

## IN SEARCH OF THAI TALENTED YOUTHS IN SCIENCE AND MENTORING

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**Presented** : The 7<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Conference on Giftedness, August 12-16, 2002, Bangkok, Thailand

The paper presents the identification and development of life-long mentoring to the Thai talented and gifted Thai youth via a project of the National Science and Technology Development Agency, the so-called Junior Science Talent Project (JSTP). The JSTP started in 1998 with the aims of increasing the number of competent children in science in Thai society by continuously working with the best candidates on science projects of some nature under the supervision of mentors. Selection of students is done at lower secondary school level (Grade 7-9), higher secondary school level (Grade 10-12), and first year university, based on nomination by schools and parents. Researchers and scientists of national repute are invited to serve as mentors to the children, which has not been done in other programmes.

KMUTT is in charge of the lower secondary school in take. Nation-wide selection is carried out through interviews by the KMUTT mentoring team, taking into consideration education and other achievements, students' portfolio and interviews. The selection ratio was originally about ten to one and at the present has climbed to twenty to one. Three one-week enrichment camps are conducted in May, October and April. Activities include open-ended experiments, field trips (dealing with science, industry, environment, or arts and culture), competitive intellectual games, special lectures and the Constructionism learning methods. Additionally, individual science projects of about 9 months in duration are conducted under supervision of the KMUTT mentoring team and invited professors from other universities.

Observations are made by the KMUTT mentoring team on student performance and potential. Throughout the period, we identify creativity, learning and general behaviour characteristics through the above mentioned activities. The best 3 students are awarded scholarships. Up to date, 12 youths thus selected are studying engineering, and science in Thai universities and abroad, and in high school. Others are still continuing their science projects under guidance of their mentors.