

Gifted kids Jonathan Malabanan, Angela and Mikaela Guerrero

Child prodigies

by CYNTHIA DE CASTRO / AJPress

JONATHAN Malabanan, Angela and Mikaela Guerrero were all reading by the age of one. Jonathan went to college at age 10. Angela was doing sixth grade math at the age of four, while Mikaela played 50 musical pieces on the piano from memory when she was just 5.

Highly gifted children, these Filipino-American kids belong to the world's top one percent level in general intelligence ability.

Jonathan and Angela both attended The Mirman School for the Gifted in LA, one of a handful of private schools in America for the highly gifted (IQ of 145 or above).

The average IQ of the general population is between 90-100. Individuals whose IQs fall between 145 and 160 are typically considered to be highly gifted whereas individuals whose IQs range from 160 to 180 are considered to be exceptionally gifted. Based on Stanford Binet LM tests, Jonathan and Angela are highly gifted while Mikaela is exceptionally gifted.

Angela Guerrero

Angela is 15 and is a third-year undergraduate student (BS Chemistry Minor Music) at Cal State LA (Early Entrance Program for the Highly Gifted). Prior to enrolling at CSULA, she was a student of Gretchen Whitney High School (Grade 7 to 9) where she had a consistent unweighted 4.0 grade point average (GPA).

Her IQ was formally assessed by Dr. Sheila Vaughan of the Mirman School when she was only 4 years old and was found to be a highly gifted child based on a Stanford Binet LM Test. As a child, she attended the Mirman School in Bel Air.

Angela mastered her ABCs at 18 months. At two, Angela completely amazed a doctor who saw her reading the text on a cereal box.

At 3, she surprised her parents, Fe and Alvin Guerrero, when she read an entire book. Dr. Valerie Maxwell of the Structure of Intellect Counseling and Testing Center assessed Angela at that time for gifted abilities using a variety of ecologically valid measures. Dr. Maxwell said that Angela is a classically academically gifted child and requires an environment of intellectual challenge and high stimulation.

Angela was doing sixth grade mathematics at four years of age. She could also transpose a musical piece in different keys at that age.

When she was five, Angela attended kindergarten at Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Downey. At 6, she transferred to the Mirman School located in Mulholland Drive where she studied for the next three years. At 9, she enrolled as a fifth grader at Lewis Elementary School in Downey. After a month, she was promoted to sixth grade and was transferred to Sussman Middle School in Downey. At 10, she entered seventh grade at Gretchen Whitney High School (grade 7-9) in Cerritos. At 13, she took the ACT and the Washington Precollege Test. She had a remarkable composite score of 35 in the



Jonathan Malabanan



Angela Guerrero

ACT and was accepted at CSULA Early Entrance Program. She entered college at 13 and was awarded the Early Entrance Program Department Scholarship on the basis

of her exemplary academic achievements. She was also given a \$4,000 scholarship by Sempra Energy, the youngest recipient of said scholarship. Normally, the scholarship is open only to high school seniors, but Sempra Energy allowed her to apply as a recognition of the existence of gifted children like her.

Angela has been a consistent Dean's Lister in college. She was the recipient of the President of the United States Award for Outstanding Academic Excellence. She was given several commendation awards for being an outstanding delegate in several Model United Nations conferences.

Angela is also a gifted writer and a published poet. Her poems were published in *Spring 2003 Anthology A Celebration of Young Poets, Fall 2002 Anthology A celebration of Young Poets, Anthology of Short Stories by Young Americans 2002, A Celebration of Young Poets spring 2002, Anthology of Poetry by Young Americans 2002 Edition.*

Angela wants to become a doctor in the future. She wants to go into an MD/Phd Program.

Mikaela Guerrero

When Fe Guerrero was pregnant with Mikaela, the doctors told her that the fetus might have abnormalities and advised abortion. According to the perinatologist, a scan of Mikaela's brain revealed very big ridges which is not normal. Thankfully, Fe did not push through with the abortion. A few years later, Fe actually called the medical practice group to inform them that Mikaela turned out to be an exceptionally gifted child.

Like her sister, Mikaela's IQ was assessed by Dr. Sheila Vaughan of the Mirman School and was found to be exceptionally gifted. Her IQ is 167 (Albert Einstein has been said to have an IQ of over 160). She was also invited by the Mirman School to apply, but it was so far from their home that they decided to enroll Mikaela in a nearer school.

Mikaela is 8, a fifth-grader and a consistent honor student at Lewis Elementary School in Downey. She attended Stowers Elementary (Kinder to Grade 1) in ABC Unified School District. During her first few weeks in kindergarten, she was given the year-end exam which she passed with flying colors. The school psychologist, Dr. Richard Quaglino, further assessed her ability and was amazed when Mikaela passed the materials given to third graders. Hence, after a month in kindergarten, she was accelerated to first grade.

Mikaela enrolled at Lewis Elementary School as a second grader. After a month she was accelerated to third grade. As a third and fourth grader, she scored in the advanced level both for Mathematics and English-Language Arts (California Standards Test). She even garnered a perfect-scaled score of 600 in mathematics.

Mikaela is also a consistent honor student just like her sister. At age 6, when she was in third grade, she read all seven Harry Potter Books as well as all seven books in the Narnia Chronicles. A very creative child, Mikaela is a gifted writer and an excellent artist too.

Mikaela wants to become either an engineer or an architect.

Jonathan Malabanan

Born on November 16, 1991, Jonathan is a child prodigy. At 10 months, he was able to identify letters, numbers, shapes and colors. At one year old, he was already reading the road signs from the car and stories in his children's books. He loved reading so much that when his mother got tired of reading to him, he would finish the book himself.

His mother, Lorna, got so worried when he would not stop reading so she sought the help of a professional at Children's Hospital. His IQ score on a Stanford Binet was 136, taken when he was three years old.

When he started going to school, he would not stop complaining about school. So Lorna brought her concern to the principal's office. In the beginning, they refused to give Jon an IQ test because he was still in the pre-K. One month after he turned 6, an IQ test was administered and true enough, his IQ of 145 revealed that he was highly gifted. In fact, Lorna was told that Jon's actual IQ could be higher since they do not have an IQ test for children his age at that time.

Jonathan had his first piano recital when he was 5 years old. He attended the Mirman School for the Gifted and then started going to college at age 10, as a summer program at Calstate LA for two years. He then transferred to Santa Monica College, as a member of the scholar's program, and graduated with an AA degree with honors at age 14.

Last year, at the age of 16, Jon graduated from UCLA with a degree in Cognitive Science. He is now on his way to medical school to become a pediatrician.

The Davidson Institute for Talent Development has just awarded Jon a certificate for being a young ambassador last June 2009, at Reno, Nevada. He also received an award from CalState LA for his high performance on the Washington Pre-college Test. John Hopkins University also gave him a State Award for high performance on the SAT.

Jonathan has published two poems in a book called *Anthology of Poetry by Young Americans and Creative Communications.*

Does genetics play a part in gifted children? What causes a child to be gifted? Is it their environment or is it genetics? This has been a long debated topic with much disagreement on either per se. Today, many experts agree that it is a combination of both. It has been suggested that the heredi-

tary giftedness is approximately 62% and the rest is made up of the environment one grows up in.

Angela and Mikaela come from a family of highly intelligent people. Their father, Alvin, is a service advisor of The Gas Company and is a brilliant writer and a good mathematics teacher to the kids, while their mother, Fe Makalinao, is a lawyer.

Fe Guerrero explains, "It is still nature plus nurture. In order to help the child reach his or her maximum potential, there is a need for a very good mentor. A lot of people think that the parents are pushing these children; but the truth is, it is the other way around. It is not easy to raise very gifted children. They have varied interests. It is also very expensive to educate them because there are very few available merit scholarship for children like them."

"Intelligence is hereditary. However, in order for these children to reach their maximum potential, they will need a lot of help from different mentors. This is the part that can be developed. For instance, although both Angela and Mikaela are musically gifted, without their piano teachers and violin teachers, they will not be able to develop their talents. John Hopkins University, as well as the Mirman School, have both immensely contributed to Angela's development. Angela was fortunate to have very good Math and English teachers at Sussman Middle School. Mikaela was fortunate to have understanding and accommodating principals in Stowers (Principal Blagden) and Lewis Elementary School (Principal Robin Martin).

Jonathan Malabanan's mother, Lorna, totally agrees with Fe that parents also have a part in developing their child's giftedness. "I believe that every child has a chance to be developed. Parents should devote as much time as they can to reading and learning with their child, even if they are still very young. Babies, especially, need a lot of interaction and learning opportunities, and pointing and naming objects in the surroundings like fruit, pictures, letter, colors, shape, etc. Introducing many things like- sports, music, arts, the environment, trip to different educational places, libraries, etc before the child turns 10 years old is highly recommended. During this time, a child is like a sponge and absorbs a lot of things," said Lorna. ■



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containing 573 relief good boxes of various sizes will be shipped on October 21, for distribution to the dioceses of San Jose (Nueva Ecija), Cabanatuan, Alaminos (Pangasinan), Lingayen-Dagupan, Tarlac, Baguio and Kalocan.

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