

Institute for the Study of Advanced Development
President's Report 2005
June 14, 2005

This year marked the 25th anniversary of the Gifted Development Center. To celebrate, we combined our third annual gathering of families of exceptionally and profoundly gifted children ("PG Retreat") with a three-day conference at the Hyatt Regency. We attracted 46 PG families from as far away as Tokyo, Hong Kong and Germany, and conference participants from Europe. In determining a conference theme, we reflected on our most significant contributions over the last 25 years: (1) we helped to redefine giftedness as asynchrony; (2) we created the concept of the visual-spatial learner; (3) we constructed instruments to assess overexcitabilities; and (4) we refined the assessment of gifted children with learning disabilities (twice exceptional children).

We have become known as the detectives who can weave the complex threads of twice exceptional children into a meaningful picture to guide remediation and development. In order to accomplish this, we needed to learn about visual, auditory and sensory processing disorders, AD/HD, and Asperger Syndrome. At our conference, we brought together the 40 leading experts in different disciplines who had most shaped our thinking and honed our diagnostic skills. Dr. Lucy Miller compiled data we had collected on all of our clients with her Short Sensory Profile and concluded that there is a higher incidence of sensory processing disorders in the gifted than in the general population. Dr. Joan Burleigh described the central auditory processing issues of children we had referred to her. Drs. Lynne Hellerstein and Rebecca Hutchins reported on the visual challenges of the children we have referred and the progress they achieved through vision therapy.

Dr. Karen Rogers, who learned to assess children in an extensive postdoc with us, shared the results of her study (supported by a Malone Foundation grant) of the impact of the educational plans she had devised. Linda Leviton, Director of our West Coast Office, constructed a tactile-kinesthetic learner corollary of our visual-spatial and auditory-sequential learners. Dr. George Dorry, a key member of our Visual-Spatial Learner Study Group, created a model of the characteristics of visual-spatial learners, the characteristics of children with AD/HD and the characteristics of children with both labels. Dr. Deirdre Lovecky introduced her new book, *Different Minds: Gifted Children with AD/HD, Asperger Syndrome and Other Learning Deficits*. We have become a distributor for this state-of-the-art manual. When I invited Dr. Elaine Aron, author of *The Highly Sensitive Person*, to keynote the conference, I was surprised to learn that when she first began her research on sensitivity, the only articles she came across in her search were written by Dee Lovecky and me! She was very eager to meet us.

The 25th anniversary conference was truly a golden moment for all of us. Thank you for sharing it with us by participating in the opening ceremonies. To further commemorate our work, Betty Maxwell put together a scrapbook of letters and photographs from colleagues whose lives we've touched along the way.

Last May, an inquiry from an agency in Brisbane, Australia, put into motion a trip Down Under. Allie Golon's book, *Raising Topsy-Turvy Kids: Successfully Parenting Your Visual-Spatial Child*, was in press, and the invitation was extended to both of us to come to Brisbane. Soon, we received invitations from Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra, Perth and Adelaide, in Australia, and Auckland and Christchurch, New Zealand! We had to turn down Perth and Adelaide, as we could not stay away that long. This unforgettable trip took place the first three weeks of March.

It is gratifying to see how our ideas have been embraced in Australia and New Zealand. There are actually three centers, one in Sydney and two in Melbourne, providing support services for visual-spatial learners, as well as assessment and presentations. We were interviewed for several magazines, newspapers and radio programs (some national) in New Zealand and Australia. Allie conducted visual-spatial workshops for children in most of the cities we visited. We usually spoke to 200 people in each venue, and made lasting friendships with many wonderful people.

This year we were able to reach several groups outside of gifted education. While most of our presentations Down Under were for gifted advocacy organizations, we also had the opportunity to address the Australian Primary Principals Association in Brisbane and meet with Aboriginal Educators in Melbourne. Our suspicion was confirmed that Maori, Aboriginal and Pacific Islanders are usually visual-spatial learners. While we were away, Steve Haas worked on a proposal for a Javits grant with a school district in Arizona to validate our *Visual-Spatial Learner Identifier* with 750 Native-American children.

Last May, I was asked to present to an "Arts and At-Risk Kids Conference" in Colorado Springs. I wrote a paper entitled, "At-Risk Youth and the Creative Process," which I recently submitted for publication to the *Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk*. I'm waiting to hear if it has been accepted. The presentation on at-risk youth led to my being invited to keynote the ARTS/BUSINESS/EDUCATION Consortium Awards Banquet April 20th in Colorado Springs. I presented the awards and, to my surprise, was given one myself.

October 7th, I was invited to present a three-hour pre-conference seminar on visual-spatial learners for the ChildSpirit Conference in Asilomar, California, then flew to Portland, to present a full-day seminar on giftedness for the Oregon Psychological Association on October 8th. In December, Allie and I were invited to speak to the Learning Disabilities Association of the Yukon. This month the two of us were invited by Transdisciplinary Workshops to speak with social workers, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, educators and parents in Freeport, Maine on visual-spatial learners. And, next November, I have been invited to present to the European Council of Independent Schools in The Hague. The word is spreading.

In August, our representative in Toronto, Jerry Silverman, was successful in getting *Upside-Down Brilliance* into the major bookstores in Canada: Chapters and Indigo. This initiated a series of speaking engagements for Allie Golon and me in Canada, beginning

with Vancouver, BC, in October; Whitehorse, Yukon in December; and Edmonton, Alberta in April. We were also interviewed on the Bill Good radio show in Vancouver.

In November, in Salt Lake City, the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) Annual Conference once again became a showcase for the work of the Institute. I was invited by the President of NAGC to give a special double session on “INTENSITIVE! Four Decades of Studying Emotional Giftedness.” Allie Golon was asked to give the keynote address at the Parent Day to over 200 participants. Frank Falk analyzed data on 103 children to whom we had administered the new *Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, Fourth Edition* (WISC-IV). Three presentations for NAGC resulted from this analysis. The first and most exciting was by Bobbie Gilman and me; we had a packed room of influential leaders. I presented once by myself as Frank was unable to attend. The third was by Bobbie Gilman and Kathi Kearney. Steve Haas and I presented a session on gifted visual-spatial learners. Allie and I presented on “Raising Topsy-Turvy Kids.” Allie’s book was released at the conference. I also met with Luz Estudillo during the conference, our former intern from the Philippines, who discussed plans for bringing Allie and me to Manila.

The work of the Institute will also be showcased at the World Council for Gifted Children Conference in New Orleans. We will hold a full-day Symposium on Assessment of the Gifted on August 7th, as well as a full day of presentations on visual-spatial learners on August 8th. The papers from the Symposium on Assessment will be published in a special issue of *Roeper Review*, edited by Bobbie Gilman, Kathi Kearney and me. A book is also expected to result from the papers, co-edited by Richard Boolootian and me, to be published by Wiley. Bobbie Gilman, Steve Haas, Allie Golon, Linda Leviton, Frank Falk, Kathi Kearney, and I submitted proposals and all were accepted. Frank and Susan Daniels will introduce the new *Overexcitability Questionnaire for Children* (OEQ-IIC) that they have developed and validated. We will soon be collecting data with the OEQ-IIC with all of our clients.

The Gifted Development Center website and the Visual-Spatial Resource website have both undergone major transformation this year. Allie Golon is our new webmaster. Bobbie Gilman’s book, *Empowering Gifted Minds*, has won two awards: *Foreword Magazine’s* Silver Award and the 2004 Legacy Award. Allie has completed a second book for children, *If You Could See the Way I Think: A Handbook for Visual-Spatial Kids*. She will be self-publishing it as an 8 ½ x 11 spiral bound, kid-friendly manual. It is due out next week. Betty Maxwell and Linda Leviton have also begun books on teaching visual-spatial learners. A woman who read Allie’s first book has begun a campaign to get us on Oprah! Over 20 requests that we know of have been sent to Oprah’s website. It is clear that our organization is having a global impact and that our influence is growing.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Silverman, President