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Good books require good readers. This is why I highly recommend the inspiring and well-written gem of a book by Joan Franklin Smutny and S.E. von Fremd: ***The Lives of Great Women Leaders & You*** (2014, Royal Fireworks Press). Teachers, parents, and both female and male students in gifted classrooms should read this masterpiece on women who have made important contributions to Math and Science, Society and Culture, Government and Politics, and the Arts. The final chapter addresses the issue of finding one's way to become a leader. Some examples of the women pioneers discussed in the Math and Science chapter are Amelie Noether who developed a mathematical theorem of symmetry in nature with the laws of conservation of energy and matter. Her work was strongly supported by Albert Einstein for its originality and importance to physics, and remains as one of the foundations of modern physics. The chapter also describes the role of women in the NASA space exploration program from the original Mercury 13 (who were eventually excluded from the space program) to Sally Ride's and Kathryn Sullivan's space shuttle voyages. Sullivan was the first American woman to spacewalk.

To hold this book in your hands is to possess a goldmine of inspiration for current and future generations of gifted girls and women. In the Introduction the authors say: "If you are a girl or young woman who wants to do what you've always dreamed but who thinks you cannot, this book is for you. If you think your ideas for education and career are unrealistic and impossible to achieve because other people have told you so, this book is also for you. If you live in a place where you cannot find anyone or anything to show you how you can create a new life, you will find in this book the footprints of women leaders who faced even greater challenges. You will discover what actions you can take to make your life your own and to have a life that makes you happy." (Introduction, p. 1).

Another book I recommend is by the Latin American genius of fiction, non-fiction and poetry – Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986). He was completely blind when he presented a series of lectures on Anglo-Saxon and English literature at the University of Buenos Aires in 1966. The lectures were compiled into a wonderful analysis of such masterpieces as *Beowulf* , the writings and life of Samuel Johnson, and the Romantic English poets. It is entitled, ***Professor Borges: A Course in English Literature*** (2013, New Directions).

I would also like to inform you about our latest book from Gifted Education Press by R.E. Myers, a former student of E. Paul Torrance. He has recently published ***Giving a Lift to the Gifted: Ideas and Essays for Helping Teachers Inspire Higher Thinking in the Creative Classroom*** (2014). Please see the link at Amazom.com and a picture of the inspiring cover designed for gifted students and their teachers: http://amzn.to/1lwkfhn.

Articles in this Issue of GEPQ:

- Stephen Schroeder-Davis presents an in-depth analysis of the problems and issues of using a Common Core curriculum with gifted students.

- Hanna David discusses her extensive counseling with a young gifted child diagnosed with ADHD and dyslexia. She also includes details about her interactions with the parents. Although the article is an useful object lesson for working with these children, it shows how counselors' best of intentions can sometimes produce few positive results.

- Harry T. Roman has written a wonderful book that was recently published by GEP – ***Invention, Innovation and Creative Thinking in the Gifted Classroom*** **(2014)**. http://amzn.to/1cCbMrD. The excerpt included here addresses some of his main concerns about teaching gifted students to be inventors and innovators.

- Michael Walters wraps up this issue with a fascinating account of Katherine Anne Porter who was an outstanding author and Pulitzer Prize winner.

Maurice D. Fisher, Ph.D. Publisher

A Cure for the Common Core

Stephen Schroeder-Davis

Elk River, Minnesota Public Schools

As I write this article, the Common Core controversy appears to be intensifying. A Google search using the words "Common Core" conducted the morning of July 6, 2014 yielded 47,300,000 hits, eight related searches, and five sponsored sites. While many of those hits simply present basic descriptive information about the Common Core, many others reveal the debate raging over it. Both the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association (NEA) have critiqued the Common Core and are moving from criticizing *implementation* of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) to criticizing the *content* of the CCSS, joining powerful skeptics such as Diane Ravitch, Alfie Kohn, and the states that either have refused to adopt the CCSS or are reconsidering their adoption.

I was immediately skeptical regarding the Common Core, as my primary interest was the impact this initiative would have on gifted students, and the recent history of legislated educational mandates, particularly No Child Left Behind (NCLB), was not encouraging. I expected my concerns would be somewhat assuaged—and they were—when Hughes, Kettler, Shaunessey-Dedrick, and VanTassel-Baska (2014) published *A Teacher's Guide to Using the Common Core State Standards with Gifted and Advanced Learning in the English Arts*, and Johnsen, Ryser, and Assouline (2014) published *A Teacher's Guide to Using the Common Core State Standards with Mathematically Gifted and Advanced Learners*. The two volumes are intended answer at least two questions:

> How can schools provide the level of rigor and relevance within the new standards as they translate them into experiences for gifted learners? [and] How can they provide creative and innovative opportunities to learn that will nurture the thinking and problem solving of our best students in the subject area? (Hughes et al., 2014, p. XII)

Hughes et al. also stated in their introduction that the group's book "serves as a primer for basic policies and practices related to advanced learners in school" (p. XII), and they placed major emphasis on advancing key "21st century skills," which include collaboration, communication, critical and creative thinking, problem solving, cross-cultural skills, and information and technical literacy. Hughes et al. (2014) also appear to enthusiastically endorse the CCSS, stating, "Clearly, CCSS hold great promise for better teaching and learning" (p. X), and, "Although the new CCSS-ELA are a positive movement for all of education . . . it is important to be mindful of the ongoing need to differentiate appropriately for our top learners within them" (p. 5).

Well! Here were three red flags, and I had yet to get to page six in the language arts book. My concerns:

1. The endorsement of the CCSS appeared despite the necessity of writing two volumes to make them applicable to gifted learners;
2. The authors needed to augment the CCSS by embedding 21st century skills, as they were not present at sufficient levels; and,
3. As stated by the authors, the book is essentially a differentiation guide to help teachers provide challenge for advanced learners within the CCSS framework. Clearly they were aware guidelines were necessary to facilitate differentiation for gifted learning with the CCSS, although they did not advocate the need to *ensure* it. Further, it is curious they would characterize the CCSS as holding "great promise" for "all of education" while simultaneously attempting to redress a clear deficit in its fundamental design.

It should be stated that the differentiation examples both sets of authors provided are superb. They have succeeded admirably in creating conceptual support for gifted education, but merely publishing some books does not remotely ensure teachers will differentiate for gifted learners, nor should they have to. Clear, deliberate, overt, growth-promoting accommodations for gifted learners should have been part of the CCSS package.

Did the authors of the CCSS completely neglect to consider gifted students in their calculus? Not exactly. The Common Core authors dutifully acknowledged that the *grade specific* standards do "not define the intervention methods or materials necessary to support students who are well below or well above grade level expectations" (Common Core State Standards Initiative, n.d., p. 6). Hughes et al. (2014) rightly pointed out that "some students will traverse the standards before the end of high school" (p. 3). It appears the authors of the CCSS intend the standards to be for all students *whose zone of proximal development matches the standards*. Students who are "well above or below grade level expectations" or who traverse the standards faster than age peers are acknowledged without being accommodated.

The Common Core and Classroom Reality

The remainder of this article will critique the CCSS primarily from the vantage point of gifted advocacy, although many of the injurious aspects of CCSS are applicable to all students. I will also suggest one intervention we are using within my district, an approach that brought to mind the title for this article, "A Cure for the Common Core."

Concern One: The CCSS are Normative Rather than Ipsative and Stress Competition Rather than Collaboration

In 2011, the Council of Great City Schools, located in Washington D.C., created a video (http://vimeo.com/channels/511746) explaining the Common Core to parents. The script for the video, entitled "Explaining the CCSS" includes the following:

- Like it or not, life is full of measuring sticks. How smart we are, how fast we are, how well we can, you know, compete.
- Is a graduating senior in, say, St. Louis as prepared to get a job as the graduate in Shanghai?
- Secondly, the standards are consistent from school-to-school, and they match up against international standards too. Now, we know how we're doing compared to just about everyone.
- The world is getting more and more competitive every day.

As it happens, the Council of Great City Schools, an urban school consortium and strong CCSS supporter, has a "Blue Ribbon Corporate Advisory Group" that "serves as a sounding board to the Council" (Council of Great City Schools, 2002-2014, para. 1). Their list of corporate advisors includes Microsoft and Pearson. The Gates Foundation is the primary funder of CCSS, and Pearson is one of the main financial beneficiaries. The Gates Foundation is underwriting implementation of the standards because federal law prohibits the government from controlling, directing, or supervising curriculum or instruction—but not from having a proxy to do so. One reason Pearson benefits so rapaciously from CCSS, according to the Washington Post's Lyndsey Layton (2013), is that the Pearson Charitable Foundation created Common Core products to generate "'tens of millions of dollars' for its corporate sister" (para. 1), Pearson Publishing. Rarely do charitable foundations focus on national curriculum innovation.

The deeply questionable ethics of this arrangement was evident in the announcement that The Pearson Charitable Foundation, the nonprofit arm of Pearson Publications, recently agreed to pay a $7.7 million settlement to New York Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman for "misuse [of] charitable assets" (Layton, 2013, para. 2). Specifically, Pearson used its nonprofit foundation to develop Common Core products in order to win an endorsement from a "prominent foundation" (Layton, 2013, para. 6), which turns out to be the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Beyond the suspect, furtive corporate business arrangements fueling the conception and development of the CCSS, there are further reasons everyone involved in American education should be skeptically scrutinizing the Common Core. The CCSS are driven by normative comparisons and global competition rather than by concern for student improvement and well-being. This operating orientation is clearly evidenced in the blog of Gates' Foundation educational point person Alan Golston, who wrote, "I am pleased to see the excitement in the business community for the common core. Businesses are the primary consumers of the output of our schools, so it's a natural alliance" (Golston, 2013, para. 7). Understand that the phrase, *Businesses are the primary consumers of the output of our schools* is a reference to actual human beings—children and young adults!

Also disturbing is that, according to the New York Times, President Obama's current plan to rate American colleges and universities would include, among less ominous factors, *the future earnings of graduates* (Lewin, 2013). A graduate's earnings seem an odd metric indeed, as a student's major—say, education rather than business—could now harm the school's reputation because teachers earn less than business graduates. What are the cultural ramifications of implicitly promoting the value of earning money over other important social contributions, such as helping young people reach their full humanistic (nonmonetary) potential? This monetary-competitiveness ideology is frequently manifested in what I call the twin totems of "college and career readiness" (Schroeder-Davis, 2014). My major objection to framing the overriding purpose of K-12 education as ensuring that our "outputs" (i.e., students) are optimally primed to be "consumed" by businesses by exiting high school "college and career ready" is that it reduces education to job preparation, either immediately (career ready) or eventually (college ready). Surely education has nobler and less utilitarian functions than arming our nation's children to do battle with other nations' children to achieve economic hegemony.

Further, and, in light of the goals of the CCSS, ironically, as Gerald Bracey (2003) so brilliantly demonstrated via a simple mathematical formulation in his critique of *A Nation at Risk* on the 20th anniversary of its publication, there is no relationship between our K–12 education system's "outputs" and American "global competitiveness." Bracey (2003) wrote:

> I located 35 nations that were ranked in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) eighth-grade tests and were also ranked for global competitiveness by the World Economic Forum (WEF), the Geneva think tank. Among these 35, the U.S. was number one in 2001. Among all 75 countries that the WEF ranked in its Global Competitiveness Report

> 2001-2002, the U.S. was number 2, trailing Finland. But Finland did not take part in the first round of TIMSS in 1995. The rank order correlation coefficient between tests scores and Competitiveness was +.19, virtually zero. If five countries that scored low on both variables were removed from the list, the coefficient actually became negative. (p. 617)

My admiration for Dr. Bracey knowing no bounds, I repeated his procedure, albeit more modestly and using slightly different measures. Specifically, I used findings from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) test, and conclusions reached using the most recent World Economic Forum's (WEF) Global Competitiveness Index. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (n.d.), recent PISA results indicate the United States is currently at or below average in science, math, and reading. Yet according to the WEF's (2013) Global Competitiveness Index, 2013-14 (a more recent iteration of the measure Bracey used), the United States is fifth worldwide, having moved up two positions from 2012-13. As a delicious aside, the Global Competitiveness Index also measures and lists "The Most Problematic Factors for Doing Business." In the United States, the top three factors are "tax regulations, tax rates, and an inefficient government bureaucracy" (WEF, 2013, p. 382), all of which are far beyond the reach of teachers and students, or for that matter, the CCSS.

To be perfectly clear: Schools are not businesses, students are not "outputs," and linking standardized test results to global economic status is conceptually flawed. The euphemism "college and career readiness" at the center of the nation's educational agenda reduces education to *employability,* which is at best ill-advised and counterproductive, if not unethical. Further, the reductionist view of education exemplified by the business-driven emphasis on quantifiable results, specifically in math and reading, directly counters what virtually every "21st century" initiative demands: the "4 C's "of creativity, collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving, and creativity and innovation.

A Google search conducted on April 7, 2014 using the phrase "21st century education" yielded 146,000,000 results, suggesting the ubiquity of this educational agenda. Businesses and education leaders (that phrase may be redundant) offer tomes such as *Preparing 21st Century Students for a Global Society: An Educator's Guide to the "4 Cs"* (NEA, n.d.), and "The Four C's: Making 21st Century Education Happen" (EdLeader 21 & Pearson Publications, n.d.), a YouTube video publication. Business/education leaders promulgating the CCSS tout the vital importance of collaboration, problem solving, and innovation, and then proceed to straightjacket teachers and students within the confines of the standards and the standardized tests that accompany these, as the tests necessarily eliminate many opportunities for students to collaborate, problem solve, and innovate, and further are not effective means of measuring student abilities in those areas.

The normative measurements needed to rank our international economic standing necessarily deflect focus away from students as individuals and provide, at best, mixed messages regarding the virtues of collaboration. When students are viewed as human capitol, commodified, and represented as aggregate test scores in service of a need to remain economically competitive, the focus on individual student growth and well-being is inevitably subordinated to quantifiable "results," and teachers are forced to become test conscious rather than student-centered.

Concern Two: The CCSS Homogenize When They Should Individualize

Shortly after the 10th anniversary of the 1983 publication of *Habits of Mind,* Howard Gardner (1995), writing in *Phi Delta Kappan*, reflected on the enduring educational impact of his theory of multiple intelligences. Garner surmised that one of the reasons so many embraced his theory was that it encouraged more personalization of education. He wrote, "We are not all the same; we do not all have the same kinds of minds; education works most effectively for most individuals if these differences . . . are taken into account rather than denied or ignored" (Gardner, 1995, Messages about MI in the Classroom section, para. 17).

The enormous diversity represented in a typical classroom encompasses essentially *all* the ways in which humans differ, but for simplicity's sake, I'll temporarily restrict the idea of student diversity to just 10 factors: culture, academic engagement, aptitude, readiness, interests, learning preferences, access to educational resources, parental involvement, motivation, and English language proficiency. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2013), this is the student reading proficiency continuum facing an American fourth-grade teacher:

- 10% of students are below basic proficiency
- 31% are at basic proficiency
- 44% are proficient
- 16% are advanced (averages are rounded, so the total equals 101%)

Note that the percentages above reflect just one-tenth of the diversity variables I listed in the preceding paragraph and yet present a formidable challenge to any teacher, as the grade level equivalency from "below basic" to "advanced" within a classroom could easily equal more than 6 years. Realistically, how many teachers can keep that continuum of learners in their respective zones of proximal development simultaneously? Yet the Common Core State Standards Initiative's (n.d.) Introduction section clearly implies *all* teachers are assumed to have the expertise, time, and resources to challenge *all* students simultaneously. The emphases in the excerpt below are mine:

> *The Standards do not define the nature of advanced work for students who meet the Standards prior to the end of high school*. For those students, advanced work in such areas as literature, composition, language, and journalism should be available. . . . The Standards set grade-specific standards but do not define the intervention methods or materials necessary to support students who are well below or well above grade-level expectations. . . . *It is also beyond the scope of the Standards to define the full range of supports appropriate for English language learners and for students with special needs*. *At the same time, all students must have the opportunity to learn and meet the same high standards* if they are to access the knowledge and skills necessary in their post–high school lives. (Common Core State Standards Initiative, n.d., p. 6)

I have doubly emphasized the last quoted line above, as it gives lie to the ubiquitous and misleading characterization that the CCSS provide equity to all students. The CCSS do nothing of the kind. Having "the opportunity" to learn all of the standards in the designated time provided is not the same as actually *learning* all of the standards in the designated time provided. In fact, tragically and ironically, the depth and breadth of the standards, coupled with the grade level expectations that accompany them, ensure that a majority of students—"opportunities" notwithstanding—will *not* meet all of the standards. In other words, the CCSS pretense that all students can be cloned to meet grade level expectations is as cynical as was NCLB's dictate that all students be proficient at grade level standards by 2014 (which is to say *now*, and while estimates vary, nowhere near 100% of the nation's children are "proficient" in accord with NCLB mandates).

The CCSS authors' blithe assertion that students working ahead should have "advanced work in such areas as literature, composition, language, and journalism" (Common Core State Standards Initiative, n.d., p. 6) catapults to the erroneous assumptions that:

- advanced materials are available,
- teachers automatically know who the advanced students are without needing time to administer pre-assessments, and
- teachers have the expertise to utilize advanced materials to differentiate for gifted and other advanced learners.

Further, even if the assumptions above were a reality, the CCSS themselves preclude all but a fraction of teachers the time to actually obtain (or create) the advanced materials, consistently pre-assess their students, and use the information derived from the pre-assessments to fashion differentiated assignments for their students, to say nothing of guiding them through the differentiated lessons and then assessing them.

The CCSS authors' willful ignorance of the actual lives of teachers is not surprising, given that only 8 of the 24 had classroom teaching experience in math or English language arts, and not one of the 24 was employed in the classroom during the time the CCSS were written. We know this thanks to the investigative work of Mercedes Schneider, whose observations and conclusions were reported to blogger Diane Ravitch (dianeravitch, 2014).

Recall the Gardner (1995) quote that began this section: "We are not all the same; we do not all have the same kinds of minds; education works most effectively for most individuals if these differences . . . are taken into account rather than denied or ignored" (Messages about MI in the Classroom section, para. 17). Consider that reality in the context of a classroom of 30 students, representing the diverse reading continuum cited earlier. Those 30 students differ in more than just "reading proficiency," however; each student is unique and will not be taught appropriately unless each is perceived as an individual by a teacher who has the time, expertise, resources, and incentive to differentiate, thereby making learning relevant.

Concern Three: CCSS will Disproportionately Harm Gifted Students

A simile: The CCSS force schools to function like assembly lines in which the "outputs of schools" are produced to be "consumed" by businesses (note in that sentence, I am using the actual words the Gates' Foundation's educational spokesperson, Alan Golston, used to describe the relationship between businesses and the CCSS). The "outputs" (students) come down the assembly line in units (grades 1 – 12). Outputs that are "defective" (that is, students who are not yet "proficient") need tweaking (instructional support) on the assembly line in order to be useful to America's economy. Outputs that are up to standard (students, gifted and otherwise, who are above "proficiency") are deemed helpful to America's economy, as they are "college and career ready" and so are no longer in need of further tweaking. Is this really what we want education to be and do? It seems to me the soul of education has gotten lost:

Students are not a means to end but rather are ends themselves, unique and precious. They should not be viewed as malleable cogs in some giant national economic wheel; instead, they deserve the right to chart their own paths and destinations with the aid of ongoing instruction that maximizes their personal development. Or, put another way:

The problem is that there's only so well bright kids can do on these [standardized] exams, and the incentive to invest in them beyond that point vanishes. Since they max out at the ninety-ninth percentile, they are, as it were, fully capitalized businesses with limited growth potential. (Weiner, 2014, para. 3)

Three separate studies sponsored by the Fordham Foundation (Farkas & Duffett, 2008; Loveless, 2008; Xiang, Dahlin, Cronin, Theaker, & Durant, 2001) documented what gifted advocates knew even before the advent of NCLB: Grade level standards inevitably harm gifted students. There are several reasons for this, but the overarching reason is obvious: Most teachers cannot simultaneously accommodate the enormous diversity within their classes, and if penalties, rewards, and funding are targeted to ensure mass proficiency, teachers will logically focus on students who are not yet "proficient." Given that the CCSS will remain the dominant educational driver for some time, and assuming gifted students are the most likely group to "traverse the standards before the end of high school" (Hughes et al., 2014, p. 3), what can be done to engage them productively?

A Modest Proposal: Genius Hour

One of my roles as a Gifted and Talented (GT) specialist in my district is to ensure Response to Intervention (RtI) accommodates gifted students and others reaching proficiency "too soon" (that is, earlier than their grade level assignment dictates). The vast majority of the teachers in my district are eager to provide high-end differentiation for gifted students but lack the time, resources, or expertise to do so. As a result, the "advanced work in such areas as literature, composition, language, and journalism" (p. 6) the authors of the CCSS assert "should be available" (Common Core State Standards Initiative, n.d., p. 6) are not, leaving teachers, students, and parents frustrated.

As a differentiation coach, I have long encouraged teachers to prepare, as an initial GT intervention, compelling anchor activities, so at least high achievers and gifted students (those dreaded "early finishers") are afforded the opportunity to engage in out of level curriculum. As relatively simple as anchor activities are (compared to, for example, well structured tiering or the use of Sternberg's TriMind), my teachers still face the time, resource, and expertise limitations mentioned previously. The teachers generally feel comfortable adapting lessons in Tiers II and III for students needing remediation but struggle with designing Tier II and III enrichment interventions, essentially viewing enrichment as "an extra prep" they do not have time to plan. As a result, I was asked to devise an anchor activity for teachers that:

- was transdisciplinary;
- required no teacher preparation;
- was compelling enough that "extra credit" and other banal incentives would not be necessary;
- could be done alone or in dyads, triads, and small teams;
- was open to all grade levels;
- could be of short or long duration;
- had rubrics, timelines, and organizational support (which are optional if students find them confining);
- culminated in a "real-world" presentation;
- did not require expertise in gifted education or differentiation;
- could provide public relations for the district;
- could increase attendance at conferences and open houses; and
- could stimulate parental involvement.

While the requirements above may appear overwhelming, I consult with several districts – and work in one – that have taken the time and effort to schedule enrichments on a par with the time devoted to remediation and so have made life much better for gifted students. The anchoring activity I imported and adapted is modeled after Google's *20% Time,* a program in which employees were allowed the equivalent of 1 day each week to pursue personal passions, so long as they were of benefit to Google (Gmail and AdSense were developed on employees' 20% time). The RtI-friendly enrichment I promote is known as *Genius Hour*, and while not comprising 20% of a student's time, it can be made available whenever grade-level mastery is demonstrated, whether within an RtI framework or not.

Genius Hour accommodates the time, resource, and expertise issues mentioned previously, as well as these typical staff development challenges, which gifted advocates routinely face: (a) high-end differentiation is not a priority; (b) there is serious competition for teachers' time and attention, leaving gifted education vulnerable to competing initiatives and edicts; and (c) teachers want suggestions that can be implemented immediately and prefer strategies that benefit all students. *Genius Hour,* as this link will explain, has only three requirements:

1. Students must select a topic that interests them.
2. They must thoroughly research the topic.
3. They must present their findings to as large an audience as is feasible.

For many students with established passions and sufficient executive functioning skills, the sheer joy of release from the rigid requirements imposed by the CCSS and standardized tests may be enough motivation to bring a *Genius Hour* investigation from initial inquiry to completed presentation. For students needing some time to determine a topic, and for those needing more structure, I suggest a similar but more structured anchoring activity, *The Passion Project.* As the link will demonstrate, this variation of *Genius Hour* provides scaffolding, examples, a rubric, and several other supports for students not quite ready to immerse themselves in what is essentially an independent study.

The versatility of either option is impressive, as individual teachers can use *Genius Hour* or *The Passion Project* as an anchoring activity or as an assignment. They can be used within enrichment clusters and/or as an after- or before-school option. After some piloting this year, several schools in my district will utilize *Genius Hour* (with *Passion Project* scaffolding) as an enrichment option throughout the year during what we call WIN (What I Need) time. WIN time was historically devoted to remediation but now will offer advanced students a delightful option for pursuing their interests, working in teams (if desired), doing authentic research, preparing a presentation, and going in front of a live audience to share their findings. In my district, I have suggested teachers follow some guidelines, which I endorse in other districts as well:

1. *Genius Hour* projects should not be graded but rather be self-assessed and also critiqued by adults and peers.
2. A reflection should be required, perhaps consisting of "what I learned," "what I might do differently next time," and "what my next investigation might be."
3. Working alone or with others should always be an option.
4. Presentations should be to the largest audience the student is willing to entertain.
5. Schools might feature either live *Genius Hour* presentations or tape highlights for airing during conferences and open houses. My district is considering a "Genius Hour Presentation Evening" to coincide with our Fine Arts Festival.

It's worth noting that teachers have been almost universally enthusiastic about *Genius Hour,* and some of our district administrators were awarded the "Star of Innovation" by the Minnesota Association of Secondary Principles for the schedule that was created to accommodate enrichment on a par with remediation within the school's RtI framework.

Summary

In this article, I have expressed my specific concerns regarding the CCSS. I would like to provide a summary of the concerns I listed and then make a few closing comments.

The CCSS are focused on education as a means of maintaining America's global economic competitiveness, an "educational" agenda that has been prominent at least since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983. Even if one were to grant the mercenary proposition that the primary purpose of education is to prepare our students to compete with other nations' students, the relationship between K-12 education and our nation's global economic status has at least twice been called into question, and perhaps disproven (see Bracey, 2003; Schroeder-Davis, 2014). The competition model requires normative measures rather than focusing on individual student improvement, and as a consequence requires continuation of our national fetish with standardized tests, particularly in mathematics and English language arts. The focus on standardized tests necessarily narrows the curriculum (David, 2011; Farkas Duffet Research Group, 2012)

The CCSS require grade level proficiencies, standards, and standardized tests, and this combination has already been demonstrated to slow the progress of gifted students (Farkas & Duffett, 2008; Loveless, 2008; Xiang et al., 2011). Further, there is serious doubt regarding the rigor of CCSS for gifted students, revealed by, among other things, the 2014 teachers' guide publications by Hughes et al. and Johnsen et al. In essence, the CCSS function as a more robust version of NCLB in that the effect of adopting the CCSS will necessarily force teachers once again to focus on remediation for the many rather than on growth for all.

In an absurd irony, the narrowing of the curriculum, which is hardly a new concern (e.g., see Berliner, 2011; FairTest, 2007; Robelen, 2011), compromises if not precludes development of the very skills and habits of mind the "21st century" and "college and career ready" advocates say they want, namely: collaboration, communication, critical and creative thinking, problem solving, cross-cultural skills, and information and technical literacy (NEA, n.d.). Berliner (2011) provided the following elegant summary of the devastating effects of curriculum narrowing (emphases are mine):

> Yet the most pernicious response to high stakes testing is perhaps the most rational, namely, curriculum narrowing. In this way more of what is believed to be on the test is taught. *Curriculum narrowing, however, reduces many students' chances of being thought talented in school and results in a restriction in the creative and enjoyable activities engaged in by teachers and students*. The tests commonly used with narrower curricula also appear to restrict thinking skills. In addition, responses to high stakes environments can easily retard the development of achievement in later grades as a function of the restrictions on learning in earlier grades. Finally, narrowing compromises interpretations of construct validity. The dominance of testing as part of American and British school reform policies insures that *many of the skills thought to be most useful in the twenty-first century will not be taught*. Thus students and their national economies will suffer when nations rely too heavily on high stakes testing to improve their schools. (p. 287)

The two emphasized sections above get to the heart of the CCSS failings. Recall Gardner's (1995) statement that minds differ, and educational efforts are most effective when those differences are planned for and embraced in instructional design. Thousands of unique and potentially vibrant, enthusiastic students' entire school lives are in jeopardy, as their love of art, music, choreography, paleontology, and a myriad of other dynamic, diverse interests are sacrificed on the altar of norms, standards, and economic competition.

As a token of resistance to the homogenization and learner commodification of the CCSS demand, I have suggested that advocates promote *Genius Hour*, as gifted students are likely to meet the Standards prior to the end of high school (as well as within lessons, units, and grade levels). If *Genius Hour* and similar opportunities that encourage the very "21st century" skills and habits of mind CCSS negates are made available, at least some gifted students will, for a brief, brief part of their school day, partially escape the harm this most recent *business* reform will wreak.

One More Thing: Power Should Speak Truth to Power

A Google search conducted on July 18, 2014 using the words *common core resources* generated 96,500,000 hits. A second Google search conducted on the same day using the stem *common core resources* and adding *for gifted education* yielded 1,930,000 hits, with NAGC featured prominently. Clearly there are many concerns regarding how our gifted, "fully capitalized" students will fare in a system that once again forces teachers to be consumed with mass proficiency rather than promoting individual student growth and welfare.

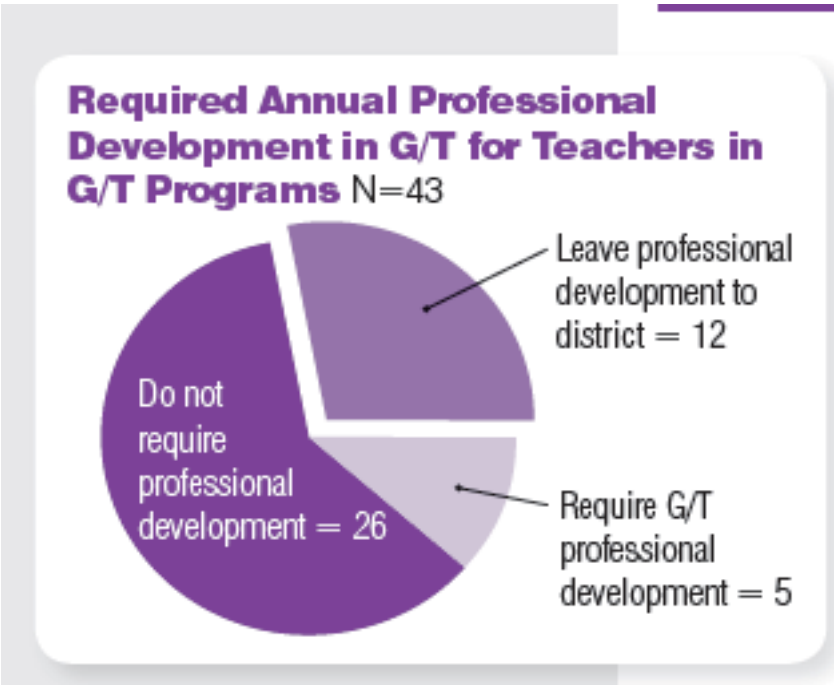
While I have already expressed admiration for the organization and rigor of Hughes et al.'s (2014) *A Teacher's Guide to Using the Common Core State Standards with Gifted and Advanced Learning in the English Arts* and Johnsen et al.'s (2014) *A Teacher's Guide to Using the Common Core State Standards with Mathematically Gifted and Advanced Learners*, I feel compelled to question an assertion made by Hughes et al., and by extension, the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC), which holds the text copyright. The following quote appears on the NAGC (n.d.) website page addressing the Common Core:

> Although the new content standards are considered to be more rigorous than most current state standards, they fall short in meeting the specific needs of gifted learners, and if held strictly to the standard, could actually limit learning. To overcome this pitfall, it is imperative that gifted educators create a full range of supports for high-ability learners through differentiated curriculum, instruction, and assessments. (para. 4)

The NAGC webpage continues with several suggestions to help advocates better accommodate the CCSS, which NAGC just *explicitly* stated, "fall[s] short in meeting the specific needs of gifted learners, and if held strictly to the standard, could actually limit learning" (para. 4). How then, can the authors of the NAGC-copyrighted Common Core and language arts text state, "Clearly, CCSS hold great promise for better teaching and learning . . ." (p. X) and "Although the new CCSS-ELA are a positive movement for all of education" (p. 5), I would argue that if the CCSS are more rigorous than were previous standards (as the NAGC contends), they will cause *more* neglect for gifted students, as teachers must attend to instilling the mass proficiency required of students who now face a more rigorous set of standards.

More than two decades ago, the Federal Government published *National Excellence: A Case for Developing America's Talent* (Office of Educational Research and Improvement, United States Department of Education, 1993). On page 28 of that report, teachers were called, "the key to success in our vision of excellent education. They must be prepared to work with advanced materials and to use

complex teaching strategies with a variety of students." Now, 21 years later, the NAGC (n.d.), in reference to the CCSS, tells us, "it is imperative that gifted educators create a full range of supports for high-ability learners through differentiated curriculum, instruction, and assessments" (para. 4), yet its own "State of the States" report (NAGC, 2010-2011) contains this (condemnatory) graphic, indicating the paucity of opportunities for teachers to learn how to do what the NAGC states is required:



If we are to make progress in the education of gifted students, I think we would be better served if the NAGC, our preeminent advocacy organization, offered the two Common Core texts along with the strong, straightforward admonition that *A Teacher's Guide to Using the Common Core State Standards with Gifted and Advanced Learning in the English Arts* (Hughes et al., 2014) and *A Teacher's Guide to Using the Common Core State Standards with Mathematically Gifted and Advanced Learners* (Johnsen et al., 2014) are a severely limited means of damage control. Without accompanying funding and legislation to help ensure teachers will actually have the time, training, and resources to give gifted and high ability students a fighting chance, the CCSS, like NCLB, will be nothing but a learner (and teacher) straightjacket.

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Termination of Treatment of Gifted Disabled Students

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A Concise Summary of the Concept of Termination of Treatment

Termination of psychological treatment has been a major issue in psychology since Freud (S. Freud, 1937). Actually, it was Rank (1924) who first wrote about termination of treatment, as Freud himself described in his 1937 article. In this work Freud (1937) showed – in a short vignette – how the notification that the next year was to be the last one of the treatment helped the patient to advance from a "stuck" psychoanalysis. This analysis ended in 1914, 10 years before Rank had published his work, so we can conclude that termination of psychological treatment was a subject psychologists were dealing with since the very beginning of modern psychology.

One-hundred years have passed since 1914, the year of the first documented end of treatment that was the basis of the first written case study on this subject (ibid), and the publishing of: *On Freud's "Analysis Terminable and Interminable"* edited by Sandler (2013). Sandler's book which includes 11 chapters written by the leading theorists and practitioners in the psychoanalytic field is described as being an "invaluable teaching tool for psychoanalytic therapists" (ibid, the book's cover). During these 100 years, termination of psychological treatment has been widely discussed, written about and described in detail in conferences and smaller professional forums. There are many lists and bibliographies of such works (e.g. Treatment Termination, 2014).

In the introduction to her book, Salberg (2010) reveals her motivation for taking upon herself the editing of a 16-chapter volume focused on termination of treatment:

> […] I came upon an outstanding article by Martin Bergmann (1997; Chapter 2 [in Salberg's book]) in which he incisively determines that the field has been negligent in developing a true paradigm for termination. I found his proposal simultaneously reassuring and disturbing.
> Further reading confirmed much of what Bergmann had assessed, and I also learned that over the years, both before and after Bergmann wrote his article, others had remarked on the slim writings on the topic (Salberg, 2010, p. XVI).

A few months before the publication of Salberg's book, Fosshage and Hershberg (2009a) dedicated a whole issue of the *Psychoanalytic Inquiry Journal* to termination of treatment. In addition to the seven articles dealing with a variety of subjects related to termination of treatment, the editors contributed a prologue as well as an epilogue (ibid, 2009b). Here is the first paragraph of their prologue:

> The last time that the psychoanalytic issue of "termination" served as a focus of study for a *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* issue was in 1982. A number of questions were addressed: (1) criteria for termination; (2) the process of termination; and (3) the subjective response to termination of analysand and analyst on those occasions when there is a sense of success as well as at those times when there is a sense of premature interruption (p. 99).

We can thus see that the issue of treatment termination, in spite of its unquestionable importance, has been at the center of psychoanalytic theory and practice in wavelike frequency. It seems that the last wave, starting about 5 years ago, has not calmed down yet; let us hope it remains at the center of psychological work for good.

According to Behnke (2009), the initiation for termination by the psychologist has to be the result either of the inability of the therapist to fulfil paragraph (a) in the "2.01 Boundaries of Competence":

> Psychologists provide services, teach, and conduct research with populations and in areas only within the boundaries of their competence, based on their education, training, supervised experience, consultation, study, or professional experience,

or when:

> […] it becomes reasonably clear that the client/patient no longer needs the service, is not likely to benefit, or is being harmed by continued service (Behnke, 2009).

Indeed, this is the case with termination of treatment among adults. Let us see how it works for children.

Premature Termination of Therapy with Children

While among adults termination of treatment is usually the decision of the patient, termination of therapy with children is the decision of their legal guardians – in most cases their parents.

According to Howes (2008), terminations from child therapy "provoke feelings of sadness, anger, grief, rejection and/or abandonment." Many other theoreticians wrote about these feelings occurring as a result of ending psychological treatment (e.g., Bonac, 1993; Lanyado, 1999; Penn, 1990), especially when done prematurely.

In contrast to Freud's idea (Freud, 1937) that analysis should be a long process, Rank (2006 [1929-1931]) argued that it was recommended to find ways to shorten the process of analysis, and thus set a date to terminate it. Rank's main argument was that the separation from the psychologist prepares the patient for future separations, since only by being able to leave meaningful people behind, can a person grow and go ahead with life. This idea is of great importance when treating children; as much as growth is important for adults, it is one of life essences for children and adolescents.

As Bar-Sadeh (2004) has summarized, the influence of environmental and circumstantial factors, namely the parents, on the termination of treatment among children makes a difference between treatment of adults and children. Usually the influence is a combination of environmental factors and the relationship between the psychologist and the patient.

Another crucial ingredient makes a great difference between the treatment of a child and treatment of an adult: when treating a child a substantial part of the treatment, namely the therapeutic alliance is missing. The psychologist had not agreed upon the conditions of the treatment prior to its beginning with the actual patient – the child, who started the treatment because the parents agreed upon such an alliance. This difficult situation might lead the therapist to give up the therapy (A. Freud, 1965).

It should not be surprising, under these circumstances, that just holding onto the treatment of children, rather than letting the patient drop out, might be quite hard. Statistics about dropout rates in treatment of children are far from promising. According to Westmacott et al. (2012), citing Barrett et al. (2008), Swift et al. (2009) and Wierzbicki & Pekarik (1993), as much as 50% of treatments of children are ended prematurely. Dropout rates are tightly connected to the nature of the problem of the patients as well. According to Johnson et al. (2008), children experiencing family problems or having conduct disorders and ADHD are more likely to drop out. Those experiencing negative life events, anxiety disorders or not being diagnosed are less likely to drop out. This conclusion, made after examining 520 new cases during an entire year, is clear-cut.

Under such circumstances, one of the most challenging aspects of treating children and youth is the termination of the treatment. When dealing with termination of treatment of adults there are many theories and even "prescriptions" regarding the recommended separation time (for example: Macneil et al., 2010; Piselli et al., 2011, Younggren et al., 2011). The reasons for termination of treatment of children are much more varied than for adults. The treatment of a child can be terminated because of the child's refusal to go to the therapist, or cooperate to such an extent that either the therapist or the parents decide about the termination. But, unlike the case among adults, termination can also be caused by the parents' sole decision.

In addition to the therapeutic alliance, vital in treatments of adults, two more alliances must exist in treatments of children:
1. Alliance between the therapist and the patient's parents; 2. Alliance between the patient and parents. Whether the treatment will go on or end depends on the continuous existence of these two alliances. Furthermore, the continuity of treatment when one of these alliances is broken not only jeopardizes the efficiency of the treatment but even the basis of medical ethics: "primum non nocere."

In most cases of treatment of adults the patient pays the therapist. Even when this is not the case, such as when a family member pays, or the therapist is paid directly by the insurance company, the termination of treatment is a process involving only the therapist and the patient. Sometimes the patient informs the therapist about the wish to end the therapy; quite often the reason given for such a wish is the financial burden the patient feels he is no longer able to or does not wish to carry. When the initiative to terminate the treatment comes from the therapist, this will involve approaching both the patient as well as the person who pays, especially with patients suffering from severe mental diseases. Only then will the termination process start.

The situation is different in the treatment of children and youths. In many cases the initiative to the termination comes from one or both parents, namely, the decision is not the patient's but rather that of the person who pays for the treatment (e.g. Bar-Sadeh, 2004). Especially when the patient is a young child, but even when already a teenager, they have, in most cases, no influence on the decision to terminate the treatment.

In addition, there are cases when a responsible therapist would try to persuade the adult patient to continue the therapy. But taking into consideration that the termination is not the child patient's decision, there is no point in doing that. Furthermore, if the child wishes to hear the therapist's opinion about the termination, being honest may put the therapist in a conflicting position with the child's parents. If the therapist tells the child or the adolescent that the decision has been made by the parents, the legal guardians, who were paying for the treatment and making sure to arrive at the clinic on-time for therapeutic sessions, it might have a negative influence. The child will experience the termination as a bad action, done against her or his interests without being consulted and sometimes even forced.

Additional Difficulties of Termination from Therapy among the Gifted

During the last 20 years I have observed a constant pattern for discontinuing therapy among children and adolescents who were both gifted and learning or emotionally disabled. The main reason was the wish of the parents to terminate the treatment. That was also the conclusion of Kazdin et al. (1997), in research among 242 families of children referred for treatment for oppositional, aggressive, and antisocial behavior. Among adolescents, I frequently heard the explanation that “the boy is too busy” or “your clinic is too far from us.” But whether the parents directly resisted the treatment or they were unable to overcome the difficulties, it never happened that the child or the adolescent refused to come to the meetings with me. It was always the parents who had informed me, “The child does not want to come.”

Because of the lack of professionals in the field of gifted education, there are many children who have already gone through a series of failed treatments when still quite young. In order not to add any more disappointments and feelings of failure I made it a rule never to “send away” a child after the treatment had started, and as a result the only way to terminate a child’s therapy is when parents have decided to do so. Even when the child is just 8 I say, “You are to decide when you are ready to get rid of your crunches, namely – me” (David, 2010, p. 20). As a result in many cases, especially among gifted children without learning disabilities, I have to help the parents come to the conclusion that “it is time to say goodbye,” that the child had overcome the problem she had first come to me in order to solve, and that it was time to walk without help. It is the other way around among gifted disabled children. In some cases the parents are not able to accept that their “wonderful child” does indeed have a severe disability; in others – they believe that “there is somebody who will be able to fix my child,” and more often – they just get tired of providing support. Usually a case of “Incomplete Mission” is not published. I hereby present one.

Case Study of an 8-Year Old Gifted Dyslexic Girl

This detailed example is that of an 8-year old dyslexic girl. Among all learning disabilities, dyslexia is the one considered most difficult to deal with among gifted children. The main reason is that intelligence is perceived as having a high level of literacy, and when a child cannot read or write at the end of grade one, when school problems related to the most elementary assignments become more and more severe, when the child is not able to do simple math because of not understanding elementary word problems – most educators and even counselors and school psychologists find it hard to believe the child is gifted. The child is torn between an inner feeling of being smart, intelligent and capable of doing very well, and the reality that “proves” the opposite. It makes oneself to be on very shaky ground to wonder “Who I am” and “What am I” – not to know what to expect from oneself, and whether to listen to the inner voice that says, “You can do it.” Or to the cacophony of the outer voices shouting, “Do not fool yourself. You are stupid.”

Here is the story of Sharon, a gifted disabled child, whose termination of treatment, initiated as usual by her parents, had a fatal influence upon her education and psychological well-being.

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Presentation of Sharon: An 8-Year Old Gifted Girl with Several Learning Disabilities

A few years ago I received a letter from the mother of a grade 3, 8.3-year old girl.

Dear Dr. David,

I am the mother of Sharon, a very clever 8-year old girl who suffers from severe reading and writing problems since the beginning of grade 1. All members of the school staff have been convinced that Sharon has ADHD. In the middle of grade 2 Sharon was diagnosed, and it was found that she indeed had a mild level of ADHD, but this condition could not explain her extreme difficulties in acquiring literacy.

Sharon started taking Ritalin on a regular basis in spite of our understanding that this drug was not going to solve her main problem. Her teachers told us they were satisfied because she became more restrained and calmer, but we realized that her performance did not improve significantly.

Since the beginning of grade 3 Sharon's situation became worse as learning in the classroom is based on high competence in reading and writing in all subject matters. We have noticed that Sharon's achievements in math, a subject Sharon had excelled in during the first grades due to her deep mathematical understanding, have been very poor. She is unable to make complicated math calculations, or understand word problems.

At the beginning of grade 2, when the class teacher had to decide who was to be invited to the second stage of the giftedness examinations (e.g. David, 2014b, in press), Sharon was not even considered as a candidate because of her poor performance both in math and verbal tasks.

After reading some of your articles we feel strongly that the ADHD diagnosis of Sharon does not explain her difficulties and it also prevents us from finding a new, more effective way to help her. Thus, we would like to meet you in order to get a full, more accurate picture of the situation and try to understand what should be done.
I have the feeling that being treated with Ritalin makes life easier for the teachers who do need to deal with Sharon's discipline problems, but it leaves our creative, talented daughter far behind materializing her actual capabilities. Thus, we would like to meet you for a counseling session as soon as possible.

Thank you!

Abigail Cohen

I asked Abigail to send me any relevant material about her daughter, and indeed, she sent me a 2-year old diagnosis, done when Sharon just started school.

Background Materials

<u>Sharon's first diagnosis: age 6.0</u>

At the beginning of grade 1, when it was clear that Sharon had difficulties in acquiring literacy, she was diagnosed for the first time. The main findings of this diagnosis were:

1. Sharon had excellent verbal abilities on the one hand; on the other – she still did not recognize the alphabet. She also had major writing difficulties. This could have been due to fine motor skills problems, eye-hand problematic coordination, as well as many other possibilities or a combination of a few disabilities.

2. A large difference was found between Sharon's score on the verbal and performance parts of the intelligence test she took. As she did not do all 5 verbal and 5 performance sub-examinations of the Wechsler, the results were not accurate. In spite of this substantial limitation, it gave a good clue to understanding her situation: a huge difference was found between Sharon's performance on ALL verbal sub-scales, which were all quite low, and her Mazes score, which was 3 standard deviations above the average.

3. Time presented a major difficulty for Sharon. In all assignments where time limitations existed, she did poorly. In those where there was no time limitation she did much better. This could have been another clue to her main disability, though it was not conclusive. Difficulties in completing assignments in time are common to most learning disabilities; taking into consideration that organization problems have a very high comorbidity with all learning disabilities (e.g. Jackson Gilman et al., 2013), and having an organizational problem means that the person needs more time than usual in order to complete any assignment, leads us to the conclusion that Sharon suffered from a sever learning disability.

4. In addition to Sharon's difficulty in writing, she did very poorly on the Bender-Gestalt II test (Bender, 2003). As we very well know, the BG is a very good predictor of reading; there is a high correlation between the BG and reading achievement measured concurrently, and the BG differentiates very well between good and poor readers (Lesiak, 1984). The fact that Sharon struggled in copying not only letters but other shapes as well should have been an additional clue to her main learning disability. Unfortunately, that was not the case.

5. Not only was it difficult to know whether Sharon was suffering from just one or several learning disabilities, it was impossible to figure out the severity level of the disabilities. In some learning disabilities, such as ADHD, exact tests are available and their results show the exact harmed area and the different levels of severity. In others, such as dyslexia no such test exists. In addition, Sharon's high intelligence, her high success motivation and the very well developed compensation mechanism (David, 2011a) substantially masked her true situation.

The second diagnosis: age 7.0

Sharon was diagnosed again at the beginning of grade 2. This time, mainly because of both her first and second grade teachers insisting that "Sharon must suffer from ADHD," she was referred to a multi-disciplinary attention clinic, headed by a doctor considered to be one of the best in Israel in diagnosing and treating ADHD. And indeed, the head of the clinic, who did Sharon's diagnosis in person, confirmed these suspicions, and provided the family with a 3-page summary of his diagnosis, as well as a recommendation to start putting her on Ritalin.

A year after Sharon started taking Ritalin she was still not a fluent reader, and found it very hard to write. She hated taking Ritalin. It caused the loss of appetite, made her much less energetic – and satisfied her teachers as she became "A good girl." However, she was behind her peers academically, and frustrated and unhappy.

Meetings with Sharon's Parents

Preparation for the intake meeting with her parents

Before the first meeting with the parents, I prepared the following questions that stemmed from reading the diagnosis:

1. Is she able to learn by reading or only by listening/hearing? When listening, is there a noticeable difference between her learning-capability when she learns new, more interesting things than when having to listen to things she is not interested in?
2. What was the situation regarding Sharon's capability of learning mathematics? The only information given from the diagnosis was that she had difficulties in complicated calculations; this information was more than two years old. There were no data regarding her math understanding, her interest in mathematics, her ability to analyze or synthesize, her logical thinking, conceptualization and implementation, spatial cognition, reconstruction of a number sequence, re-organizing a number sequence, understanding continuity, understanding and using symbols, math concentration and attentiveness.
3. What are the recommended learning strategies for Sharon? What can be known about them from her learning when in kindergarten?
4. The issues of sensitivity and [over-]excitabilities (e.g. Mendaglio, 2012; Rinn et al., 2010; Tieso, 2007).
5. Examination of the quality of processing data in all areas.
6. Looking into perfectionism: Is Sharon a perfectionist? How can we help her in setting reasonable standards, taking her condition into consideration?
7. Explain to Sharon the meaning of her extremely high results in the Mazes and Matrices subtests.

Looking back, all warning signs were already there, right from the beginning: the parents did not understand the difference between diagnosing and treating, were not able to do whatever was needed in order to help their daughter, and thought that there was some "magical cure" for her problem. Here is the list of the warning signs that should have alerted me – had I not been too optimistic.

What were the warning signs after the intake meeting?

1. Right at the beginning, before I met the child even once, the parents asked: How many meetings are necessary?
2. The mother was quite worried, after my first meeting with her daughter, because she "was sure I did not get a chance to perceive the true abilities of Sharon."
3. When the child and the parent did not arrive on time for the meetings.
4. Each meeting had to be arranged anew, as the parents found it impossible to set a weekly hour for my meeting with their daughter and another one – with them. They kept changing the set day and hour during the whole intervention.
5. The parents found it too difficult to come together to the parents' instruction meetings, and only one of them came each time.
6. I asked the parents to read relevant materials, such as my article about giftedness and learning disabilities (David, 2011a) or about a gifted dyslexic boy (David, 2011b), and they either postponed it or did not read at all.
7. I asked the parents to watch the TV series, Yellow Peppers, in order to make it clear to them that when there is a disabled child the whole family is recruited in order to help her. They did not do it.
8. In spite of the fact that I wrote to the parents every week, they kept on asking for more written information and were disappointed when I explained to them I could not speak with them on the phone as a substitute for meeting with me.

Before meeting Sharon's parents, I also prepared a list of some of the main issues I thought would be discussed. Though I was fully aware of the fact that in a 90-minutes meeting it was impossible to cover all important subjects, it surprised me, as it always does, that we did not have time even for one third of the prepared issues. The main reason was that it happens so often in cases of learning disorders in general and in the cases of multiple disorders in particular: during a major part of the counseling session we speak about coming to terms with the situation. In spite of the fact that by meeting me the parents "admit" there is a problem, they usually still have a long way to go until they really accept the situation. And even then, issues such as guilt ("I have not have dealt with the situation the way I should have."); injustice ("What did I do wrong to deserve this?") self-pity ("How will I be able to function?"); child-pity ("How will she manage? What will become of her?"), might consume a lot of energy and leave the parents exhausted, even worn out.

Subjects Discussed with the Parents

1. The coexistence, even comorbidity of learning disabilities

The focus was that Sharon was not an exception, but rather that there is a wide base of knowledge of quantitative research, case studies, and shared knowledge of practitioners about this phenomenon (e.g. David, 2011; Johnson, 2005; Landerl, & Moll, 2010; McGillivray, & Baker, 2010; McNamara et al., 2008; Prior et al., 2001; Yeo et al., 2007).

2. Ritalin and its various effects

The focus was on the fact that I was neither "pro-Ritalin" nor "anti-Ritalin," but rather wanted to help them decide whether to continue with it or not. As they were not convinced right from the beginning that ADHD was Sharon's main problem. it was clear that Ritalin was not going to "fix" her. On the other hand, the labeling of a learning disabled child as "disturbing, undisciplined or just badly behaved" might have had a destructive influence on a child struggling with learning the basics of literacy and math while feeling it was not "right" that she should not be able to do it as well as "everybody else."

3. The need to know more – to be an integral professional part of the team working for Sharon

This necessity is double-edged: on the one side, only when the parents understand their child's situation will they have enough power, based on knowledge, to resist various demands from the system. On the other side – when in addition to so many obligations, a couple with two careers and three children having to do constant assignments might get them closer to a breaking point. I suggested the parents read just one Hebrew article (David, 2011b) because that was a successful case study of a boy with multiple disabilities, and I wanted them to have hope that working hard guarantees good results. Unfortunately, they did not do that.

4. The need of multi-system treatment

It is extremely difficult to work with a variety of professionals. The difficulty stems from:
• Financial reasons;
• The need to travel from one treatment to the other harms daily routines of the treated child as well as the parents and siblings;
• The stigma the child receives from society is irreversible;
• The child's self-value cannot always be rehabilitated after such a "slam in the face of the ego";
• scheduling all these treatments and interventions needs a special person who is to be in charge of making all these arrangements.

This person might as well be one of the parents who receives directions from an expert who is able to counsel in all aspects of the child's life, and arranges all needed interventions.

I found it quite difficult to explain to the parents that unlike when going to the doctor for a diagnosis, it is usually not very complicated to offer treatment and prognosis. When starting treatment, even when relying on an excellent diagnosis, the levels of uncertainty regarding the right treatment, its length, and especially its results are high. In Sharon's case, in spite of the fact that she was first diagnosed at age 6, there was no clear diagnosis, and thus the prospects of explaining Sharon's exact condition to the parents were practically non-existent. I also told them, that even when the diagnosis is good it might be difficult to explain to parents – who are usually non-professionals in the fields of learning disabilities and developmental psychology – the problem of finding the "exact dosage" for each child, both when referring to chemical treatment, as was the case with Sharon who was put on Ritalin in spite of the fat that ADHD was not her main problem, and other interventions – some of which were not helpful and even harmful.

The Second Parental Meeting

In the second parents' meeting only Sharon's mother was present. I gave her the following recommendations.

Learning recommendations included the following:

1. Because of the importance of priming: do your best to introduce all school materials before they are first learned in the classroom;
2. Help your daughter use a pocket calculator on a regular basis;
3. Encourage Sharon to use your home computer for any activities involving reading or producing tests;
4. Make sure Sharon understands each step before moving to the next one in the process of learning;
5. Encourage Sharon to do as many exercises as possible and practice all new learning techniques.

I suggested all these to Sharon as well; she understood everything immediately. She was already familiar with the "priming" concept, but was concerned – as it turned out she had a good reason – because she did not believe she would be able to learn ahead of her classroom without help, and no regular help was provided. Unfortunately the explanations I gave her mother did not help. As for using the pocket calculator – Sharon liked that very much, but said her school teacher forbade using it in class, especially during examinations. Sharon's mother did not offer to speak with the teacher about it, but rather said that "one has to respect school regulations."

As for the computer – at this stage Sharon was not allowed to hand in homework tasks written on the computer, and thus asking to show extra effort and type her written tasks after she finished writing them seemed to be out of the question. She hardly finished writing her homework, was always frustrated when the output did not look good enough, nice enough, sometimes not even readable…

I suggested that Sharon email me in order to motivate her to practice typing. She said she would do that, but never did. Sharon's mother listened to what I said, but never encouraged her to write to me. As a result Sharon never got to it. As for my suggestion to get to the root of each problem, and not to let go until reaching full understanding of the subject matter, Sharon agreed with me. At this point she had already developed easier ways to move from one subject to another – capturing the interest of another person by telling jokes, interesting stories or just nodding expressively in order to make the conversation partner forget the less interesting previous subject. After using this technique for as long as Sharon herself remembered in order to compensate for shortcomings, I knew it would take a long time and a lot of persistence – both things were not available – to change this pattern. In addition, I suggested the following:

Reading recommendations

1. Read every day!
2. Use a magnifying glass, the enlargement function in the computer, or special cards with large letters.
3. Make sure the space between lines is large, the margins are generous, and each page does not seem "loaded."

Writing recommendations

1. Write every day!
2. Do not give up even when your handwriting seems unreadable. Only by practicing can one improve.
3. Leave short reminders for yourself – on your desk, on the refrigerator, etc. This way you will reduce the tremendous load on your memory by relying partially on your literacy abilities.

The Third and Last Meeting with Sharon's Parents

As I knew that was going to be the last meeting, I decided to devote it to practical recommendations rather than to start an emotional/psychological process that would be abruptly ended. During this meeting we discussed two main subjects: 1. Sharon's bad appetite and how to overcome the problems it caused; 2. some advice regarding school difficulties.

The eating advice/recommendations included the following:

1. Sharon must commit herself to change nutrition habits.
2. While in school, she has to try to eat something in each break. As her appetite was very modest that was the only way to make her consume at least some of the energy she needed for learning.
3. Sharon should make sure there was always toilet paper in her school bag. As the school toilet quite often did not supply it, many a time Sharon did not eat – sometimes did not even drink during school time – so that she would not have to make a visit to the paperless toilet.
4. Sharon should be in charge of her eating sweets. She understood very well that she needed proteins in order to build her body and vitamins – in order to keep healthy and fit, and to process complicated carbohydrates for a long-term energy supply. However, in cases of an energy fall, that usually resulted in apathy, lack of interest in learning, and inability to concentrate in spite of the Ritalin, it was better to eat a candy bar, some chocolate or preferably – a bunch of dried figs that "destroyed" her appetite and gave immediate fuel to keep going.

Some advice to her parents regarding school difficulties

1. Try to find a private tutor for Sharon on a daily basis. Sharon needs mediation in order to learn. As the parents are not willing or able to be her constant mediator, a suitable student – preferably a special education student – will do.
2. Sharon needs extra-curricular learning in order to feed her hunger for knowledge. However, if you are not 100% sure you can provide her with a suitable learning environment, arrange for transportation, or you do not feel you want or can pay – it is better not to offer her such an opportunity rather than start such studies at all.
3. There is a huge difference between Sharon's ability to learn with Ritalin and without it. Thus, for example, you must tune yourself towards her rather than expect her to learn when you have time for her.
4. Be prepared for the fact that you are just at the beginning of training for a marathon. Sharon's struggle will be life-long. You must be there for her!

My Meetings with Sharon

I met with Sharon only three times (a detailed report of these meeting is in David, 2014). Right from the first meeting with Sharon I realized she had a problem with her not being labeled as gifted. Indeed, as is the case with gifted disabled children, I asked the parents to prepare their daughter to meeting me by telling her that I was an expert in giftedness. When we met it was the first time

a child as young as 8 did not pay attention to all kinds of colors for painting and drawing, the variety of books, games, raw materials for handcraft, etc., but said immediately after I introduced myself: "You know, in the giftedness examinations they do not wish to know how much History or Natural Sciences, for example. They are interested only in how I do in Hebrew and Mathematics." I responded by saying that these examinations were not meant to measure knowledge, but were aimed at discovering potential, and future prospects for reaching high achievements. I also told her that in the subtests where she excelled, namely, Mazes and Matrices, there was no prediction of "prospects" as the results themselves were high, and thus demonstrated her present high achievement. Of course, this was not the "full truth." At age 6 Sharon took the Raven's Colored Progressive Matrices test, Designed for children aged 5 through 11 years-of-age; of the 36 given items she did 34 correctly. A year later, at age 7, she took the Mazes subtest of the Wechsler and obtained 15 points. These two tests did not examine knowledge, but they were neither measures of achievement outside of the "world of evaluation." In the "real world" a person is not measured – certainly not rewarded by a higher salary or a more prestigious job – because of being able to figure out quickly and correctly how to complete missing shapes or get to the end of a complicated maze with minimum mistakes in a minimal time. However, being fully aware of Sharon's state of mind, I preferred to be less accurate and better understood rather than the opposite. As Sharon raised the subject of potential versus actual achievements, in the context of the screening for giftedness examinations she was not invited to take, I preferred to strengthen her believability in her own abilities and raise the level of her self-confidence rather than give her long explanations that would not do that.

The last sentence in the 7-page summary of Sharon's first diagnosis, signed by two diagnosticians – one who heads a well-known Israeli institute for diagnosing and developing learning abilities was:

> "I have no doubt that Sharon will acquire the basics of reading and writing quickly and become an integral part of school activities."

This prophecy has never been realized. As we shall see, Sharon never reached the point of full literacy, never felt a part of her classroom, and at the end of elementary school she was on the verge of dropping out, even before starting junior high school. Sharon understood very well the meaning of "scattered thoughts" – a term she used during our first meeting. This helped me explain to her – without any need of using professional terms – terms such as "being flooded by stimuli" – and thus the meaning of having ADHD. As for her short term memory: during our first meeting I gave her an example of her difficulty to remember a sequence of numbers or words – with and without connections. In the presence of connections she did quite well. Sharon also realized that her short term visual memory was excellent. I used the professional, exact term for this explanation in order to prove to Sharon that I took her high cognitive abilities into consideration and thus gave her a full, accurate explanation in accordance with these abilities.

<u>Here is the list of my recommendations explained to both her and her parents:</u>

1. Let Sharon engage herself in attractive assignments. ADHD makes the person feel flooded by too many stimuli. It is natural that anybody who suffers from it will be more willing to do interesting rather than dull things which are difficult to concentrate on for everybody, particularly for people with ADHD.

2. Sharon must learn to manage her learning. Being clever is going to help in this task. Only by acquiring some control, will her motivation be high enough to enable her to learn in spite of her tremendous difficulties. At this stage Sharon's parents were the only people who could help her get some control regarding her daily schedule, her homework, preparing for school examinations, etc. Both must be recruited for this task.

3. Sharon should be taught by other means than reading. If possible – the learning materials should be read to her. All available audio materials should be provided to her. Her teacher should be required not to ask her to read aloud in the classroom until this recommendation changed. Reading in front of her classmates had been a source of embarrassment for Sharon for a long time, and if the teacher kept on asking her to do that she might be harmed not only educationally – but also psychologically. She would probably also choose from abstaining rather than participating in the classroom activities.

4. As Sharon demonstrated <u>difficulty in visual screening of words</u>, she must practice slow reading on a daily basis. It should be done by cutting each word into syllables and thus enable screening of smaller units – letters or syllables.

5. <u>Transitions from Visual to Auditory Attention and vice versa should be reduced</u> as much as possible due to Sharon's problem in attention transitions.

Epilogue

Three years after the parents had decided to prematurely terminate Sharon's treatment I received a telephone call from the mother. She told me that her daughter not only stopped learning in grade 5, but hardly went to school from the beginning of grade 6. This call made me very sad, as I deeply cared for this girl, but it was no surprise. Sharon had been suffering in school since her first day there. When children are on the verge of adolescence they re-examine many of the truths, opinions, orders and customs, and re-evaluate those concerning their life. Sharon made the only reasonable decision: for five years the education system proved to wrong her; for a longer time her parents decided not to do anything that would make life easier for her. Thus the conclusion to leave the place that made her miserable was the best for her well-being.

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From Harry T. Roman's Latest Book: *Invention, Innovation and Creative Thinking in the Gifted Classroom* (2014, GEP)

(Originally published in the June-July 2014 Issue of Gifted Education News-Page)

Background –Technology Education

Technology education or TechEd is about the study of the human-designed world, containing both process and content components. Its process is a defined, step-wise approach to problem solving; and its content base are all the other subjects of the academic day…..blending both together into a high quality, multi-dimensional, multi-disciplinary solution. It is very similar to what engineers do in their daily work; and well-suited for the gifted classroom. Many gifted education teachers are discovering the value of technology education in the classroom.

Since its inception in the 1980s as a bona fide branch of modern school curricula, technology education has embraced STEM education and taught the vital importance of invention as a head and hands activity. TeachEd teachers also recognize the huge contributions of inventors like Thomas Edison to the whole concept of STEM and invention. These teachers value and highly promote the concept of sustainability and alternate technology design, and evaluating new technologies beyond just the technology itself by assessing its impacts on society. The business community is very much interested in students who take TeachEd courses because they prepare them for the highly unstructured problem solving workplace of the business world.

Superb magazines like Techdirections, www.techdirections.com/, and The Technology and Engineering Teacher, the flagship publication for the International Technology Education and Engineering Association (ITEEA) **www.iteaconnect.org/** , are excellent resources for the STEM-oriented teacher. There are also state organizations like the New Jersey Technology Education and Engineering Association (NJTEEA) in my home state. Check out a local technology education association in your state and talk with them. You will find a great wealth of information and advice about conducting head and hands activities in your class. If you have a technology education department in your school, by all means talk to each other! Check out your district and neighboring ones as well.

Invention and STEM

Invention and project management are very similar. An inventor manages a very complex project/process involving manpower, money, resources, and time schedules – just like an engineer would do when creating a new product, or designing and constructing a new building or bridge. The inventive process is inherently STEM-based, requiring the inventor/engineer to think in a multi-dimensional/multi-disciplinary fashion. Since project management is a highly prized skill in the world of work, having G&T students involved in inventive activities is a highly relevant school-to-work activity. This is exactly the kind of thinking the modern world of work will demand of employees.

The roots for modern day project management and STEM are sunk deep into the soil of West Orange, New Jersey, for here the world's greatest inventor forged both, and unleashed a torrent of creativity and innovation that is still accelerating through time. By codifying the process of invention, Thomas Edison took this process from a cottage industry performed in garages, barns, basements and attics, and transformed it into an industrial powerhouse. Today, we call it R&D. During 2012, United States companies, universities, and the federal government spent $440 billion dollars on R&D of all kinds.

Edison's Four Great Inventions

Light bulb and electric utility industry
Recorded sound
Motion pictures
R&D labs

Edison's technical and economic legacy from West Orange is still a powerful force in our nation's economy. His creations and industries account for about 10% of our current annual gross national product, or about $1.5 trillion per year. This makes Edison and

his methods highly relevant for your gifted students to study. The Voice of America says that Edison's accomplishments today account for one-fourth of all the jobs on the planet!

The men who worked with Edison were practicing STEM-based project management long before it had a name. The heart of the legendary West Orange labs was a three-story building and factory where craftsman, engineers, toolmakers, technicians and highly skilled workmen made the new product prototypes as they were designed by Edison himself and his teams of "muckers." Team members for the brainpower of each new product and project were drawn from his specialty buildings located just across the courtyard from the large building. There were buildings housing men skilled in physics and electricity, chemistry, model-making, metallurgy and materials – and also experts on economics, mathematics, engineering, and marketing. Here was the germinating core of inter-disciplinary team building that has grown into the mainstay of business today. Modern day project management was born here.

The factory and specialty buildings occupied perhaps an acre or so of the West Orange Labs; but the creative output of these facilities generated enough new products to keep 20 acres of factories surrounding it busy making products for the marketplace. That is a manufacturing leverage of about 20:1. Edison also had satellite plants, occupying untold acres around New Jersey and in other states, that made things for him, or chemicals he needed in support of his West Orange activities. This shows the power that focused R&D can produce. No one understood this better than Edison. This was his greatest invention…a process that we sometimes refer to as technology driven "progress."

In its heyday, about 250 employees occupied the invention factory and specialty buildings and about 10,000 people worked in the factory structures surrounding it. A small city, devoted to technological development had grown out of what once was farmland, not so much different from how Silicon Valley in California sprang from the fruit tree orchards once there!

Undoubtedly, the great explosion of invention and commercial development of the late 1800s (the industrial revolution) was propelled by the likes of Edison and many other inventors who realized how to turn invention into a commercial endeavor. Many of the great United States companies inaugurated their R&D Labs between the very late 1800s into the early 1920s. Edison's West Orange Labs are considered to be the "mother ship of American innovation."

The Legacy of Inventive Thinking

1792 United States Patent Office Created
1793 The 5000th patent was issued (Edison is born in 1847
1935 2,000,000th patent was issued (Edison dies in 1931)
1976 4,000,000th patent issued
1999 6,000,000th patent issued
2011 8,000,000th patent issued

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Classroom Activities

1) Design a new classroom desk and chair set-up.
2) Design a new method for taxing individual income; and defend your reasons for your design.
3) Design a roadway through your favorite park in town and use that roadway to enhance the park and minimize its impact on park users.
4) Design a suit of clothes for military use that houses an onboard computer and sensors to monitor the health and safety of the soldier.
5) Design a solar panel system that also doubles as an awning for windows.
6) Design a pipe crawling robot for use in pipes of 4-6 inches in diameter.
7) Create a new food snack that uses three main ingredients, of which the students may choose any three.
8) Create an educational math game involving dice, cards, and a spinner board
9) Design a fire-fighting robot for use in chemical fires.
10) Design a device that police could use to stop a fleeing car, and thus avoid dangerous high-speed car chases.

Katherine Anne Porter – A Gifted Woman Writer (1890-1980)

Michael E. Walters

Center for the Study of the Humanities in the Schools

". . . .He retired into the dark and airless ghetto of his soul and lamented with all the grieving wailing company he found there; for he was never alone in that place. . . ." ***Ship of Fools***, p. 95 (New York : Back Bay Books).

Katherine Anne Porter was one of the most significant American writers of the twentieth century. Yet many feminist literature classes neglect to include her. Ms. Porter was not about a political agenda, rather her writing and consciousness were concerned with the human condition. Twentieth century American literature contained many gifted and creative women writers. The list includes Eudora Welty, Flannery O'Connor, Carson McCullers, Maya Angelou, and Harper Lee. Two American women have won the Nobel Prize in Literature – Pearl Buck in 1938 and Toni Morrison in 1993. (See Pearl Buck's ***The Good Earth*** [1933] and Toni Morrison's ***Beloved*** [1987]). It is important for gifted women writers to be aware of these role models because they will learn more from literary experts and mentors than from political ideologues.

Porter's environment was a paradigm for giftedness. She and most of her women colleagues developed within small towns, e.g., Porter-Indian Creek, Texas, Welty-Jackson, Mississippi, and O'Connor-Milledgeville, Georgia. They had families who served as mentors and encouraged their creative endeavors. Among the most significant ingredients were the family and public libraries in their hometowns. Also, women's cultural and social groups such as book clubs and discussion groups were an important influence. It is interesting to note that most of these women followed certain religions, e.g., Ms. Porter and Ms. O'Connor were Catholics in communities dominated by Protestant religions. This gave them a refuge and the ability to observe people as sympathetic outsiders.

Ms. Porter's life was indicative of the sensibility of giftedness. She lived in Texas, Mexico and Paris, and spoke English, Spanish and French. On a personal level, she interacted with such diverse cultural figures as Hart Crane and Gertrude Stein. She was influenced by both Saint Augustine and socialist thinkers.

Her sensibility as expressed in her writing style is an excellent example of giftedness. She combined the following traits: journalistic and realistic details, psychological personality analysis, social concerns, poetic prose, and philosophical insight. Her masterpiece, ***Ship of Fools*** (1962), is one of great books of the twentieth century. Her paragraphs are literary gems, and the characters and situations become part of your personality. There is a scene where the ship's doctor, who has a chronic heart disorder, risks his life for the mascot cat from being tossed into the sea. Ms. Porter's book contains many implicit political concerns of the early 1930s and of today. In the beginning, her description of Vera Cruz was concerned with the chaos engulfing Mexico at that time from the 1920s to 1940s which led to destruction, mass executions and illegal immigration. The reader also gains insight into the prejudices that created the Holocaust by following the Jewish salesman returning to his family in Germany, and a German man who was married to a Jewish woman.

Besides her novel, ***Ship of Fools***, she wrote some of the finest short stories and essays in the English language. Porter's short story entitled "Flowering Judas" (1929) is a wonderful depiction of the interactions of Laura and Braggioni during a period of the Mexican revolution. Her collected stories won a Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award in 1966. In her essays on creative writing she stressed that a beginning writer learns more from reading great literature and by constantly practicing writing (see "Writing Cannot Be Taught. . ." 1964) than by attending writers' workshops. It is important for gifted educators to read Katherine Anne Porter's writings to show how her curriculum involved exposure to and analysis of great literature, experience in the real world, interaction with other gifted individuals, and a commitment to one's craft.

Resources

Ship of Fools by Katherine Anne Porter (1962). New York: Back Bay Books.

Porter, Katherine Anne (1964). Writing Cannot Be Taught. . . (pp. 698-701). In ***Porter: Collected Stories and Other Writings*** (2008). New York: The Library of America.

Porter: Collected Stories and Other Writings (2008). New York: The Library of America.

Katherine Anne Porter (2002). American Masters, PBS. http://to.pbs.org/1ruTW2a

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STEM-Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Education for Gifted Students: Designing a Powerful Approach to Real-World Problem Solving for Gifted Students in Middle and High School Grades by Harry T. Roman
http://bit.ly/hQIqaO

STEAM Education for Gifted Students! Upper Elementary Through Secondary Levels: Combining Communication and Language Arts with Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics by Harry T. Roman
http://amzn.to/UJ20Kb

STEM to STEAM Education for Gifted Students: Using Specific Communication Arts Lessons with Nanotechnology, Solar, Biomass, Robotics, & Other STEM Topics by Harry T. Roman & Robert E. Myers
http://bit.ly/143Cm7i

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Language Arts, Homeschooling –

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http://www.giftededpress.com/REMYERS.htm

HOMESCHOOLING GIFTED STUDENTS: Stimulating High Levels of Creative Thinking and Problem Solving in the Home: Upper Elementary through Middle School by Robert E. Myers
http://www.giftededpress.com/MYERSHOMESCHOOLING.pdf

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