

# Three programs provide education supplement Institute courses challenge gifted students

By Kirsten Bolin  
Of the Emerald

A desire to provide a challenging education with programs designed to meet the special needs of talented and gifted children spurred the development of the University Talented and Gifted — Institute for the Development of Educational Achievement (TAG-IDEA), says George Sheperd, director of TAG-IDEA.

"About 10 years ago, I saw a resurgence in the country in the pursuit of excellence," Sheperd says. "People are realizing we need to change education to meet the needs of individual students."

The primary impetus for development of the institute is a belief, held by many educators and parents, that the public school system in this country does not adequately provide for students who possess above-average intelligence or other special skills, Sheperd says.

"Parents can see that something else can be done for gifted kids," he says.

The institute, which was approved by the State Board of Higher Education in Fall 1984, now encompasses three major programs: the Summer Enrichment Program, the Super Summer Program and the Super Saturday Program.

The TAG classes are self-supporting, with fees ranging from \$30 for Super Saturday to \$415 for the two-week Summer Enrichment program. In addition to instructional materials and instructors, the Summer Enrichment fee includes housing and food.

Before admission to any of the TAG programs, students are screened for special skills or talents such as an above-average IQ, leadership skills or creativity, Sheperd says.

"You just look for certain kinds of characteristics," he says. "Giftedness covers such a wide range... not just A and B students."

The need for programs now provided by the institute became obvious in 1980 with the success of the Summer Enrichment Program's trial year, Sheperd says.

This program, which enables students to learn such skills as speaking a foreign language, producing a newspaper or designing a home, attracts a total of 450 six- through ninth-grade students to three two-week sessions each summer, he says.

"It's been an extremely successful program," he says.

From this initial success came the development in 1982 of Super Summer,

for children in kindergarten through grade five, and in 1983, Super Saturday, for children in grades one through eight.

Some of the Super Saturday programs offered this term include Beginning Rocketry, Fun With Computers and Creative Production Workshop.

In the production workshop class, students explore their creative abilities in visual arts, dance and drama, says instructor Paula Prober-Binder.

Students will end the class by producing an original production, including costume design and musical accompaniment, Prober-Binder says.

"The theme is exploring themselves — kind of a 'hurray for me,'" she says.

The Super Saturday program offers 10 courses each session, Super Summer has 20 courses and Summer Enrichment offers 42.

In an effort to increase the individual attention each student receives, TAG classes limit enrollment to 15 children.

TAG instructors are affiliated with the teacher education division of the College of Education, Sheperd says.

Because of the students' aptitude, instructors must be willing to be energetic in the classroom, says Marjorie DeBuse, TAG liaison for the University and the Eugene 4-J School District. DeBuse also is the coordinator for the Super Summer and Super Saturday programs.

"I find (TAG students) a real challenge," Prober-Binder says. "I find it really exciting... I do a lot of growing when I work with the kids."

The instructors also normally teach full- or part-time at the University or at a school in the Eugene 4-J School District, DeBuse says. Some instructors also are local artists or experts on particular topics, she says.

"It's basically a community outreach program," she says. "A mutual effort between the University and 4-J."

Classes are conducted in classrooms provided by the school district.

Sheperd says each TAG program has been developed to fulfill two main criteria: to create an academic program with a variety of courses on subjects unavailable to children in their regular classes, and to provide students with the social and emotional satisfaction of be-



Photo by Karen Stallwood  
Renee Sindi is one of many area children who finds the 'voluntary' education fun, yet challenging.



Photo by Karen Stallwood  
Sierra Thomas and Randall Lucas are participants in the University's TAG-IDEA program, which is designed to meet the needs of talented and gifted children.

ing with children similar to themselves. Because participation in the program is not required as it is for regular school, students should be particularly motivated to learn, DeBuse says.

"Hopefully, (participation) is a kid choice, not a parent choice" she says.

TAG classes also are different from most other classes because they stress keeping interest in a topic alive, DeBuse says.

"The learning is at levels suitable to their levels," DeBuse says. "The key is enrichment... extend their learning and give them a chance to get involved in the topic. It's supposed to challenge, as well as turn them on."

For more information about TAG-IDEA or any of the TAG programs, contact George Sheperd at the College of Education, 686-3084.

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