

## *Original Paper*

# Developing Teachers' Skill to Identify High Ability Students

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### **Abstract**

*The question: "how to educate teachers in order to help them be more understanding, more suitable, and more motivated when teaching gifted students" has been widely discussed. The question whether it is possible at all certainly needs more research. However, we shall hereby suggest some "signs", hints, or even explicit utterances that might help teachers to notice students who need extra-supervision, enrichment activities or an accelerated track. These sayings, or doings, are usually either ignored by teachers or quite often wrongly interpreted. Had teacher known how to "read" these signs it would have helped them to know if a certain student needs extra-challenging, different, higher-level school curriculum, more creative homework or self-learning assignments. Here are the 5 main points a teacher should consider when having to decide whether their student is gifted or talented. 1. Boredom: looking bored or complaining about being bored 2. Finishing all tasks before everybody else 3. Correcting the teacher or/and other students/"Takes over" class conversation 4. Does not do homework or prepares for exams but gets high grades; 5. Shows emotional high level*

### **Keywords**

*Teachers' skills, high ability, identification*

### **1. Introduction**

The question: "how to educate teachers in order to help them be more understanding, more suitable, and more motivated when teaching gifted students" has been widely discussed. The question whether it is possible at all certainly needs more research. However, we shall hereby suggest some "signs", hints, or even explicit utterances that might help teachers to notice students who need extra-supervision, enrichment activities or an accelerated track. These sayings, or doings, are usually either ignored by teachers or quite often wrongly interpreted. Had teacher known how to "read" these signs it would have helped them to know if a certain student needs extra-challenging, different, higher-level school curriculum, more creative homework or self-learning assignments.

It is widely agreed that there are many skills needed in order to identify high ability students. These skills can be divided into intellectual-cognitive- and emotional abilities. Intellectual-cognitive abilities can be substantially improved by learning, gaining more experiences, in short—growing up. Emotional abilities are mainly in-born; in many cases they also improve with experience but unfortunately in many other they do not or their improvement is marginal. These abilities, though connected to what we all call “intelligence”, traditionally measured by IQ, can be improved—mainly by education. From a philosophical point of view, it is interesting to know more about “inborn” versus “learned” characteristics, and if intellectual characteristics are more flexible than emotional or vice versa. However, this important issue is not as important as the integration of sensitivity, intensity or high-level energy, dedication, or the ability to devote oneself to an important-enough cause, patience, and motivation, in addition to a certain level of both intelligence and acquired knowledge any teacher needs, in order to identify gifted students. As much as these characteristic are important for the identification of “the typical gifted”, they are much more important in order to identify those who have not been formally diagnosed as gifted, and/or students belonging to ALL minority groups.

Here is a list of some main characteristics of gifted children and youths that teachers can learn, explore, read about and discuss with peers at school or—even preferably—at professional meetings, such as pre- and in-service training sessions, in order to “sharpen” their ability to identify high ability students. It should be emphasized that characteristics considered “typical” to gifted children and youths, such as school success or rich written or oral verbal ability are not to appear in this list. Such characteristics are either part of the identification for giftedness process (e.g., school success), or demonstrated in intelligence tests (e.g., high verbal ability). They are also characteristics that—according to some giftedness definitions, rely on present school achievements, such as high-level math achievement of being at the top of the class, top of the school or top of the county in reading, chess, or robot-building. We shall concentrate in this presentation in the following characteristics, perceived as less-typical, that might help teacher of kindergartners, elementary-, junior- or high school students further explore the possibility that their student is indeed gifted or talented.

- 1) Boredom: looking bored or complaining about being bored
- 2) Finishing all tasks before everybody else
- 3) Correcting the teacher or/and other students/ “Takes over” class conversation
- 4) Does not do homework or prepares for exams but gets high grades;
- 5) Shows emotional high level

## 2. Method

Here is a discussion of each of the identification for giftedness less-typical behaviors or characteristics of gifted students that can be of help to their teachers. After each discussion a vignette is to be presented.

## 2.1 Boredom: Looking Bored or Complaining about being Bored

### 2.1.1. The accepted assumption that boredom contradicts learning

It has been widely accepted that students must not feel boredom at school, as boredom has negative effects whether on the student's well-being or achievements (Al-Shara, 2015; Daniels, Gallagher, Harradine, & Coleman, 1997; Kanevsky, & Keighle, 2003; Mönks, 2014; Özerk, 2020; Pekrun, & Carper, & Schatz, 2012; Tze, Daniels, Klassen, & Li, 2013, Tze, Klassen, & Daniels, 2014, Tze, Daniels, & Klassen, 2016). According to Pekrun et al., (2011), it seems that boredom is negatively related to deep learning related criteria, for example: intrinsic motivation, self-regulation, and the adoption of flexible learning strategies.

### 2.1.2. If a child "looks" bored he or she might be bored, but they also might not

This is the first rule any teacher must remember. There are many children who need to do something with their hands, or even their whole body, in order to be concentrated of what is heard. A student can yawn simply because of being tired. So please—try not to be determined when suspecting that the child is bored even when you tend to think they are!

### 2.1.3. Pros of boredom: Connections among boredom, daydreaming, and creativity

Let us assume that the student is indeed bored. We have to keep in mind that being bored is not necessarily negative. There are theories about boredom as a contributor to creativity, or at least, as does not interfering with leaning or the student's well-being. According to Belton (2008) there are some potential benefits of being bored. Bench and Lench (2013) suggest that boredom motivates students to make a change, to move forward by setting more challenging goals. Bell (2011) who suggested that boredom may boost creativity; Mann and Cadman (2014) even suggest that students become more creative after being exposed to boring conditions. To be more particular: they found that boring activities resulted in increased creativity and boring reading activities lead to more creativity in some circumstance, such as convergent tasks, than boring written activities. The role of daydreaming as a mediator between boredom and creativity is discussed and implications are outlined. This assumption goes along with the theory of need time for incubation in order to materialize one's giftedness and creativity (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Dijksterhuis & Meurs, 2006; Easom Hines, Catalana, & Anderson, 2019; Ritter, & Dijksterhuis, 2014; Lee et al., 2021; Piechowski, 1992; Segal, 2004; Snyder et al., 2004; Torrance, & Safter, 1990; Wallas, 1926).

According to Mann and Cadman (2014), daydreaming has been a mediator between boredom and creativity. They explained this finding of their experiment as a result of the situation when it is not possible to physically avoid being at a place when the task required is boring, and thus the focus is turned into inner thoughts, feelings and experiences that seem like "doing nothing" or daydreaming, but in fact,

[...] This inner focus allows a way of gaining the stimulation that is being craved and that is missing from the boring task. This internal focus could involve a search for new ways to carry

out the boring task to make it more engaging (Toohey, 2011) or could involve thinking about unrelated problems or ideas the consideration of which is more appealing than the boring task at hand. It is this attention-shifting that is termed daydreaming, and is thus a common by-product of boredom (Smallwood & Schooler, 2006).

[...] Singer (1975) described daydreaming as shifting attention from the external situation or problem to the internal representation of situations, memories, pictures, unresolved things, scenarios, or future goals. Smallwood (2011) more recently explained the process of daydreaming as “a state of decoupled processing in which attention to ongoing perceptual information is reduced often in favor of the active consideration of internally generated thoughts and feeling” (p. 63). Schank (1999) proposed that daydreaming is a part of dynamic memory [Mann & Cadman, 2014, p. 166]

2.1.4. Students should not be punished for saying they were bored or “acting” as if they are bored.

Students should not be reproached and certainly not punished for telling the truth about their deeds or feelings. Indeed, it is impolite to tell a friend that she or he is boring, or what they say is boring. But teachers are not their students’ friends, and thus students should under no circumstances have to pretend to be interest when they are not, or lie about the interest the teacher had inspired the class with. Thus the explanation teachers give, quite often, for being angry with a student who says she or he is bored or behaves in a way the teacher interprets as “showing boredom” cannot be “I must teach my students how to behave”. Teaching to be polite is by being polite; it is not possible to explain “how to be interesting” or “how not be boring”. Trying to “teach” how not to show one’s boredom by punishment when being “too clear, open or verbal” implies that “it is good to conceal one’s feelings”. Well—if you learn how to be a spy, I guess this knowledge might be useful. But when teacher puts a lot of effort into help students, especially the younger, to use words instead of feasts; to verbally express feelings rather than act-out when unable to “let it out” (David, 2020)—why to teach that it is preferable to suppress one’s feelings?

Instead of teaching students to pretend they are interested when they are bored, and when there is not possibility to make the students interested in the material taught, as occurs very often with the gifted, a different approach should be adopted. After hearing from a 16-year old that he is unable to stand the boredom of the literature classes, aimed for preparing the class for the matriculation examinations, I made use of one of the means I practice quite rarely: self-exposure. I told him, that over 50 years ago, I had coop with a similar situation as I had already read a substantial part of the matriculation material at 12, and everything else shortly later, and had no need to re-read them and certainly not have them “explained” to me.

A vignette from David (2019):

[...] During it [the summer of 1964] I also took my Hebrew reading to next level, and made my first steps towards being a writer. The late Mr. Rahmani was my reading mentor, to whom I am

grateful to this day. Mr. Rahmani, who moved to our apartment building a week after we did, was an educator who had then retired after a 40-year career, half of it as the headmaster of a Tel Aviv well-known school. He kindly suggested to my mother, who told him how much I missed my old library, that he would be my librarian. He asked her to tell me to stop by and borrow from his large library any book I chose. I still remember how embarrassed I was when shaking his hand with my sweaty palm. I was very excited, even frightened, having to meet the strict, meticulous headmaster I had heard frightening stories about, a person who seemed to me the oldest man I had ever met, though he was just 65 then...

When I was finally courageous enough to knock on his door I was invited to the living room, and to my surprise I was first offered to drink a glass of cold lemonade—as if I walked a long way rather than went down the stairs to the first floor. A delicious slice of home-made pumpkin cake was also there, on the plate next to the yellow drink. The words: “pumpkin cakes are my favorite” just came out of me, without thinking, and he laughed and said: “So you better eat this slice and take another one back home, so you can eat it after dinner”. I tried to eat while Mr. Rahmani—nobody was ever calling him by his first name—was talking about “the rules of the Rahmani library” but I felt my hand was shaking and my stomach was shrinking. I did get the essence of the “Rahmani’s rules”: I could borrow just one book each time, and I had to be ready to answer Rahmani’s questions about every book I returned before I could take another one.

The first book I chose was Agnon’s *The Bridal Canopy* (1931) [in Hebrew: *Hakhnāsat kallāh*] and Mr. Rahmanin smiled and said: “good taste, good taste”. Of course, neither of us could have known that two years later Shai Agnon would be awarded the Nobel Prize—I did not even know at that time that there was a Nobel Prize in literature; since age 8 and for the next 12 years my phantasy was to be the next Marie Curie, but I was going to be satisfied with “only” one Nobel Prize, as long as it would be in physics.

If you wander what happened to the slice of pumpkin cake—in spite of my efforts I could not eat it then, being too excited, but Mr. Rahmani understood it without words. He went into the kitchen and asked his wife for another slice, and then wrapped both slices in a nice napkin, and handed the little packing to me.

This arrangement worked very well for the whole vacation. To this day I remember the “Rahmani examinations”, which helped me a lot a few years later, when I took Prof. Shaked’s class “Introduction to Israeli literature” where we had to take a “knowledge exam” as a proof of reading 100 Israeli novels. The entire class thought it was too much for a 2-credit course, but I was used to be “examined” about knowledge of details after practicing it carefully almost on a daily basis with Mr. Rahmani. The only difference between Rahmani’s and Shaked’s teaching methods was that while Rahmani examined both my knowledge and my understanding simultaneously, Shaked wanted first, by content checking, to make sure we read the books, and

only then allowed us to take the “literary” examination, which included all “traditional” areas, e.g. the characters, meanings, metaphors, parallelisms, references, etc.

These were my earliest and pretty much only lessons in literature until my BA studies. When I started high school, two years later, my literature teacher—who was also the home-room teacher, let me skip literature classes. When my peers rehearsed books I had long time before read, I had free time for three enjoyable activities that turned to be essential to my future life. Sometimes I took the ~120 stairs from my school to the “monkey’s garden” where I had carefully been observing the apes. Even then I would have loved to observe human behavior, especially babies’ and children’s social interactions, but had to do with apes as observing humans was considered impolite or even wired. When my headmaster had free time he invited me to his office for conversations about philosophical issues, a skill I had never had before any opportunity to practice, especially not over a cup of tea. From time to time I just left directly to Bialik Avenue, the main street of Ramat Gan, for window-shopping. This expertise served me during my entire life: I still know how to buy any outfit for the lowest price (David, 2019, pp. 7-9).

## 2.2. *Finishing all Tasks before Everybody else*

Giftedness does not necessarily mean doing things quickly or finishing tasks ahead of time (about intelligence and speed see David, 2012c). In fact, a substantial percentage of students “fail” in “giftedness tests” because of being “too slow” (e.g., Butnik, 2013; Jackson Gilman, 2013). Slow processing speed is a typical characteristic of double-exceptional children (e.g., Adalio et al. 2018; Butnik, 2013), as for the less talented, being quick is not expected and thus lack of quickness seems “normal”.

But a many gifted children, adolescents and adults, maybe even the majority of them, are quick. They “succeed” in giftedness tests as not only they know the answers—they have enough time to finish all tasks. Thus, while in real life it does not matter whether a book was written in one year or 3 years as long as it is excellent, or a mathematical problem might take generations to solve, in the mathematical part of the SAT it does matter the student solved ALL questions or had not enough time.

Vignette: (from David, 2014c)

At the end of grade 11, when the first matriculation examinations became closer, Joy had some serious quarrels with her mother. Though her grades were always excellent, her mother insisted that she “invested more in her studies”. For long weeks Joy would live in lie: she closed her door and asked not to be bothered, because “I must concentrate for the examinations, and I need to listen to music while I study”. Needless to mention that Joy’s main activity was listening to “her” music through the computer. This “arrangement” worked for Joy very well, but then she became a little too careless. Being somewhat bored of listening to music by herself for such long time periods, she started making telephone conversations with any friend who was available, especially when her mother was not at home. But after the telephone bill came in she could no

longer deny her double crime: spending substantial amount of money without permission, and doing that during the time she was supposedly learning. As a result, the mother suspicions, regarding the computer activities, grew to the level she required her 17-year old daughter to inform her when she wanted to use the computer, and finally, when she realized this condition was unrealistic she took Joy's computer out of her room and placed it in the family living room "until you finish your matriculation examinations" (p. 97).

### 2.3. *Correcting the Teacher or/and other Students/"Takes over" the Class Conversation*

Correcting others does not mean one is gifted; not correcting others does not "prove" that one is not gifted—whether when hearing opinions that are presented as facts, or "truths", someone who makes any kind of language mistake—whether while having an oral communication or when writing. However, a substantial number of students, especially when still young, tend to "correct" others: teachers, peers, salespeople, neighbors—anybody who comes across them. In many cases this tendency has been developed at home, by family members who constantly praised the young child for noticing mistakes of others. When a gifted child is not emotionally well adjusted, has not learned some of the most elementary social rules, such as "sometimes just shut up for your own good", the result is the annoying phenomenon of the "correcting child".

One of the most frequent complains I hear from parents of age 3-6 kindergartners is: the child gets along with adults so well, why does her teacher complain about not having friends? is it not obvious that such an intelligent girl has nothing to talk about wit children her age? How can others understand when she talks about mathematics? Or astronomy? Or biology? "Well, speaking about subjects that are not age-appropriate certainly gives a clue about the ability of the child to understand things that are not typical for her age, and such a child certainly does not need any formal giftedness identification. However, making long speeches, endless questions, or trying to contradict others usually are symptoms of being emotionally underdeveloped. A child who does not understand peer rejection that stems from "taking over" the conversation does not need any gifted label, but rather treatment necessary to develop her emotional stage: to make her understand that others matter as well and they might have things which they wish or even need to speak about, that whatever she wants to say might not be interesting for the others, no matter why, that she must be patient and listen, ask question and participate in conversations that others initiate, that if she does not win—it means that another child was better and she must accept this fact rather than complain or quit. What seem to be temporary social "falls" are the bricks building the child's spine. When there are no falls, as it happens quite often when a gifted child has always been praised, or admired by adults—there is no growth potential.

Here are two real examples, both from a third grade class, which show the difference between a child who has learnt how to deal with a teacher who is less knowledgeable than himself and another one—who has not.

### 2.3.1. A vignette from the first case study I had published (David, 1999, 2005, 2009)

In a science exam the pupils were asked to define a “magnet”. A gifted 8-year old student wrote: “a piece of iron drawn to anything made of iron”. The teacher “corrected” him, writing: “an iron- stone” instead of “a piece of iron”. The pupil knew his answer was right and hers was wrong, but being very developed emotionally, he understood that there was no point telling her that, because she would be very embarrassed and he might have lost her affection, so he got an “A-” in the exam, rather than the straight “A” he deserved, but retained his teacher’s likeness.

In a geography class held by the same teacher, the subject learnt was Longitudes and Latitudes. In order to illustrate the subject, the teacher took an orange, put it on her table, cut it at its “equator” and said that the orange was cut at its longest longitude. A 9-year old gifted boy, who knew she had been wrong, tried to correct her, but instead of admitting making a mistake, she argued with him, saying he had not heard her correctly. It was almost impossible to mishear what had been said regarding longitudes and latitudes in Hebrew, as the Hebrew term for longitude is “KAV ORECH” and for latitude: “KAV RO’CHAV”. In addition to her mistake, the pupil had to deal with his teacher’s denial, and with her future suspicious attitude toward him, resulting from her fear that her student “is out there, waiting for her to make another mistake” (David, 2011c, p. 77).

### 2.4. *Does not Do Homework or other School-tasks but Gets High Grades*

Teachers complain, many a time, about “not doing homework”. It should be clear that this presentation is NOT about pros and cons of homework, either about the educational aims of doing homework even if the student does not need to rehearse what has been learned in class by doing homework (e.g., David, 2012a, 2012b). I suggest here that when a certain student is refusing to do homework on a regular basis, or must be persuaded by her or his parents to do homework time and again and pretty soon their homework become the parents’ task, but in spite of this behavior they achieve highly, succeed in the tests given and seems as controlling the material learned, it is very often because the child is gifted. A gifted child who is well equipped with good learning habits, had no disabilities and is blessed with learning motivation either knows already what is taught in class or understands and in control of the subject matter with no need for further rehearsing.

It is highly recommended that when such a student has demonstrated more characteristics of giftedness both teachers and parents should offer them high level assignments, high level materials and a possibility to master additional subject matters—not just those learned in school. The tendency to label a student that has been “discovered: as gifted as “one who does not have to learn” is exactly the opposite of what that student needs. In order for a gifted student materialize their gifts, one might take into consideration that using the “gifted” label might prove to be prone to more harm than good (e.g., David, 2014c). As Ryan (2013) has shown, labeling students as gifted has positive outcomes on self-concept developing when they receive supportive environment, and negative outcomes when they do not.



### 2.5. Shows Emotional High Level (might even be Social leader)

Studies by Matheis, Kronborg, Schmitt, and Preckel (2017) and Matheis, Keller, Kronborg, Schmitt, and Preckel (2020) have shown that pre-service teachers have a strong belief about “maladjustment of the gifted”. Similar results had been found among pre-service teachers (Preckel, Baudson, Krolak-Schwerdt, & Glock, 2015). Indeed, many gifted students, especially those who are disabled and do not get proper treatment, or others with a variety of risk-factors (e.g., David, 2009a, 2009b, 2011b, 2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2016a, 2016b, 2017a, 2017b). This prejudice has been supported by the media, describing the gifted child or adolescent quite often as a loner, “strange”, socially-rejected individual (e.g., Bergold, Hastall, & Steinmayr, 2021; David, 2021; Gross, 2006).

Bergold, Hastall, and Steinmayr (2021) discuss the “Persistent Popular Stereotypes About Gifted Individuals Stereotypes Depicted in the Mass Media” (p. 76). According to them:

Despite the overwhelming evidence in support of the harmony hypothesis, negative stereotypes about gifted individuals are reflected in media representations. Mass media such as movies, TV series, and fiction literature mostly present extremely gifted children and adolescents who lack social skills; have few friends; are solitary and whimsical, misunderstood, sensible, unsporting, or have a rather feeble constitution (Cox, 2000; Friedl & Hoyer, 2014; Vialle, 2007).

According to Bergold et al. (2021), “Stereotypes Held in the Population” (p. 77) are also negative; this includes the majority of parents and educators: both teachers and pre-service teachers (Baudson, 2006; Baudson & Preckel, 2013, 2016; Carrington & Bailey, 2000; Cramond & Martin, 1987; Ely, 2010; Geake & Gross, 2008; Lee et al., 2004; Matheis et al., 2017, 2020; Moon & Brighton, 2008). It also includes some research of gifted children and youths; the majority of which did not choose to be leaders (e.g., Ogurlu, & Sevim, 2017).

But all these “testimonies”, beliefs and opinions do not contradict the fact that there is a substantial part of gifted children who are very well emotionally developed and thus popular by their peers, well-accepted in school and some even chose to be social leaders (e.g., Sisk, 2008, 2018). Indeed, many a time a highly gifted child “does not fit in”, but it does not necessarily mean that she or he lacks characteristics needed in order to be a “social success”. Quite often it happens that a gifted child who seems to have social problems, or adjustment problems, once they are offered a more suitable environment, moving to a more challenging class, and getting higher level teachers and instructors “gets rid” of the former social problems. Here is an example.

One of the main reasons for the belief of “maladjustment of the gifted” and “social/emotional problems of the gifted” is the high occurrence of gifted children, youths and adults with over-excitabilities. Carman (2011) suggest adding over-excitabilities to the “personality list” that can help identifying the gifted. Ackerman (1997) had suggested the use of personality characteristics, based on Dabrowski’s overexcitabilities theory, in order to identify gifted students. More explicitly, she (ibid, 2009) found that in almost 80% of the cases using three of the five “over-excitability components”—psychomotor,

intellectual and motor was good-enough in order to discriminate between gifted and non-gifted adolescents. While many educators, who are not familiar with Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration (e.g., Ackerman, 2009) perceive phases of restlessness—whether physical, such as psychomotor, intellectual, as asking too much, being involved in an intellectual activity to such a level that nothing else seems important or interesting, or being emotionally touched by things that most people might not even be aware of seem problematic, Dabrowski (1972) had shown half a century ago that this is not the case. As the title of this first translated-to-English book says: *Psychoneurosis is not an illness*.

#### 2.5.1. A vignette from my clinic

A few years ago I met the parents of a ten-year old highly gifted girl, who, in spite of learning in a gifted class, was extremely unhappy both with the learning level and pace and with her peers. By the time I met her she was a grade 4 student who had attended school regularly only in the 3 first month—September—November of the school year, while since December she hardly showed up in school for three months. It did not take me long to understand why she felt so bad in school: she was much more emotionally developed than most high school children I met; she felt that in order to be an integral part of her class she had to speak about subjects that did not interest anybody else; to hide her own abilities, insights, even aesthetic tastes that did not “fit in”, as she had an original way of speaking, dressing, even seeing the world. She was self-observant about all these facts, saying: “I am sick and tired of playing, of putting on a mask; It is a lose-lose situation. Either I keep on pretending to be a part of a crowd I do not belong to or I am to be rejected, laughed at, even banned”.

After my second meeting with that girl I told her parents that she MUST skip a grade in order to have an opportunity to socialize with children who would be a better fit for her. I already thought that skipping two grades would be a better move, but knowing that the Israeli ministry of n objects, in general for skipping two grades, and hoping she could still continue her formal education in a gifted class I was hoping that skipping one grade would—at least partially—“do the job”. I referred her to a well-known educational psychologist whose “day job” is at the Ministry of education, so that no authority would be able to question his qualities. But soon enough I got a call from the psychologist who, after speaking with the girl just once asked me why I did not recommend that she skipped two grades. I told him that I was sure the ministry of education would object to such a move, and I was not sure whether he was willing to stay firm behind his recommendation when having to face the authorities' objection. He assured me he did; the girl took all tests required and passed with extreme success, and the recommendation of skipping two classes was handed to the headmistress of her school.

A few days later the parents got a letter stating that under no circumstances their daughter could skip two classes. As I already knew that in grade-speaking issues the final decision is in the diagnostician's hands, the parents hired a lawyer who was to represent them if the case needed to be decided in court. But the “chief counselor” in the department of gifted and excellent students at the ministry of

education—who knew that the department actually had ‘no case’ invited the parents for a meeting aimed to “explain’ that skipping two grades was not the child’s best interest. I attended the meeting, as well as the psychologist, in addition to both the girl’s parents. The “chief counselor” was accompanied by the girl’s home-teacher, her headmistress, and another high official from the ministry of education. The 3-hour meeting started by the chief counselor who “told” us all: “you must be aware of the fact that gifted children are less developed emotionally than the non-gifted. I KNOW it, as I am a mother of a gifted son myself. Thus, skipping one class would probably not be the best interest of the girl, but we are willing to accept it as a compromise. But there is no way skip two classes; we cannot allow it”.

This is not the place to discuss the knowledge level of the decision makers in the field of gifted education, nor are we to make any remarks about people who “know” things by extrapolation from their mother, sister, or son. I have brought this example only to demonstrate the fact that this prejudice, about the lesser emotional abilities of the gifted, not just exists, but is quite common even among those who are in charge not just of the cognitive development of the gifted but of their wellbeing as well.

If you wonder how did this saga end: knowing that they had no prospects to win in court the ministry of education could not object to the girls’ skipping two grades, but as the department of gifted and excelling students in Israel is “separate kingdom” when the head of the department has a final say about everything, the girls could not get into a gifted class and thus after not attending school for most of grade 4 she moved to another school where on the next September she started attending a scientific grade 7.

### **3. Discussion**

The following unconventional discussion is to demonstrate the frequency of ignorance still existing among teachers regarding gifted students, and is to show how by teacher education rather than by explanations, discussions and argumentations and attitudes towards gifted students can be achieved by teachers and thus higher probability of identification giftedness.

Over a quarter of a century ago, when teaching for the 5<sup>th</sup> time the course: “the gifted child in the regular classroom” to in-service kindergarten teachers, I started the first class in the year by asking all my students to sit in a large circle so that everybody would be able to see all other students. I assured them the material learned during that class is not going to be included in the final test, so they did not have to worry about writing “everything the teacher said”, and thus got their full attention as well as their cooperation: they were both thankful for “having less material to learn for the test” and being able to feel more at home, as sitting in a large circle is practiced in all Israeli kindergartens as a part of the morning ritual intended to enable every child share feelings, thoughts, knowledge she or he find interesting, while the teacher steps in both as an interpreter for the children when needed, and as a person who by sharing her own experiences helps shy, hesitant or indifferent kindergartners to participate as well.

I approached the woman sitting next to me and asked her: “can you tell us anything you wish about one of the gifted children you have met”? The teacher who was already in her 50ies had probably met dozens of gifted children in her 20+year career said: I never met a gifted child”. OK, I said, let’ go to on, and looked at the student sitting next to her. She thought for a minute, but then said: “I cannot recall meeting any gifted child”. I did not lose my patience and went on, until that student no, 5 said: “can I describe a gifted girl who is a family member”? Of course you can, and it turned out that one that teachers’ nieces was identified as gifted by the ministry of education while 8-years old, and thus the teacher could not deny the fact that she “met a gifted child”. After describing some of the girls’ characteristics and ways of behavior, one of the first 4 students asked: “I can now remember a gifted boy who attended my kindergarten a few years ago. Can I still speak about him?” “of course you can”, I answered. After that boy was described the other two students who previously “never met a gifted child” suddenly remembered that they had been meeting several gifted children, and ALL other students had also met gifted children and were eager to speak about them... But the 90-minute class was too short, and as we had a lot to learn in that course too many teachers were disappointed for not getting the opportunity to share their experiences with gifted children in the regular kindergarten with their class-mates. So I told my students that at the end of the course everybody who was to prefer writing a case study about a gifted child was welcome to do it instead of taking the traditional final test. They ALL chose this option and I had a tremendous amount of interesting materials about gifted children in the periphery. Their work intrigues me to write my book: “gifted girls: Case-studies” and about ten years later, after teaching the same course at the masters’ programs for educational counselors at the Eilat branch of the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (David, 2011a).

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#### Note(s)

Note 1. While many definitions of giftedness are IQ-related, more and more countries are changing their criteria for giftedness identification by adding actual achievements—rather than focusing on future potential that might—or might not—be materialized.

Note 2. Agnon, S. Y. (1953 [1931]). *Hakhnāsāt kallāh* (in Hebrew). Schoken: Jerusalem.

Note 3. The home-room teacher is called in Hebrew “the educator”. In elementary school this teacher teaches usually a few subjects, including, in most cases, language, mathematics, or both. In high school “the educator” usually teaches less subjects, sometimes only one subjects, but is in charge of all social class issues.