

## COMMITTEE ON ACCELERATED ENGLISH

### THE TROUBLED, THE LEARNING-DISABLED, AND THE GIFTED

The troubled, the learning-disabled, and the gifted, and the gifted-special students, all of them, and all of them entitled to what we as English teachers really want to give them, the very best we can. The others, too--the ordinary, everyday kids who fill the classrooms in which those special students reveal their needs--they also are entitled to what we as teachers really want to give them, the very best we can.

Not so long ago, the interest of the community focused on the special problems of troubled students. As teachers we responded. We went to workshops. We tried to learn to recognize the symptoms and needs of the socially-maladjusted child, the emotionally-disturbed student, the chemically dependent youngster. We identified the appropriate support staff and, remembering that we are English teachers and not counselors, we learned to use that support staff. We did our best to make the classroom a humane place in which troubled students could learn.

More recently, the interest of the community turned to learning-disabled students and to their right to be part of the mainstream of public school education. Again we teachers went to workshops. We studied Public Law 94-142. We learned to recognize new symptoms and needs, and again we identified the appropriate support staff and hoped that that staff would be able to help us make the classroom a humane place in which learning-disabled students could learn.

Now, the interest of the community is concentrated on the gifted students in our classrooms, on academic excellence. We are being asked to challenge the most able students, to provide an atmosphere in which talented young people can work constructively and creatively, uninhibited by the slower pace of their classmates. Now, however, there are fewer workshops. We must be our own support staff. Now we are the experts, the ones to determine curricula for these able students. Few

schools have full classes of truly gifted students, so most of us must tailor our material for small numbers or, perhaps, for talented individuals. We have to do our own planning and consult resources we find for ourselves. We must stay alert to Advanced Placement workshops, to opportunities such as Carleton College's Institute for Teachers of Talented High School Students or Macalester's Center for the Teaching of Humanities. We need to talk to colleagues in MCTE. We must add our names to whatever lists exist to offer help to one another in working with accelerated English students. This is particularly important to those of us who believe that public schools should continue to serve these talented young people.

Once again we respond to public interest. We work a little harder. We add another objective to our lesson plans. We remember, however, the ordinary, everyday kids who fill our classrooms. They, too, are special. They also are entitled to the best that we can give them, so we try to make our classrooms humane places in which all youngsters can learn.

Jean Vinton  
Chairperson

### TEACHING THE TROUBLED

By Carolyn L. Bell

Teaching the troubled, alienated or dropout-prone student can be the biggest challenge in the field of teaching and, at the same time, a most rewarding experience. It takes stamina, relevance, a sense of humor, and perspective.

Stamina means that every teacher who wants to be effective with troubled students must take excellent care of him or herself outside the classroom getting plenty of rest, leading a varied and interesting life, coming to class fresh with ideas are only possible when a teacher considers his or her own needs first.

I strongly recommend teachers take little or no work home. If teachers find no time during school hours to read and prepare, possibly they may be requiring too much work; they aren't going