

Confratute—An Interview With Dr. Joe Renzulli and Dr. Sally Reis by John Burrell

On Monday, July 1, I had the privilege of interviewing Drs. Joe Renzulli and Sally Reis in anticipation of the 46th anniversary of Confratute, held on July 14–18 at the University of Connecticut. Confratute, a blend of a conference, fraternity, and institute, has been a pivotal event since 1978, promoting the Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM). Our discussion also touched on their views about summertime enrichment for gifted and twice-exceptional (2e) children.

Drs. Renzulli and Reis have significantly influenced the field of gifted education with their four-part model of talent development, detailed in Joe's 2012 article from *Gifted Child Quarterly*:

- The three-ring model of giftedness
- The Schoolwide Enrichment Model
- Operation Houndstooth for the development of social capital
- Executive functions as leadership skills for a changing world

Dr. Reis has also conducted research on gifted women and girls, talented readers, curriculum compacting, and twice exceptional students.

John: What do you believe has contributed to Confratute's enduring success over 46 years, and what are you most looking forward to this year?

Dr. Reis: Confratute is a community of purpose centered around the Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM) and providing enrichment for students. The conference is research-based and fosters three E's of SEM—Enjoyment, Engagement, and Enthusiasm for learning. Participants leave Confratute recharged. This year, we look forward to returning to campus after COVID. We are back in the residence hall and look forward to a sense of normalcy.

John: Dr. Renzulli, do you have anything you want to add about how Confratute has remained successful after 46 years?

Dr. Renzulli: Confratute's success is related to its hands-on and practical nature, allowing teachers and principals to take ideas right back to their schools. In this way, much of our growth has been organic through word of mouth. Also, in the middle of Confratute is frat. We are a fraternity sharing a common purpose, with social events in the evening. Participants take walks together around our campus and the town of Storrs. Confratute allows people to be a part of something that they believe in and want to implement.

John: Shifting focus, what advice would you offer to parents, teachers, and practitioners on how gifted and 2e students can utilize the summer for personal enrichment?

Dr. Reis: Joe and I really encourage opportunities for creativity. Summer is a time for new ideas and to focus on interest, interest, interest. Focusing on the three E's [Enjoyment, Engagement, and Enthusiasm] is also important. During the summer, we used to send our 2e (twice-exceptional) child to a debate camp where she thrived as opposed to a camp to remediate her dyslexia. Had we sent her to a remedial program, it would have been a travesty that goes against our basic principle – focus on strengths and interests rather than deficits.

Dr. Renzulli: I distinguish between schoolhouse and creative-productive giftedness. Summer is a time for students to do something qualitatively different from school. I encourage hands-on learning, like learning to debate by debating. This is, in fact, how we designed Confratute. For example, participants might learn archeology by meeting with a local archeologist and going on an archeological tour of the campus.

Dr. Reis: Advanced Academic Programs like Mentor Connection and the Jack Kent Cooke Young Scholar Program are important. That said, we really want to focus on enrichment-type programs. Enrichment should be engaging, enjoyable, and fun, and it does not necessarily require money. For example, kids can sign up to be volunteer at the Veteran's Home, the Humane Society or volunteer to work in a head start program or, as our grandson does, several days at the Audubon Society. Summer is a time when talented kids can use their talents to make the world a better place.

John: Thank you so much for your time and helping our readers learn more about Confratute and the importance of summertime enrichment for gifted and talented children and youth.

Editor's Note: You can learn more about Confratute at <https://confratute.uconn.edu/>

Publications by Dr. Joseph S. Renzulli & Dr. Sally M. Reis
https://gifted.uconn.edu/rezulli_all_publications/

Instruments by Dr. Joseph S. Renzulli and Colleagues
https://gifted.uconn.edu/rezulli_instruments

Short Articles by Dr. Joseph S. Renzulli
https://gifted.uconn.edu/rezulli_short_articles/

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