

ACCELERATION

Clearing the Runways for Sprinters

The Advancement of Highly Gifted Children

Research shows that highly gifted children flourish in educational systems that provide them with peers of comparable intelligence and curricular challenges appropriate to their abilities. Society is the beneficiary of their considerable talents. The initiative's goal is to provide resources to report on the current state of acceleration practices and research in the United States.

Sir John has always had a highly optimistic view of human potential, and what can be achieved when barriers are removed and resources are provided. This philosophy is behind an original new initiative: "Radical Acceleration of Highly Gifted Children."

Highly gifted children are at risk in two ways: (1) their intellectual gifts often alienate them from their peers, creating socialization problems; (2) their intellectual gifts might not be fully utilized if they are constrained within an educational system that goes too slowly for them. Research shows that such children flourish in educational systems that provide them with peers of comparable intelligence and curricular challenges appropriate to their abilities. When such systems are present, society will be the beneficiary of their considerable talents.

Despite the obvious advantages to society of recognizing and maximizing the intellectual gifts of such children, most school systems are simply unequipped to provide anything more than a moderately accelerated program for them. The goal of the new Templeton "Radical Acceleration" initiative is to develop research and programs to foster such systems of opportunity.

In May of 2003, a gathering at the University of Iowa of leading researchers and practitioners who considered acceleration as a curriculum intervention was supported by the Foundation. Hosted by the Belin-Blank Center and the Gifted Education Research Resource and Information Center (GERRIC), the focus of the meeting was to generate a report on the current state of acceleration in the U.S. The report will include current acceleration practices and research and be modeled after several recent national reports that have had significant impact on educational research, policy and legislation. The new report is being presented at the 2004 Wallace National Research Symposium on Talent Development.