partners with PNC Bank on the Grow Up Great Initiative for the Little Learners, Big Ideas video series developed by Allison Bemiss.

Through Innovate Kentucky, The Center holds the first IdeaFestival Bowling Green.

The Center partners with Green River Region Educational Cooperative for the first of two summer workshops through Race to the Top.

# 2012

The Summer Camp is first held.

The Center hosts a delegation of educators from Saudi Arabia.

Through Innovate Kentucky, The Center collaborates on the Kentucky Girls Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) Collaborative conference and sponsors the first of two three-week winter courses with the WKU Honors College and The Gatton Academy.

# 2013

The Center hosts a second delegation of educators from Saudi Arabia.

Innovate Kentucky partners with the Mary Wood Weldon Memorial Library in Glasgow for Engineering Tomorrow and is a co-partner in creating Innoplex.

212<sup>o</sup> Academy is founded in the Warren County Public Schools as a result of Project GEMS.

The first of two twice-exceptional learners policy studies is conducted by Julia and colleagues.

The headquarters of the World Council at The Center hosts the 2013 Biennial Conference of the World Council in Louisville.

We expand *The Challenge* to three issues a year.



# 2015

WKU starts offering an MAE in Gifted Education and Talent Development.

The Summer Camp becomes Camp Innovate and Camp Explore.

The Center relocates to Tate Page Hall and Gary Ransdell Hall while Schneider Hall is expanded.

A traveling exhibit of the VAMPY Nazi Germany and the Holocaust murals is displayed for the first time through a grant from the Jewish Heritage Fund.

The first of several books by staff of The Center is translated into Arabic.

Julia receives The Palmarium Award from the University of Denver Institute for the Development of Gifted Education.

# 2017

WKU begins offering the Specialist Degree in Gifted Education and Talent Development.

The Center receives our first grant from Qatar Foundation International for ten VAMPY students to study Arabic tuition-free.

A traveling exhibit of the VAMPY Nazi Germany and the Holocaust murals is continued and expanded through a second grant from the Jewish Heritage Fund and a partnership with the Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts and Kentucky Education Television.

The Center hosts a third delegation of educators from Saudi Arabia.

*Parenting Gifted Children 101: An Introduction to Gifted Kids and Their Needs* (Prufrock), authored by Tracy and Jana Kirchner, wins a 2017 Legacy Award.

Julia is elected president of the World Council.

# 2016

The Center receives our fourth Javits grant for the three-year Project Reaching Academic Potential (RAP), done in partnership with the Kentucky Department of Education, Jefferson County Public Schools, and the University of Louisville.

The first National STEM Scholar Program is held through a grant from the National Stem Cell Foundation.

The World Council renews the contract for its headquarters to be hosted at WKU.

The Center and The Gatton Academy return to a newly expanded Schneider Hall.

# Appendix

## Presentations, Consultantships, and Other Work for the Community

### Presentations and/or consultantships for educators and/or parents

#### Kentucky public school districts and organizations

Adair County  
Allen County  
Anchorage Independent  
Ashland Independent  
Barren County  
Bell County  
Bowling Green Independent  
Boyd County  
Boyle County  
Brandenburg County  
Breckinridge County  
Bullitt County  
Butler County  
Campbellsville Independent  
Carroll County  
Christian County  
Clinton County  
Cloverport Independent  
Corbin Independent  
Covington Independent  
Crittenden County  
Cumberland County  
Daviess County  
East Bernstadt Independent  
Edmonson County  
Elizabethtown Independent  
Fayette County  
Frankfort Independent  
Ft. Campbell Schools  
Ft. Knox Schools  
Glasgow Independent  
Grayson County  
Green County

Hardin County  
Harrodsburg Independent  
Henderson County  
Hopkins County  
Jefferson County  
Kentucky School Board Association  
LaRue County  
Laurel County  
Letcher County  
Lincoln County  
Livingston County  
McCracken County  
Meade County  
Mercer County  
Metcalf County  
Monroe County  
Montgomery County  
Monticello Independent  
Muhlenburg County  
Murray Independent  
Nelson County  
Newport Independent  
Ohio County  
Oldham County  
Perry County  
Rockcastle County  
Russell County  
Russellville Independent  
Shelby County  
Simpson County  
Taylor County  
Todd County  
Union County  
Warren County  
Wayne County  
West Point Independent  
Woodford County

#### Kentucky independent and religious schools and organizations

Archdiocese of Louisville, Louisville  
Christian Academy, Louisville  
Christian Academy School System, Louisville

Frankfort Christian Academy, Frankfort  
St. Aloysius (Archdiocese of Louisville), Pewee Valley  
St. Christopher's Elementary School (Archdiocese of Louisville), Elizabethtown

#### States and cities outside of Kentucky

**California:** Clovis (Phi Delta Kappa) and Los Angeles (The Galef Institute)

**Colorado:** Denver (Colorado Department of Education) and Greeley (University of Northern Colorado)

**Indiana:** Columbia City, Fishers (IN Department of Education), French Lick (IN Department of Education), Huntington, Indianapolis (IN Department of Education), Jasper (IN Department of Education), Merrillville, New Albany, Spring Mill, and St. John

**Kansas:** Ft. Leavenworth (Phi Delta Kappa)

**Maryland:** Easton (Country School)

**Michigan:** Lansing

**Oklahoma:** Muskogee (Phi Delta Kappa)

**Pennsylvania:** Pittsburgh (Phi Delta Kappa)

**Tennessee:** Franklin, Memphis (Lausanne School), Nashville, Springfield, Williamson County, Wilson County

**Texas:** Edinburg (Phi Delta Kappa), Ft. Bend, Houston (Houston Area Cooperative on the Gifted and Talented)

**Washington:** Ocean Beach (Phi Delta Kappa)

**Washington, D.C.:** (St. Anselm's Abbey School; Phi Delta Kappa)

#### **Addresses, booths, exhibits, focus sessions, institutes, panels, posters, presentations, speeches, table talks, and workshops for organizations**

\*invited #keynote

#### Kentucky organizations

Bowling Green Women's Club, Bowling Green  
Consortium for Gifted Coordinators, Somerset  
Green River Regional Educational Cooperative, Bowling Green  
Identification Workshop: Intellectually and Academically Gifted Students, Bowling Green



Kentucky Advisory Council for Gifted and Talented Education, Elizabethtown

Kentucky Association for Academic Competition Conference, Louisville

Kentucky Association for Gifted Education chapter and state conferences, creativity nights, updates, workshops, and parents nights, Bowling Green\*, Elizabethtown, Glasgow, Lexington\*#, and Morehead

Kentucky Association of School Administrators annual conferences, Louisville

Kentucky Association of School Councils annual conferences, Lexington

Kentucky Council for Social Studies Annual Conference, Bowling Green

Kentucky Council of Teachers of English/ Language Arts conferences, Lexington

Kentucky Council of Teachers of Mathematics annual conferences, Bowling Green and Lexington

Kentucky Counselors Association Conferences, Louisville

Kentucky Department of Education Advanced Placement Workshop, Louisville

Kentucky Educational Collaborative for State Agency Children At-Risk workshop and conference, Richmond\*

Kentucky Nanotechnology Symposium, Bowling Green

Kentucky School Board Association Conferences, Louisville

Kentucky Teaching and Learning Conferences, Louisville

Kiwanis Club, Glasgow and Hopkinsville

Mensa, Louisville

National Institute of the Humanities Dante Institute, Bowling Green

Rotary Club, Henderson, Hopkinsville, Logan County, Paducah, and Trigg County

Servicing the High School Student: AP and Beyond Conference, Bowling Green

South Central Counseling Association, Bowling Green

Teaching American History Fall Conferences, Bowling Green

Title I Regional Conferences, Owensboro and Pikeville

Warren County Foundation Board, Bowling Green

Western Kentucky University Engaging the Spirit, Bowling Green

Western Kentucky University Kappa Delta Pi Education Honor Society, Bowling Green

Western Kentucky University School of Teacher Education Annual Summer Conference, Bowling Green

Western Kentucky University School of Teacher Education Preservice Teachers classes, Bowling Green

### **Organizations outside of Kentucky**

Alabama Council for Exceptional Children Conference, Birmingham, AL\*

Arizona Association for Gifted and Talented Conference, Phoenix, AZ#

Arkansans for Gifted Education Conference, Little Rock, AR#

Arkansas Association of Gifted Education Administrators Annual Fall Conference, Conway, AR#

Day of Sharing at the University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS\*

Gifted and Talented End of Year Training and Workshop, Muhlenberg County, KY

The Hormel Institute, Austin, MN\*

Illinois Association for Gifted Children Conference, Chicago, IL

Indiana Association for the Gifted Annual Conferences, Indianapolis, IN\*

Indiana Department of Education Administrators Workshops, Columbia, Fishers, and French Lick, IN

Indiana High Ability Conference, Indianapolis, IN\*

Julian Stanley Series at Vanderbilt, Nashville, TN

Nebraska Association for the Gifted Conference, Omaha, NE#

New Mexico Summer Institute for Gifted Education, Albuquerque, NM\*

North Carolina Academically or Intellectually Gifted Coordinators' Institute, Winston-Salem, NC

Parents and Advocates for Gifted Education, Houston, TX\*

Pennsylvania Association for Gifted Education Conference, Harrisburg, PA#

Pennsylvania Department of Education Conference, Hershey, PA

Society for Study of Motivation, Washington, D.C.

Tennessee Association for the Gifted Conferences, Nashville, TN\*#

Texas Association for Gifted and Talented regional and state conferences, Dallas, El Paso#, and Houston, TX\*

University of Denver Institute for the Development of Gifted Education Conference, Denver, CO\*#

Virginia Governor's Schools Conference, Lynchburg, VA#

William & Mary National Curriculum Network Conference, Williamsburg, VA#

Wisconsin Association for Talented and Gifted Conference, Sheboygan, WI#

Working on Gifted Issues Conference, Jacksonville, FL\*

### **National organizations**

American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education Conference, Washington, D.C.

American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL

American Psychological Association Convention, Washington, D.C.

Association for Middle Level Education (formerly the National Middle School Association) Annual Conferences, Louisville, KY; Nashville, TN; and Philadelphia, PA

The Association for the Gifted (a division of The Council for Exceptional Children) institutes, conferences, symposia, and workshops, Bowling Green; Philadelphia, PA\*; and Waco, TX#

The Council for Exceptional Children Annual Conferences, Boston, MA; Denver, CO; Louisville, KY; Nashville, TN\*; Philadelphia, PA; San Antonio, TX; San Diego, CA; St. Louis, MO; and Tampa, FL

Department of Education Jacob K. Javits Meeting, Washington, D.C.

National Association for Gifted Children affiliate, network, and annual conferences, Atlanta, GA\*; Baltimore, MD; Charlotte, NC\*; Denver, CO; Indianapolis, IN; Louisville, KY#; Minneapolis, MN; New Orleans, LA\*; Orlando, FL\*; Phoenix, AZ; Salt Lake City, UT; St. Louis, MO; Tampa, FL; Washington, D.C., and via webinar. *See separate listing for Webinars on Wednesday.*

National Consortium of Specialized Secondary Schools of Mathematics, Science and Technology Conference, Dallas, TX, and Nashville, TN

National Council for Social Studies Annual Conference, St. Louis, MO

National Drop-out Prevention Conference, Louisville, KY\*

National Science Foundation Conference on the Future of STEM Education for Children and Talented Adolescents, Washington, D.C.

National Science Teachers Association area and national conferences, Indianapolis, IN, and Louisville, KY

Society for Study of Motivation, Washington, D.C.

William & Mary National Curriculum Network Conference, Williamsburg, VA#

### **International organizations**

Biennial Conferences for the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children, Adelaide, Australia; Barcelona, Spain; The Hague, The Netherlands; Hamburg, Germany; Hong Kong, China; Istanbul, Turkey; Louisville, KY; Manila, The Philippines; Montréal, Canada; New Orleans, Louisiana; Odense, Denmark; Prague, Czech Republic; San Francisco, California; Salt Lake City, UT; Sydney, Australia; Toronto, Canada; Vancouver, Canada; and Warwick, England

International ECHA (European Council for High Ability) Conferences, Ljubljana, Slovenia; Muenster, Germany; and Vienna, Austria

International Conference on Giftedness, Mexico City, Mexico#

MIB International Scientific Conference on Talent Education, Portorož, Slovenia#

Perspectives on Gifted Education, Sydney, Australia

U.S.–China Joint Education Conference sponsored by People to People Ambassador Programs, Beijing, China

## Publications: Books, Chapters, and Articles

### Publications by members of our staff and through Center projects, by date

#### Books

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#### Chapters

- Roberts, J. L. (2017). Advocacy. In R. D. Eckert & J. H. Robins (Eds.), *Designing services and programs: A guidebook for gifted education* (2nd ed.) (pp. 200–204). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
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- Roberts, J. L., & Inman, T. F. (2007, September). Effective advocates: Always on the alert! *Parenting for High Potential*, 14-15.
- Roberts, J. L., & Inman, T. F. (2007, June). Effective advocates: Communicating with decision makers. *Parenting for High Potential*, 28-29.
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## Service to Organizations

### Julia Roberts

#### The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)

- 2015-2017 Member, Legislative and Advocacy Committee
- 2014-2015 Talent Development Task Force
- 2013-present Member, Development Committee
- 2013-2015 Co-chair, Advocacy and Legislative Committee
- 2011-2013 Chair, Advocacy and Legislative Committee
- 2009-2011 Member, Legislative Committee
- 2008-2010 Invited Member, Rapid Response Team
- 2007-present NCATE Specialty Program Reviewer and Auditor for Gifted Education
- 2006-2009 Member, Board of Directors (elected)
- 2005-2007 Member, *Parenting for High Potential* Editorial Advisory Board
- 2004-present Member, NCATE Board of Examiners representing NAGC
- 2004-2005 Co-chair, Local Arrangements Committee for 2005 Conference, Louisville
- 2003-2004 Co-chair, Search Committee for Executive Director
- 2002-2005 Member, Board of Directors (elected)
- 2002-2004 Finance Secretary, Member of the Executive Committee
- 2001-2003 Member, State Legislative Task Force
- 1998-2007 Chair, Legislative Liaison Task Force
- 1997-2005 Member, Elections Committee
- 1997-1998 Chair, Affiliates Committee
- 1997-1998 Co-chair, Local Arrangements Committee for 1998 Conference, Louisville
- 1996-2008 Presenter at the Annual Affiliate Conference
- 1996-1997 Member, Awards Committee
- 1995-2001 Member of the Board of Directors (elected in 1995 and reelected in 1998)
- 1990-1991 Secretary-Treasurer, Division of Professional Learning
- 1989-1990 Co-chair, Division of Professional Learning
- 1986-1989 Co-chair, Inservice/Staff Development Committee

#### The Association for the Gifted (TAG), a division of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)

- 2017-2018 Past-President
- 2015-2016 Past-President
- 2014-2015, 2016 President
- 2012-2013 Vice President (President-Elect)
- 2012 Coordinator, TAG Symposium in Denver, CO
- 2008-present Member, Board of Directors
- 2008-2010 Chair, Governmental Relations
- 1993-1996 Treasurer
- 1988-1996 Member, Board of Directors

#### The World Council for Gifted and Talented Children

- 2017-2021 President (elected)
- 2017 Member of Academic Committee for 22nd World Conference, Sydney, Australia
- 2014-2015 Member of Academic Committee for 21st World Conference, Denmark
- 2013-2017 Member of the Executive Committee, Treasurer (elected)
- 2013 Host for the 20th Biennial World Conference, Louisville, KY
- 2009-2013 Member of the Executive Committee, Treasurer (elected)

#### People to People International

- 2005 Invited Leader of a Gifted Education Delegation to China

#### The National Center for Research on Gifted Education, The University of Connecticut

- 2014-2017 Member, Advisory Board

#### The Council for Exceptional Children

- 2011, 2012 Member, Program Advisory Committee

#### Gifted Child Today

- 1997-present Member, Advisory Board

#### The College Board

- 2010-2012 Invited member, Advanced Placement Summer Institute Advisory Panel

#### The American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education

- 1988-present Institutional Representative

#### The Duke Talent Identification Program

- 1983-present Coordinator, Kentucky Awards Ceremony for the Duke Talent Identification Program

#### Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)

- 2006-present Chair, Program Review and Audit Teams for Gifted Studies
- 2004-2014 Member, NCATE Board of Examiners

#### Education Professional Standards Board

- 2015-present Program Review Committee
- 1998-present Content Reviewer, Gifted Education Programs

#### Gifted Education State Task Force

- 2012-2013 Member (appointed by the Commissioner of Education)

#### Kentucky Advisory Council for Gifted and Talented Education

- 2017-present Chair (appointed by the governor)
- 2015 Vice Chair
- 2014-2017 Member (appointed by the governor)
- 2011-2013 Member (appointed by the governor)
- 2002-2017 Organizer and Facilitator, Annual Symposium for Educators on Gifted Education at Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill
- 1991-present Organizer and Facilitator, Annual Symposium on Kentucky's Children and Youth Who Are Gifted and Talented

#### Kentucky Association for Gifted Education (KAGE)

- 1993-present Organizer, Gifted Education Update (New Teacher Workshop)
- 1982-present Board Member

#### Kentucky Girls STEM Collaborative

- 2012 Co-chair, Girls STEM Collaborative Conference
- 2011-2015 Member, Leadership Board

#### Kentucky Science Center

- 2011-present Member, Advisory Board



## Northern Kentucky University

2010-2013 Member, External Advisory Panel, National Science Foundation for the FORCE Project: Focus on Occupations, Recruiting, Community, and Engagement

## Odyssey of the Mind

2009, 2016 Host of the state competition

## STEM Task Force – Commonwealth of Kentucky

2006-2008 Appointed Member (one of 105)

## The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence

2015-2016 Member, The Achievement Gap Study Group

2014-present Member, Invited

2008-2012 Partner, Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership with a focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, Funded by the AT&T Foundation, the J. Graham Brown Foundation, and the Preston Family Foundation

## Tracy Inman

### National Association for Gifted Children

2017-present Chair, Parent Editorial Content and Advisory Board (PECAB)

2016-2017 Member of appointed Whole Child Gifted Task Force

2015-2017 Chair, Parent and Community Network

2015-2017 Member, PECAB

2014-2015 Member of appointed Search Committee for Executive Director

2012-2013 Member of appointed Convention Task Force

2009-2011, 2017-present Member of Publications Committee

2008-2011 Chair of Advisory Committee for *Parenting for High Potential*

2008-2011 Tri-Alliance Member (all parenting groups)

2001-present Curriculum Network member

2001-present Middle Grades Network member

2001-present Parent and Community Network member

2001-present Reviewer of presentation proposals

## The Association for the Gifted (TAG), a division of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)

2017-present Search Committee member for editor of *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*

2015-present *Journal for the Education of the Gifted* Paper of the Year selection committee

2012-present Board member

2012-present Webmaster

2010-present Reviewer of presentation proposals

## The World Council for Gifted and Talented Children

2013 Volunteer Facilitator for Sessions

2011-present Member

## European Council for High Ability

2014-present Member

## Kentucky Association of Gifted Education (KAGE)

2016-18 Past-president

2014-16 President

2012-14 President-elect

2008-present Board member

## KAGE Foundation Board

2012-present Member

## Vertical Teams Training Institutes Dates and Subjects

1996 English (piloted for the southeastern region)

1997 English, Building Success in Social Studies (piloted for the southern region)

1998 English, Building Success in Social Studies, Math (piloted for the southern region)

1999 English, Building Success in Social Studies, Math

2000 English, Math

2001 English, Math, Social Studies

2002 English, Math, Social Studies

2003 English, Math

2004 English, Math

2005 English, Math

2006 English, Math, Social Studies, Science, World Languages (nationally piloted)

2007 English, Math, Social Studies, Science

2008 English, Math, Social Studies, Science

2009 English, Math

## Webinars on Wednesdays

Tracy and Julia made the following invited presentations for the National Association for Gifted Children's Webinars on Wednesday:

- "Differentiation Toolkit: Simple Strategies That Work." April 24, 2013.
- "What Does an Effectively Differentiated Classroom Look Like?" April 17, 2013.
- "Instructional Strategies for Differentiated Assessments and Products within the Classroom." February 15, 2012.
- "Making Differentiated Products Powerful." March 30, 2011.

## White Paper

**The white paper entitled "Kentucky's Future: Mining Untapped Treasure — Children and Youth of the Commonwealth Who are Gifted and Talented" was created by**

Lynette Baldwin, executive director, KAGE

Dale Brown, superintendent, Warren County Schools

Sharon Clouse, parent, Glasgow

Mary Evans, principal, Cumberland Trace Elementary School, Warren County

Tracy Inman, associate director, The Center for Gifted Studies

Carl Stoltzfus, instructional supervisor, Hart County

**Input on the paper was given by the Kentucky Department of Education.**

**The paper was endorsed by**

Greater Louisville KAGE Chapter

Billy Harper, Harper Industries

Kentucky Advisory Council for Gifted and Talented Education

Kentucky Association for Gifted Education

Kentucky Association for Academic Competition

Kentucky Association of Elementary School Principals

Kentucky Association of School Superintendents

Kentucky Education Association

Kentucky PTA

Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence

Gene Wilhoit, commissioner, Kentucky Department of Education

## i<sup>4</sup>/Innovate Kentucky Projects

Innovate Kentucky created and participated in the following programs:

- Innovate Kentucky sponsored several VAMPY classes from 2012-2016: Sustainability, STEAM Labs, Problems You've Never Solved Before, Advanced Investigations in Chemistry, and VAMPY MakerSpace. Innovate Kentucky also sponsored a Super Saturdays class in 2014 called Play, Create, Innovate

- Innovate Kentucky co-sponsored two events related to girls and STEM in October 2012. First, a conference called Collaboration: The Key to Successful Programming for Girls in STEM was co-sponsored with the Kentucky Girls STEM Collaborative and SkyTeach. Participants came from schools, universities, and businesses across the state and included a large group of middle school girls. Second, 75 girls in grades 5-8 attended Girls in STEM Day at WKU. Participants engaged in activities like chemistry lab experiments and engineering challenges, and STEM professionals talked about how the activities mirrored their professional work.
- In January 2013, Innovate Kentucky partnered with the Mary Wood Weldon Memorial Library in Glasgow for Engineering Tomorrow, an all-day event for students to learn about engineering from hands-on activities as part of the Discover Tech: Engineers Make a World of Difference exhibit at the library.
- During the Winter Terms of 2013 and 2014, students from the Carol Martin Gattton Academy of Mathematics and Science and the WKU Honors College participated in Capturing the Innovative Spirit, taught by J. Krist Schell of the WKU Gordon Ford College of Business. This three-week winter course helped students actualize their business ideas through such activities as writing business proposals; taking field trips to local businesses and Innoplexx, WKU's Student Business Accelerator (see below); and acting out various role-playing scenarios that could arise in a business environment.
- In December 2013, Innovate Kentucky partnered with the WKU Research Foundation, the Central Region ICC (part of the Kentucky Innovation Network), Warren County, the City of Bowling Green, the Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce, and Bowling Green Technical College, to create Innoplexx, The WKU Student Incubator, a 1,200-square-foot space in the Center for Research and Development at WKU. The space gives students a place to work and network with others that are in the first phase of starting their business.
- In January 2014, PNC Bank awarded a \$150,000 grant to The Center as part of the Grow Up Great Initiative to Create the Little Learners, Big Ideas project.
- In March 2014, Innovate Kentucky and The Center established IdeaFestival Bowling Green.

## Twice-Exceptional Students Study

The following work was a result of the twice-exceptional students study:

Knotts, J. D., Roberts, J. L., and Szymanski, A. (2016). *Current status of twice-exceptional students: A follow-up study of law and policy*. National Association for Gifted Children Conference, Orlando, FL

Pereira, N., Knotts, J. D., & Roberts, J. L. (2015). Current status of twice-exceptional students: A look at legislation and policy in the United States. *Gifted and Talented International*, 30(1-2), 122-134.

Roberts, J. L., Pereira, N., & Knotts, J. D. (2015). State law and policy related to twice-exceptional learners: Implications for practitioners and policymakers. *Gifted Child Today*, 38(4), 215-219.

Pereira, N., & Roberts, J. L. (2013). *International perspectives on twice-exceptional learners: Recognition and services*. 20th Biennial World Conference of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children, Louisville, KY.

Roberts, J. L., & Pereira, N. (2013). *Current state of twice-exceptional students: A current look at legislation, policy, and standards*. National Association for Gifted Children Conference, Indianapolis, IN.

## Grants Awarded to The Center for Gifted Studies

1990-1993 Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act Grant, *Enhancing Educational Opportunities for Gifted Middle School Students*, United States Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement, \$722,805.

1993-1994 United States Information Agency Grant, *Summer Ventures: A Russian-American Educational Partnership with the Citizen Exchange Council*, NY; Rostov State University, Western Carolina University, \$76,440 (\$19,000 subcontracted to the Center for Gifted Studies).

1993-1996 Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act Grant, *Restructuring Primary Education: Responding to Kentucky's Educational Reform*, United States Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement, \$744,874.

1994-1995 United States Information Agency Grant, *High School Science and Humanities Reciprocal Exchange*, with the Citizen Exchange Council, NY; Rostov State University; the Tennessee Governor's School for the Sciences; and Western Carolina University, \$168,343 (\$21,000 subcontracted to the Center for Gifted Studies).

1995-1996 United States Information Agency Grant, *Summer Ventures: A Russian-American Educational Partnership*, with the Citizen Exchange Council, NY; Rostov State University; and the Tennessee Governor's School for the Sciences, \$201,051 (\$21,000 subcontracted to the Center for Gifted Studies).

1996-1999 Field Initiated Research Grant with a Focus on Achievement, *The Long-Term Impact of Kentucky's K-3 Continuous Progress Curriculum on Student Achievement in Core Content Areas*. United States Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement, \$954,000 (\$327,000 subcontracted to the Center for Gifted Studies). With Roger Pankratz.

1998-1999 Eisenhower Mathematics and Science Grant, *Raising Middle School Achievement in Mathematics and Science Project*, \$50,000. With Roger Pankratz.

1999-2000 Eisenhower Mathematics and Science Grant, *Western Kentucky Eisenhower Middle School Mathematics and Science Project*, \$58,950. With Roger Pankratz.

2000-2001 Eisenhower Mathematics and Science Grant, *Western Kentucky Eisenhower Middle School Science Achievement Project*, \$56,160. With Roger Pankratz.

2001-2002 Eisenhower Mathematics and Science Grant, *Raising Achievement in Middle School Science Project*, \$50,540.

2002-2003 Eisenhower Mathematics and Science Grant, *Raising Achievement in Middle School Science Project*, \$58,476.

2003-2005 NASA Grant, *How Old is Your Universe? Workshop for Middle Grade Science Teachers*, \$49,894.

2004 Grant for students from Allen County to attend The Center's programming, Laura Turner Foundation, \$10,000.

2004 Grant for students from Daviess County to attend The Center's programming, Hagar Foundation, \$10,000.

2006 WKU's Academic Affairs "Provost's Initiatives for Excellence" (PIE) grant, *Ed Hamilton: Sharing His Autobiography and His Art*, \$1200.

2006-2007 *Symposia on Gifted Education*, Kentucky Department of Education, \$21,000.

2007-2008 *Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics for Students Underrepresented in Those Careers*, Kentucky Department of Education, \$64,000.

2007-2008 *A Message for Support for Gifted Education*, Kentucky Department of Education, \$7,000.

2008-2009 *Symposia on Gifted Education*, Kentucky Department of Education, \$19,000.



- 2008-2013 Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Grant, *Project Gifted and Talented Math and Science (GEMS)*, United States Department of Education, \$2,000,000.
- 2011-2014 *Symposia on Gifted Education*, Kentucky Department of Education, \$13,000.
- 2012-2015 *i<sup>4</sup> Initiative*, James Graham Brown Foundation, \$500,000 plus dollar for dollar match. [Later renamed Innovate Kentucky.]
- 2013-2015 *High-Level Thinking for Young Children*, PNC Foundation, \$150,000. [Also known as Little Learners, Big Ideas.]
- 2014-2015 *Symposia on Gifted Education*, Kentucky Department of Education, \$8,000.
- 2014-2015 Race to the Top Grant via Green River Regional Education Cooperative. *Advanced Placement Instructional Strategies for All Students: A Four-Day Institute for Middle and High School English Language Arts Teachers*, United States Department of Education, \$65,200.
- 2015 Nazi Germany and the Holocaust Murals, The Jewish Heritage Fund for Excellence, \$20,000.
- 2015-2016 *Symposia on Gifted Education*, Kentucky Department of Education, \$13,000.
- 2015-2018 Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Grant, *Reaching Academic Potential Project*, United States Department of Education, \$238,000.
- 2015-2016 Race to the Top Grant via Green River Regional Educational Cooperative. *Kentucky Student Growth Project for Middle and High School English Teachers* United States Department of Education, \$65,200.
- 2016-2017 *Symposia on Gifted Education*, Kentucky Department of Education, \$10,500.
- 2016-2020 The National Stem Cell Foundation STEM Scholars Program, \$500,000.
- 2017-2018 Nazi Germany and the Holocaust Murals, The Jewish Heritage Fund for Excellence, \$73,700.
- 2017-2020 Qatar Foundation International Grant, \$33,500.

## Awards and Recognitions for Publications and People

### Awards for The Center's magazine, *The Challenge*:

- 1999 Blue Pencil Award of Excellence from the Kentucky Association of Government Communications.

- 2014 Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) Kentucky's Graphic Design Periodical Award of Excellence for the #34 (March 2014) issue.
- 2015 CASE Kentucky's Graphic Design Special Merit Award for the #36 (April 2015) issue.
- 2016 CASE Kentucky's Print and Digital Publications Magazine B Special Merit Award for the #38 (Winter 2016) and the #39 (Spring 2016) issues.

### Awards for books written by staff members of The Center:

- 2009 Julia Roberts and Tracy Inman. *Strategies for Differentiating Instruction: Best Practices for the Classroom*, 2nd ed. Prufrock, 2009. Legacy Award for the Outstanding Book for Educators in Gifted Education from the Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented.
- 2011 Donald Treffinger, Jennifer Jolly, Tracy Inman, and Joan Franklin Smutny. *Parenting Gifted Children: The Authoritative Guide from the National Association for Gifted Children*. Prufrock, 2010. Legacy Award for the Outstanding Book for Parents in Gifted Education from the Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented.
- 2015 Julia Roberts and Tracy Inman. *Strategies for Differentiating Instruction: Best Practices for the Classroom*, 3rd ed. Prufrock, 2015. Nominated for Legacy Award for the Outstanding Book for Educators in Gifted Education from the Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented.
- 2017 Tracy Inman and Jana Kirchner. *Parenting Gifted Children 101: An introduction to gifted kids and their needs*. Prufrock, 2016. Legacy Award for the Outstanding Book for Parents in Gifted Education from the Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented.

### Awards for staff members:

#### Gail Hiles

- 2002 Staff Excellence Award in the Administrative Support Category for Western Kentucky University (WKU), sponsored by the WKU Alumni Association

#### Tracy Inman

- 1990 Who's Who Among American Educators
- 1992 Warren County Secondary Teacher of the Year
- 1992 Kentucky Teacher of the Year, semifinalist
- 1994 Governor's Scholar Teacher Impact State Recognition
- 2009 Kentucky Association for Gifted Education Service and Advocacy Award

#### Julia Roberts

- 1987 Advanced Placement Award, College Board Southern Regional Office
- 1991 Kentucky Association for Gifted Education Distinguished Service Award
- 1991 WKU Award for Public Service
- 1992 Golden Key
- 1998 Educator of the Year, National Association for Gifted Children
- 1998 University Distinguished Professor, WKU
- 2001 The NAGC David W. Belin Advocacy Award
- 2003 Mahurin Endowed Professor of Gifted Studies at WKU
- 2003 Listed as One of 55 Most Influential People in the History of Gifted Education in *Profiles of Influence in Gifted Education: Historical Perspectives and Future Directions*, published in recognition of the 50th anniversary of the NAGC
- 2006 Honored as One of the 100 Gifts WKU Has Given the World for the Centennial of the University
- 2007 Joseph P. Cangemi Psychology/Education Award
- 2008 The WKU College of Education and Behavioral Sciences Public Service Award
- 2011 The William Nallia Award for Educational Leadership, Kentucky Association of School Administrators
- 2011 The Acorn Award for Faculty Excellence (one award to the outstanding professor at a Kentucky four-year university), Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education
- 2012 Girl Scouts of Kentucky Wilderness Road 100 Women of Distinction (1912-2012)
- 2012 Spirit of WKU Award
- 2012 National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) Distinguished Service Award
- 2015 Warren County Human Rights Commission, Woman of Achievement
- 2015 The University of Missouri College of Education Honorary Alumni Award
- 2015 The Palmarium Award, University of Denver Institute for the Development of Gifted Education
- 2015 Distinguished Educator Award, Kentucky Association of Teacher Educator



THEN  
AND  
NOW



Concept by Sam Oldenburg



Since 1982, The Center for Gifted Studies at Western Kentucky University has lead the way in serving gifted and talented young people, their educators, and their families. This history covers the origins and evolution of all our programs and accomplishments. With interviews of over 50 friends of The Center and photos reflecting every era, we recount

*VAMPY Dances in the West Hall Cellar,  
the first Super Saturdays classes in Tate Page,  
our 20th anniversary celebration on the South Lawn,  
the innovations of our Javits grant-funded projects,  
decades of study-travel tours,  
the origins of the graduate program in gifted studies,  
AP consultant dinners,  
and more.*

Whether you were with us in our early days or are brand-new to our programs, the history of our first 35 years will give you the engaging story of the breadth, depth, and long-lasting impact of the work of The Center.



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