



Center for Talent Development  
Northwestern University  
School of Education and Social Policy

# Talent

Spring 2013



NORTHWESTERN  
UNIVERSITY

## Director's Message

### Messages for the Next Decade

As CTD launches its 4th decade we felt it appropriate to update our visual identity and logo. As well, we have refined our messaging to reflect the current portfolio of valuable research, programs and services CTD offers the community of gifted learners. We present what is behind the refinements in this issue of *Talent*.



Talent development is the crux of the CTD mission. One message that we want to send students is this: Don't give up! If things seem hard, keep working. Stay on the path that will prepare you for success.

My daughter is a talented artist. Her first year in art school she made many calls home, distressed and feeling that she didn't measure up. I remember saying, "Start where you are, and develop the talent the admissions people saw in you." At the end of the year, her teachers selected four of her pieces to be showcased.

CTD's goal is to foster a commitment to achieve in young, gifted learners so that even when things get hard, they embrace challenges and keep working.

As parents and educators, we want our children to succeed. To do so, though, they sometimes need to struggle, or even fail, and realize it's not the end of the world.

The people who make it, after all, are not those who never fail; they are the people who believe in themselves, learn from setbacks and explore various pathways.

At CTD, we believe in gifted learners. We believe in being committed to high achievement and growth and strive to model it in all we do.

*Paula Olszewski-Kubilius*

## 30 Years Strong, Fresh New Image CTD Introduces New Logo and Tagline

CTD celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2012, which provided the opportunity to reflect on what we have learned and enact our mission in new and innovative ways. "The new logo is symbolic of an abundance of research showing that talent has trajectories, or paths," says Paula Olszewski-Kubilius, director of CTD. "Our goal is to help children get on those paths by providing wonderful educational experiences. We offer enrichment, plus accelerated options and leadership programs as students get older."

Olszewski-Kubilius is quick to note that CTD is not changing its educational model, but rather improving how that model is conveyed to students, parents and educators. Below, she expounds on CTD's dynamic pathways for gifted learners — what they are, where they lead and what students learn along the way.

### Pathways

Research has shown that an individual's talent development pathway starts with ability and potential, progresses to increasing competence and expertise, and can lead, if a person chooses, to creative, productive careers and even eminence in adulthood. Moving along the path requires a malleable mindset. "Ability is important as a foundation," says Olszewski-Kubilius, "but we also need to view talent as developmental. Students get more competent and confident with increased work, study, or practice."

One goal of CTD's refined messaging is to highlight the fact that gifted students can find multiple and complementary opportu-



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**Dynamic Pathways for Gifted Learners**

nities for growth through CTD. "In the past, people may have identified with CTD's individual programs, such as the Summer Program or the Civic Education Project," says Olszewski-Kubilius. "We want students and parents to see their options across programs. A student who takes Algebra on Saturdays, for example, will be ready to take Algebra II in the summer." Those courses are offered by different programs, but they are both part of the CTD experience.

Once students are on their individual talent development paths, CTD's goal is to encourage and support them on the journey. While Olszewski-Kubilius under-

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# 30 Years Strong

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stands that some students will step off the path towards highly creative, productive careers, her hope is that students don't fall off due to fear or lack of training or opportunity. "We strive to prepare young people for what they want to do and ensure that, whatever goals they choose, they do so for good reasons."

Getting to the end of the path, according to Olszewski-Kubilius, is not as important as the skills and character traits learned along the way. "The destination is not just achievement, but development of the whole person — building knowledge of strengths, interests and talents," she says. "We want to encourage kids to embrace challenge and become independent, autonomous learners who are self-directed and resilient."

## Path Marker #1: Ability

"In the early stages, we want to expose children to a lot of different things, build enthusiasm, and see what piques interest," Olszewski-Kubilius says.



Young students can choose from a wide range of courses offered by CTD programs such as Gifted LearningLinks, the Saturday Enrichment Program and the Summer Program.

To assess ability, CTD runs Northwestern University's Midwest Academic Talent Search

(NUMATS). NUMATS offers above-grade-level testing to provide students in grade 3 and above with a more accurate representation of their ability than grade-level tests provide. "NUMATS helps kids get a better handle on their strengths and gives them a way to look at their growth over time," says Olszewski-Kubilius.

For younger students, Olszewski-Kubilius recommends enrichment opportunities as a means to identify those with high ability. This is particularly important for low-income students and students with culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds, because they often enter the school system having had fewer opportunities to learn or abilities that aren't recognized using traditional measures. Testing these students can prove inaccurate when trying to identify high ability learners. Olszewski-Kubilius adds,

"Research has shown the benefits of giving young students advanced material and monitoring their response."

## Path Marker #2: Increased Competence and Developing Expertise

As children age, the emphasis is more on what they do with their ability. Achievement is increasingly emphasized. "Older students have more defined interests, so we enable them to pursue those interests," says Olszewski-Kubilius. "They can take a series of classes in programming or math or literature to help them develop expertise, technique and competency. Their interests may change but we try to cultivate a commitment to achievement."

Participating in a CTD course not only deepens a student's subject knowledge, it offers immersion learning into this achievement-oriented mentality. "Perhaps you're the big fish in a little pond at your school," Olszewski-Kubilius explains. "Are you willing to put yourself in CTD courses in which you'll be a smaller fish in a bigger pond? Do you have the self-confidence and coping skills to be in these more competitive situations? Can you develop these skills by being in a more academically challenging, yet very supportive learning environment here at CTD?"

Participating in a single course can start to build confidence and the coping skills required when facing challenges. Taking courses across CTD programs gives students practice in transitioning into different



learning arenas and provides excellent training for real life moves from elementary to high school and college and from job to job.

## Achievement Roadblocks: Perfectionism, Fear of Failure

"The main thing that derails students' achievement is not ability," says Olszewski-Kubilius. "Gifted learners are smart, and that doesn't change. It's the non-cognitive components that can get in the way of success. Bright children get derailed when they feel like they have to be perfect, or when their self-concept is threatened by a more competitive environment. They fear failure."

If perfectionism and fear are roadblocks along a student's talent development pathway, CTD serves as roadside assistance, helping students build up the cognitive and

non-cognitive elements they need. "The benefits of CTD are not just what you gain in knowledge about a particular subject," says Olszewski-Kubilius. "They include what you learn about yourself and the confidence you acquire. You can take intellectual risks. You can lose, fail, or not do as well as you want and not be deterred."

CTD promotes the elements of high achievement in a number of ways.



"First, we are purposeful about stepping up the challenge level in our courses and providing supportive people to help kids manage that challenge," says Olszewski-Kubilius. "We don't see the students day to day throughout their entire educational career, but it is amazing how much of an impact a short-term program can have.

"A student's self-perception can be completely reoriented by a CTD teacher who says, 'You did okay here. You can manage yourself in more academically rigorous environments.'

"Another important aspect of the process is our work with parents," says Olszewski-Kubilius. "We provide parent seminars and conferences throughout the year where we talk explicitly about ways that they can help their children acquire the confidence and self-efficacy they need to retain motivation and stay on their talent development path."

Parents can support a resilient mindset, Olszewski-Kubilius says, by telling children, "You don't have to get an A. You don't have to be number 1. Do the best you can. See what you can do."

### Path Marker #3: Creative, Productive Careers and Pursuing Eminence

After many years of learning and study, gifted learners may move toward pursuing the highest levels of expertise and creative achievement in their chosen field. CTD's role is to help students acquire the tools to engage in this demanding, yet highly rewarding, creative, productive life should they choose it. "It is fine for people not to focus on eminence," says Olszewski-Kubilius. "Let's prepare them, though, so that they make decisions not because they are afraid but because of a conscious choice they make. Perhaps they want more of a balance between work and other interests or other aspects of their life.

"No area of talent is fully developed in school. The challenge for our society is that outside activities are provided by organizations that charge tuition. So it's hard for families with limited resources."

This is why CTD is purposeful about reaching out to these families and other students who are underrepresented in high-achieving arenas. For example, Project EXCITE, a program held in partnership with the Evanston, Illinois school district, helps

minority students close the achievement gap and get on a path toward taking upper-level math and science courses in high school. Likewise, the national Jack Kent Cooke Scholarship provides outstanding opportunities for gifted students with financial need.

So while an eminent level of achievement is not the ultimate goal for everyone, CTD

strives to make it possible for anyone who is a gifted learner. There is great value in the talent development journey itself, the venture down exciting pathways whatever the destination proves to be. CTD aims to help exceptional students discover their unique voice, explore opportunities, cultivate a love of learning and become bold, creative achievers and contributors. ●



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## CTD's New Look... Dynamic Pathways for Gifted Learners

A truly dynamic and impactful organization is constantly evolving. One unique aspect of CTD is the fact that we conduct and disseminate considerable research as well as develop programs. Significant research findings inform and refine our approach to talent development, programs and services.

Having reached the 30-year milestone in 2012, it made sense to reassess our messaging and visual identity. We want to ensure that our public persona accurately reflects what we are today and how gifted students and families can gain maximum benefit from what we offer.

We embarked on an exercise that proved insightful and productive. Stakeholders including students, families, educators, staff and other partners were asked how they define CTD's mission and how they feel we are perceived. The feedback generated a great deal of discussion.

Time was spent articulating an internal positioning statement, exacting what we stand for and what differentiates CTD from other organizations that serve gifted students. We then transcribed our internal statement into external messages that would resonate with a broad range of audiences.

The final step was to develop a tagline and update our logo to support the messaging. In this issue of *Talent*, Paula Olszewski-Kubilius explores the concept of pathways or options. She stresses that students benefit most when they experience a full range of learning environments rather than limiting themselves to just one. "Pathways" is the driving theme in our messaging and logo mark.

The tagline "**Dynamic Pathways for Gifted Learners**" conveys energy, flexibility and multiple options for those with high ability. It highlights the journey over a prescribed destination. Our new logo, crafted around the acronym CTD, symbolizes multiple pathways that connect to create a unified whole. ●



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## NEWS, DATES & OTHER IMPORTANT CTD INFORMATION

**Opportunities for the Future Conference for Gifted Students and Their Families.** June 29, 2013. *Keynote Speakers Del Siegle, PhD and D. Betsy McCoach, PhD.* Evanston, Illinois. More information at [www.ctd.northwestern.edu/ctd/outreach/familyconference](http://www.ctd.northwestern.edu/ctd/outreach/familyconference).

**Summer Program** offers life-changing academic adventures that allow gifted students in PreK through grade 12 to delve into a subject of intrigue, build upon their strengths and connect with peers. Residential and commuter options available. Applications are being accepted.

**Civic Education Project** combines service-learning with study and reflection. Students in grades 7 through 12 engage with social issues first hand. Sessions are held in major urban sites across the country. Applications are being accepted for Summer.

**Gifted LearningLinks (GLL)** offers rigorous online courses for all ages. Nine-week summer enrichment courses for students in K through grade 8 start on June 15. Credit bearing Honors, Honors Elective and AP®

courses begin on the 15th of every month. The nine-week Accelerated Summer Option, offering credit-bearing courses for grades 6 through 12, also begins on June 15.

**Weekend Enrichment Programs** engage students age 4 through grade 9 in hands-on, in-depth activities. The wide variety of advanced and unique courses range in duration from a single weekend to eight consecutive Saturdays.

• **Saturday Enrichment Program** Fall Session begins on October 5 in locations throughout the Chicago area.

• **Accelerated Weekend Experience** programs explore topics in science, technology or engineering with an expert in the field. Sessions are offered in locations throughout the Midwest.

**Northwestern University's Midwest Academic Talent Search (NUMATS)** provides research-based assessments to identify exceptional academic ability and tailored resources. Registration for the 2013-2014 school year will open in July. ●

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Center for Talent Development has been accredited as a nonpublic supplementary school by the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) since April 1, 1994. NCA CASI is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and has more than 100 years of experience in improving educational quality.



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