

president of the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) in the 1970s. Morris later went on to found Newark's nationally recognized Science High School, still vibrant and challenging as he had originally conceived it. I owe this man more than I can ever repay. Before he passed in 2008, he gifted me with his personal technical library, books I treasure beyond description. I miss him terribly; but know full well my responsibility to influence others to make school better than it is today.....to pass the torch and keep the light glowing bright.

Additional Readings

For more about my thoughts on gifted education and what tomorrow's school might look like, check out my previous writings listed below.

Teach STEM Right – Change the Academic Day! *Gifted Education News-Page*. Volume 23, No. 2, Dec. 2013/Jan. 2014.

Solving Real World Problems in the Classroom – A Realistic Application of STEM/STEAM Principles. *The Journal of the Illinois Association for Gifted Children* (IAGC). March 2014.

Changing Education-Thoughts about Creating and Inventing Tomorrow's School. *The Journal of the Illinois Association for Gifted Children* (IAGC). March 2015.

Defining What Characterizes a Great School for the Gifted. *Gifted Education Press Quarterly*. Volume 29, No. 2/Spring 2015.

See information on Harry Roman's Latest Book, Just Published by Gifted Education Press:

How an Engineer Uses Math – Real World Practical Examples for the Gifted Classroom in Environmental, Power, and Energy Areas – Middle and High School (2015) by Harry T. Roman. Excellent introduction to real world math, science and engineering problems.
<http://amzn.to/1GEklCn>

Does the Gifted Student Need a Gifted Teacher?

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Introduction

Regarding teachers of the gifted:

1. Is it recommended, or is it better for gifted students, that their teachers should be gifted individuals?
2. Should teachers of gifted students be especially talented regarding all aspects of teaching but not taking their intellectual abilities into consideration?

The second question, namely, the required characteristics of a gifted and talented teacher, has been widely discussed. The characteristics that are considered most important for being good teachers – whether in the regular system or for gifted students, have not changed since this question has been first discussed. This article will offer a summary of the characteristics of the good, ideal, or recommended teacher according to studies published around the world.

The first question, whether teachers of the gifted should be gifted, will also be answered – to the best of my knowledge for the first time in the literature dealing with this issue.

Why is student/teacher adequacy of special importance in gifted education?

One of the most common complaints of both gifted students and their parents, as well as in websites of gifted families is: "the teacher hates my child," or in a more moderate version: "In order not to make my daughter feel bad, the teacher never mentions her giftedness." Many parents whom I have met both during public lectures for parents of the gifted and in private consultations

have been convinced that the teacher of their daughter or son “harasses” the child. If, for example, in their municipality the enrichment program for the gifted takes place on Mondays, according to them: “all social activities of the (origin) class take place on Mondays, so my daughter has either to miss these activities or her enrichment program.” About 25 years ago a mother of two gifted children, who was a psychologist, approached me during a concert’s break and told me that though her son was gifted, he was not mathematically gifted, and thus, the decision of his teacher to have two math classes on the day of the enrichment program caused him so much distress that he finally decided to leave the enrichment program in order not to have to learn by himself a subject he was not very good at and did not particularly like.

Without getting into the question whether these behaviors of teachers in regular classes describe the situation accurately or they are exaggerated, and without trying to discover the reasons for such non-supportive feelings and behaviors against gifted children, let us try to find whether it is possible to minimize the damages resulting from them to most gifted children’s learning, most of the time in regular classes.

The structure of the article

The issue of the cognitive level of teachers – not just for gifted students but in general as well – has been considered a taboo in many countries. While many studies have examined the personal characteristics of ideal teachers of the gifted – their educational level, their organizational level and their emotional capabilities – attempts to find studies dealing directly with the cognitive level, or – the cognitive giftedness of the teacher of the gifted, have produced no results.

In this article I intend to:

1. Summarize the adjectives appearing in the scientific literature regarding the qualities of the “good,” “outstanding” or even “excellent” teacher – both in general and in teaching the gifted in particular;
2. Present the two paths in the discussion of the ideal teacher for the gifted;
3. Show that existing descriptions of the good teacher of the gifted include the cognitive giftedness component, and thus crack the taboo on the demand that teachers of the gifted should have very high cognitive abilities;
4. Give examples of gifted teachers from three countries;
5. Conclude that: Gifted students need gifted teachers.

This article is meant to be a platform for further investigation of this issue, based primarily on data about teachers of the gifted and teachers in the general education system from a variety of countries.

1. Adjectives replacing that of the “good” teacher

The use of the term: “a gifted teacher” has been very rare. There have been many possible replacements for it. As each of them has many – maybe too many – definitions, let us closely observe just those belonging to one of them: “**effective teachers.**”

The characteristics of an “effective teacher,” according to Gentry et al. (2011), are:

- A strong grasp of subject matter and high expectations of students;
- The skills to balance students’ intellectual achievements and interpersonal needs in the classroom;
- The ability to set high, realistic goals and present information in a manner that facilitates student learning;
- Effective teachers care about and have positive interactions with their students;
- They possess professional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal knowledge;
- They develop strong student-teacher relationships;
- They seek new solutions through continued learning;
- They are primarily focused on teacher knowledge, pedagogical skills, and dispositions.

According to a survey conducted by Babbage (2002), effective teachers:

- Challenge students, adopt various teaching methods to actively involve students in class;
- Are enthusiastic and encouraging;
- Connect learning at school with students' lives.

Roberts (2006) described effective secondary teachers as those who:

- Support students' interests and provide challenging opportunities that help students make their decisions about their career interests;
- Teachers of secondary gifted students regularly plan, pre-assess, and differentiate to ensure continuous, meaningful learning.

According to Demmon-Berger (1986), the five main characteristics of effective teachers are: 1. strong cognitive skills, 2. knowledge of subject content, 3. flexibility, 4. enthusiasm in their delivery of instruction, and 5. strong classroom management skills. The first four characteristics are associated either with components of intellectual giftedness or with emotional characteristics of gifted and creative people.

Witcher et al. (2003), who studied 912 undergraduates and graduate students from various academic majors enrolled at a university in a mid-southern state, revealed the following nine characteristics that students considered to reflect effective college teaching: (1) student-centered (58.88%); (2) knowledgeable about subject matter (44.08%); (3) professional (40.79%); (4) enthusiastic about teaching (29.82%); (5) effective at communication (23.46%); (6) accessible (23.25%); (7) competent at instruction (21.82%); (8) fair and respectful (21.60%); and (9) provider of adequate performance feedback (5.04%). Except for the first characteristic, "student – centered," all other 3 that were considered most important by the students – "knowledgeable about subject matter," "professional" and "enthusiastic about teaching" are closely related to components of giftedness or excellence, which is the materialization of giftedness.

Ableser (2012), who had written in length about exemplary teachers admits that: "In addition to the term exemplary practice, research and studies have used a range of terms including teaching excellence, effective teaching, high quality and best practices. According to her: "For the purpose of this research, the terms will be used interchangeably" (ibid, p. 66).

In addition to "effective teacher," outstanding, excellent teachers are also called: "high-ability teachers" (Howley et al., 2012); "ideal teacher" (David, 2014a; Tzidkiyahoo, 1975); "an exemplary teacher" (Ableser, 2012; Becker, 2000; Collinson, 1996; Gentry et al., 2005, 2011; Hativa, et al., 2001; Lowman, 1996); "an expert teacher" (Ethell, & McMeniman, 2000; Welker, 1992); "a great teacher" (Bishop, 1968; Davis & Rimm, 2004; Feldhusen, 1997); "an outstanding teacher" (Thompson, et al., 2008); "inspirational teachers" (Araújo et al., 2011); "accomplished teachers" (Sheingold & Hadley, 1990); "academically talented teachers" (Fulbeck, 2014; Spiro, 2013); and teachers who have an available a variety of ways and techniques (Ghamrawi, 2014).

It should be noted, however, that "**excellent teachers**" do not appear in this long list. To be "excellent" is, according to Ziv (1990), is to realize one's high potential, namely her or his giftedness.

2. Two paths in the discussion of the ideal teacher for the gifted

When dealing with the question: "Who is the ideal teacher of the gifted student?" – two different basic approaches should be discussed that do not necessarily contradict each other.

The first is of those who prefer to avoid definitions, tend to characterize such a teacher as "having a positive attitude towards the gifted," "loves children," "dedicated to work," "invests a lot in teaching," "innovative," and so on.

The second consists of researchers, teachers and psychologists who prefer quantifying the demands of such a teacher, and thus set a minimum educational level they perceive as necessary, and sometimes even the subject matter(s) the teachers have specialized in; a teacher who had been highly evaluated, appreciated and honored not only by her or his superiors but also by the students and their parents. As to the experience the teacher should have – all agree that the teacher must have some experience. While some believe that "more is better" others tend to think that a teacher with "too much experience" might be tired, worn out or just "too old" to connect to young, energetic people.

Attitude / knowledge /self-perception

Bishop (1968) found that teachers identified by gifted students as successful were described by these same students as:

Motivating and inspiring, and as having positive **attitudes** with student-centered teaching styles. The same is largely true today. Parents, administrators, and students often know a **great** teacher when they see one.

McCoach & Siegle (2007) studied the attitude of 262 teachers towards gifted students and giftedness. To be more exact – they tried to find if the reports of teachers regarding this issue are consistent with what teachers perceive as the opinion of researchers. They have found that “Teachers who had received training in gifted education hold higher perceptions of themselves as being gifted.” However, teachers’ self-perceptions as gifted were unrelated to their attitudes toward gifted education. This means that teachers who thought they were gifted had no better attitude towards their gifted students than teachers who did not. This finding contradicts previous ones (e.g., Bégin & Gagné, 1994a; Michener, 1980). Furthermore, according to McCoach, & Siegle (2007), no difference regarding the attitude of teachers towards gifted students was found between teachers who were trained in gifted education and those who were not. This finding was consistent with some previous ones, such as that of Bégin and Gagné (1994b) who viewed 8 other studies – 5 found low correlations between education in giftedness and positive attitudes towards it, and 3 did not.

It is interesting to note, that a program aimed at teachers of gifted students learning in a regular, mixed class has been successful. Cashion & Sullenger (2000) studied the changes in the attitudes and teaching techniques among teachers who participated in a 4-week summer training course in education of the gifted in Canada. In spite of the fact that the course took place in a rural area where education for the gifted had a low priority, there was one person in charge of gifted students in only four of the 18 participating schools where the spoken language was English. There was no legal obligation to offer special education for the gifted. Almost all participating teachers used new, various learning strategies aimed at the gifted immediately after taking the course. In addition most of them asked to continue the in-service course during the following summer.

We can thus conclude that learning about gifted students and giftedness might, nonetheless, change the beliefs and thus the attitudes of teachers towards their gifted students. The study of Geake, & Gross (2008) examined the attitudes of 377 teachers from England, Scotland and Australia, who participated in a 2-year “education of the gifted” course from September 2003 until May 2005. 290 of the teachers were female; about half – elementary school – and the other half – high school teachers; 145 had a Masters’ degree; 129 had a teaching license in addition to their first degree; 66 had a teaching license in addition to their second degree, and 5 – a teaching license in addition to their Ph.D. At the end of the course the teachers demonstrated a substantial change in:

1. Recognition of characteristics of gifted children, including their cognitive high ability;
2. Moderation of their prejudices about the social inadequacy of gifted children; and,
3. Moderation of their prejudices regarding anti-social leadership of the gifted.

In this article I have not tried to show that the attitude of teachers towards gifted students is less important than any other characteristics of the good teacher for the gifted. The first necessary condition for teaching the gifted is having a positive attitude towards giftedness and the belief that gifted students deserve education that suits their needs. However, this condition is not sufficient. It is time that the cognitive components of the teachers of gifted children should be discussed openly, and emotional characteristics, such as intensity, perfectionism, persistence and the ability to do many things at the same time – which is common to many gifted children and much more common among the best teachers of the gifted, would be appreciated.

3. The existing descriptions of the good teacher of the gifted include the cognitive giftedness component

When carefully observing any of the existing descriptions of the good teacher it is clear that all of them include the cognitive giftedness component, and thus crack the false utterance that: “the intelligence of the teacher is not so important; the main thing is that she or he is... (Here comes a long list, e.g. understanding, empathic, warm, etc.).

Free gifted education started in Israel in 1973. Just a few years later, Milgram (1979) studied gifted and non-gifted children in grades 4 to 6. She found that all students appreciated teachers who were experts in the subject matter, taught in a logical, well-built structure; and teachers who were not only intelligent but creative as well. These basic characteristics did not change in the next two decades, and similar characteristics of the good teacher have been found by *Goldberg* (1994).

Gentry et al. (2011) have conducted one of the most extensive studies of teachers of the gifted. They have examined a sample of 400+ teachers, and came to some conclusions regarding “exemplary teachers” by studying 18 teachers who were identified as such by their students. The term “exemplary teachers” – appearing in their article 42 times – is explained (in note No. 1) as:

[...] the term *exemplary* throughout this article (is used) to identify teachers selected for study on the basis of high student scores on the constructs of Appeal, Challenge, Choice, Enjoyment, Interest, Meaningfulness, and Self-efficacy (ibid, p. 124).

David (2008) has summarized the characteristics of the ideal teacher of the gifted in four groups: characteristics related to personality; professional and didactic characteristics; knowledge and experience in psychology of the gifted; and good administrative abilities. Each of these groups consists of several, more detailed qualities. For example: having a positive attitude towards excellence, creativity, productivity and leadership; being an expert in the subject matter of teaching; being able to identify exceptional abilities – not necessarily revealed during diagnosis, and being able to organize special activities for the gifted.

There are some works dealing with the issue of “the good/excellent/exemplary, etc. teacher” of the gifted from a point of view of such a teacher. Coleman (1991) has written a detailed case study about an expert philosophy teacher. The teacher’s thoughts were categorized into planning thoughts and action thoughts. The conclusion of this work is that the way in which the teacher’s thoughts were connected to his practice could not be satisfactorily understood without getting access to the invisible, tacit knowledge of the teacher. The teacher’s hidden world was described in relation to how the researcher discovered it. The description of “Alex,” as the teacher is called in the article, is of a highly gifted person. He is an expert not only in gifted education but in many other areas of special education as well such as autism, learning disabilities and intellectual disability. He planned to conduct a “Socratic-type of discussion.” He was very flexible – every day he planned the next day’s missions according to the learning developments of the previous one; Alex was also flexible regarding the structure of each day: sometimes he chose to be more rigid and constructive while on others the flow of the day was more flexible. Alex was without any question a gifted person. Without diminishing the value of Alex’s personal traits, his excellent relationship with the class that consisted of students aged 12-18 and the dedication he showed were all characteristics needed for teaching in general and teaching the gifted in particular. Anybody who has such an amount of available knowledge in so many educational areas, as well as such a high level in the subject matter he chose to teach, must be gifted.

4. Examples of gifted teachers from three countries

A McKinsey study (Barber, & Mourshed, 2007) of twenty-five of the world's school systems, including ten of the top performers indicates the following for high-performing school systems:

1. They engage the best possible people to become teachers;
2. They develop them into effective instructors;
3. They ensure that the system is able to deliver the best possible instruction for every child.

Of all these countries, Finland has scored best in Europe in the international examinations of the 21st century. Faridi (24/6/2014) has summarized the 13 reasons for it, two of which have to do with its teachers:

Out-of-this-world teacher prep programs. [...] becoming a teacher is an extremely rigorous and prestigious process. Only the best of the best are accepted into education school. In addition to having high test scores, candidates must pass an interview investigating their integrity, passion, and pedagogy. Universities are committed to finding candidates that are the right fit for the teaching profession. Their programs are research-based, and teachers finish with master’s degrees, including a published thesis.

Emphasis on quality of life. The Finnish system recognizes that happy teachers are good teachers, and overworked teachers will not be at the top of their game. Teachers prep from home and only teach to students about 20 hours per week.

In Finland only the upper 10% of candidates are accepted to education departments (Tirri & Kuusisto, 2013). Thus, there is no need for special arrangements so that gifted students would be taught by “gifted teachers” – All children get such teachers. In addition, all elementary school teachers are fully capable of teaching all subjects (ibid).

In the work of Taguma et al. (2012), *Quality Matters in Early Childhood Education and Care: FINLAND*, where this is the most successful European educational system regarding international achievements and the well-being of the students, giftedness is not mentioned even once. Instead of focusing on the giftedness of students, there is a list of requirements from teachers:

I. All elementary school teachers are fully capable of teaching all subjects

All subjects – except foreign languages – are taught by the classroom teacher up to grade 7 (Tirri, & Kuusisto, 2013). That means that the teacher must be an expert in a variety of subjects.

II. Individualism

The educational legislation continues the trend of individualism, and allows diverse education according to students' needs. It stresses the worth of individuals and the principle of accepting learners as unique, including respecting their rights. As noted by Van Tassel-Baska (1992), this policy, and its implementation by Finland's able teachers, has special benefits for gifted students, as the adoption of practices such as acceleration and grouping are the main issues that usually test the level of acceptance of differentiation for the gifted.

III. Acceleration

There are two main ways of acceleration in Finland, both are much less formal in any of the countries where giftedness is celebrated and highly depends on the ability of the teachers to simultaneously serve the needs of children belonging to different age-groups:

- Starting school at age 6 or 7. The Basic Education Act (628/1998) has allowed for flexible decisions with respect to acceleration. It has been possible for parents to decide whether their children will begin school at the age of 6 or 7 (previously the age was 7; Basic Education Act 28/1998, Section 27; Basic Education Act 476/1983, Section 36).
- Another possibility for acceleration has been ungraded school, which allows pupils to advance in their studies within a flexible schedule. This ungraded system has been in use in most upper secondary schools since 1994 (...). The possibility of attending ungraded school at the elementary grade level has been experimented with in some schools (Basic Education Act 628/1998, Section 20). Parents have also had the right to choose the school their children attend (Basic Education Act 628/1998, Section 6) (Tirri, & Kuusisto, 2013, pp. 87-88).

Thus, in spite of the fact that:

Finnish legislation does not explicitly mention gifted individuals, the education system still has a special structure: Teachers at all levels receive academic professional training, and an educational program of differentiation is standard from kindergarten onward. This means that all children are already educated according to their individual developmental and learning needs, which is the core principal of gifted education. In this respect, the Finnish educational system is highly developed with regard to gifted education (ibid, p. 89).

Finland supports special schools where the academic level is very high; these schools are not called "schools for the gifted" but the accepted students can be called "gifted" as they are high achievers and hard workers. There are also enrichment programs in mathematics and physics – both during the school year and summer courses. In addition, there is a special private boarding school for 15-18-year olds who are mathematically talented, and many summer camps in various places of the country.

All of these special arrangements could not have operated without the participation, support, encouragement and motivation of the teachers who do not perceive their profession as "passing the material" but as role models for the students who engage themselves in achieving constant learning towards excellence.

In the **United States** there has been a focus on gifted education since the beginning of the 20th century, and the existing research of giftedness goes back to the Terman longitudinal research and writing, as well as with the Hollingworth special school for the gifted, including her many studies and the first university course about giftedness. However, the focus on the teacher of the gifted was marginal during a large part of the 20th century. The late Abraham Tannenbaum and A. Harry Passow launched the first Teachers' College course at Columbia University in gifted education in 1955. In 1981 they created the Center for the Study and Education of the Gifted (now the Hollingworth Center). Tannenbaum was also a pioneer in defining gifted education as "special education." Thus, since he was appointed as a staff member of the special education department at Columbia University in the late 1960s there was – for the first time – a high level university department for specializing in giftedness both for Masters and PhD degrees. Columbia University has managed to maintain its special standing in the field of gifted education until now, both as an academic department as a part of Teachers' College, and as a unique publishing house for giftedness literature.

Mills (2003), who has studied 63 of the best teachers, as well as 1247 highly able students in the Center for Talented Youth at the Johns Hopkins University revealed that:

- The teachers in the program were more likely to prefer intuition and thinking, as compared to a normative teacher sample.
- The personality types of teachers were in many ways similar to the personality types of the gifted students:
 - I. They preferred abstract themes and concepts;

II. They were open and flexible;

III. They valued logical analysis and objectivity.

However, they had very little formal knowledge in education in general and in giftedness in particular:

- The majority of teachers reported holding **advanced degrees in a content area**;
- Most teachers were **not certified to teach**;
- Most teachers reported completing **no formal coursework in gifted education**.

We can thus conclude that effective teachers of the gifted prefer abstract subjects and discussions, they are open and flexible, and appreciate logical thinking and objectivity. These teachers suit their students both in their cognitive level and style, and in their personality traits.

A similar situation has been found in the enrichment programs in Israel where more than 90% of the Israeli children were identified as gifted in order to participate. While many children who are invited to transfer to special classes after being identified as gifted prefer to stay in their regular classes, most children who are invited to the one-day enrichment programs do participate. However, the main finding of the only quantitative study of the teachers for the gifted who trained in 5 Israeli programs is:

Partial results of the indirect measurement of the cognitive contribution regarding the teaching-learning situation and the required characteristics of the teacher of the gifted showed that the teachers did not make the required conceptual change. In spite of the fact that the participants in both programs (the one focusing on teachers' training, and the other that added the development of personal traits of teachers of the gifted – H.D.) acquired some knowledge regarding the task of the teacher in the enrichment program for the gifted, the teachers of the gifted in this program (the enrichment program for the gifted weekly program) that have not studied in any of the training programs enlarged their knowledge, based on field experience, and were similar to those studies in one of the training programs (Vidergor, 2010, p. 9).

Namely, the Israeli training programs for teachers of the gifted have no influence regarding their suitability, competence and effectiveness.

This situation can be explained by the fact that until the 2009-10 school year, most instructors teaching in the enrichment programs for the gifted in Israel were successful professionals in a variety of subjects who had a mission: to contribute one day a week to teach gifted students, in most cases for a minimal financial reward. Thus, no wonder most students who were offered to participate in these programs did participate, and the dropout rate was comparatively low. Since the 2009-10 school year all teachers teaching the gifted were required to take either the 2- or the 3-year course in one of the 3 Israeli universities (Tel Aviv, Ben Gurion, The Hebrew University) or in one of the Northern colleges (the Oranim or the Gordon Teachers' College) in order to qualify either as a teacher in a gifted class or as an instructor in one of the 50+ enrichment centers for the gifted (Professionalism of teachers of the gifted, 2009). As there has been no research regarding the potential results of this requirement aside from the study of Vidergor (2009) that had been completed before this requirement was obligatory, there is no way to know whether the requirement changed the level and competence of the teachers of the gifted. However, meeting hundreds of families with gifted children in these 5 years convinced me that the immediate result of this requirement has been that many good, experienced teachers left teaching in the enrichment programs, as they did not want to waste time learning irrelevant materials by non-professionals in the fields of gifted psychology and gifted didactics.

5. Gifted students need gifted teachers

The question: "should the teacher of the gifted be gifted?" can be answered from two different viewpoints. 1. From the definitions of giftedness: if we take one of the most common definitions, "giftedness is potential of excellence" (Ziv, 1990), as teachers are adults it would be expected that they had already realized their potential. The teacher's potential is – or is not – realized in teaching, so if the teacher is excellent – she or he are gifted according to this criterion and thus suitable to teach gifted students. 2. From the requirements of cognitive abilities: if we look at the various lists of the characteristics demanded from the teacher of the gifted, it is obvious that they all have a component of high intelligence, a wish to learn, investigate, and get into the roots of things; the wish to develop the cognitive abilities of the students while giving them a personal example of an adult who constantly widens her or his own horizons. Thus we can conclude that the teacher of the gifted should be gifted in teaching, namely – an excellent teacher, exactly as an adult gifted pianist is an excellent musician. A teacher of the gifted must love her or his students at least as much as a pianist loves both the piano and the music played on it.

It could be justifiably argued that gifted teachers should be allocated to all students, but as there are not enough gifted teachers, a priority should be given to gifted children as the educational – and very often – also the emotional needs of gifted students are difficult to satisfy. Thus the teacher contributes substantially not only to their intellectual but also to their psychological development and especially – their well-being.

When the cognitive level of the teacher is much lower than that of the student, he or she would find it very hard to satisfy the intellectual and the emotional needs of the gifted child. This assumption has not been examined in quantitative research, as this issue is a part of the “taboo” in discussing the IQ of teachers. Nevertheless, it can be concluded both from everyday life, where we can all observe that very intelligent people choose to be with those similar to them and find no common grounds with others who are much less intelligent. In countries like Israel, where the cognitive level of students in teachers’ colleges is extremely low (on the entrance requirement to the Israeli college see David, 2011, 2014a), this gap in intelligence very often causes a serious problem, as I have noticed in my 30-year practice as a counselor of gifted children and their families.

There is no accepted-by-all definition of giftedness; thus, the only way to show that teachers of the gifted should be gifted is to point at both intellectual and personal characteristics of gifted children which are identical, or at least congruent, with those of good, extraordinary teachers for the gifted. Let us discuss some of them.

Gentry et al. (2011), who studied the top 5-10% teachers according to students’ recommendations, found that the “exemplary teachers” had a large repertoire regarding both knowledge in a variety of subject matters and didactics. This corresponds both to high intellectual level, which is the main definition to giftedness, and to what can be defined as “giftedness in teaching,” namely, being familiar with didactics of the subject matter and having the emotional intelligence to teach efficiently using their creativity and flexibility.

Let us look at some representative traits of gifted teachers – in accordance with those of gifted students.

High energy level. This is important to everybody who is in touch with gifted children. One of the most frequent complaints I hear from parents who met with me for counseling sessions is: “it is exhausting to have a gifted child.” Indeed, on all occasions where I have substituted for a teacher in a gifted class – whether for my research or when I stepped in for a missing teacher in my own enrichment program (David, 2005, 2007) – I felt much more exhausted after the 50-minute session than after a whole day of teaching at a teachers’ college or at the Ben Gurion University. Thus, it is expected that a teacher with a low energy level would not survive teaching the gifted.

Rich, complicated language. Many gifted children, especially those who are verbally gifted, tend to integrate in their speaking (and writing) unique utterances, complicated sentences, long logical arguments, a lot of metaphors, similarities, proverbs, fables, allegories, and the like. For many of these children the negative attitude they get when doing that in the “outer world” might be paralyzing (see, for example, David, 2014b) so it is recommended that the teacher of such children would love to play with words, and feel adequate to participate in the word-games of the students. In short – would be verbally gifted as well.

Curiosity. Gifted children are known as “asking too many questions.” A teacher who feels a continuing need to “cover the material,” or fear of not knowing the answer to the students’ questions, might be a real problem. But for a teacher who is in a constant process of learning, who needs to satisfy her or his own curiosity – such students are a blessing.

Enthusiasm. According to Demmon-Berger (1986), one of the demands of effective teachers is “enthusiasm in their delivery of instruction.” Bishop (1968) requires that the teacher of the gifted has enthusiasm for working with gifted students; Babbage (2002), Patrick et al. (2003), and Robinson (2008) expect good teachers to be enthusiastic (as a personal trait).

Sense of humor. The issue of giftedness and sense of humor has been discussed at length (e.g. Holt, & Willard-Holt, 1995; Lovecky, 1992; Ziv & Gadish, 1990). Robinson (2008) has found that exemplary teachers used humor and had fun with their students.

Subject matter and content knowledge. As curiosity is one of the main characteristics of the gifted person, no wonder good, exemplary, outstanding teachers had subject matter expertise (Bishop, 1968; Mills, 2003) and high levels of content knowledge (e.g. Bishop, 1968; Tomlinson et al., 2000; Robinson, 2008).

Setting an example: A personal remark

In the years 2004-2006 I founded and headed the Enrichment Program for Talented and Creative Children, in the Chof Ashkelon Municipality, that included 19 villages and Kibbutzim (David, 2005, 2007). The students participating in this program studied in three

elementary schools. In order to operate the program so that it would serve as many students as possible in all these rural peripheral settlements, many of them quite close to the Gaza Strip, I needed full cooperation of the headmasters in such matters as transportation and schedules. I was deeply surprised when the headmistress who had the highest educational level of all three, and the only parent of school-age children at that time, told me her children were not going to participate in the program. When I asked why, she answered: "because I prefer them to take music and dancing classes; I do not want them to be gifted." This hard-working, diligent and dedicated person, but unfortunately not gifted, could not even understand the need of gifted children to have enrichment classes suitable to their cognitive level. I hate to think that she and the likes of her were the teachers of so many gifted children 6 days a week for 12 years.

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Why It's Essential That We Identify and Support Creativity in Gifted Children

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Modern definitions of intelligence and giftedness all include creativity. Yet, in our education system, we virtually ignore creativity in all ways—in teaching practices, assessments, and in qualifying for gifted programs. This is a disservice to all children but most especially to children whose thinking processes can only be accurately understood through this lens.