

Translated excerpts from the Swedish book:

Särskilt begåvade elever – pedagogens utmaning och möjlighet



Title in English:

GIFTED/MOST ABLE STUDENTS AN EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY

Pages (in Swedish): 152

Published 2017 by Gothia Kompetens, Sweden.

<https://www.gothiakompetens.se>

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Presentation of the author:

Ms Mona Liljedahl is an educational expert on gifted/most able students in Sweden. She is a senior high school teacher in Swedish (equivalent to English), Creative Writing, and ESL (English as a Second Language) and works as a Special Educational Needs (SEN) coordinator for all school levels in Stockholm, Sweden. She is an author of the books "[Särskilt begåvade elever – pedagogens utmaning och möjlighet](#)" (2017) (freely translated: *Gifted/most able learners—the pedagogue's challenge and opportunity*) and "[Särskilt begåvade barn – förskolans utmaning och möjlighet](#)" (2018) (freely translated: *Gifted/most able children—the preschool's challenge and opportunity*). She is also a co-writer of the guidance material on gifted/most able learners for the National Agency for Education of Sweden, [Särskilt begåvade elever](#) (2015) (freely translated: *Especially able students/gifted students/pupils*), chapter [ämnesdidaktiskt stöd i svenska](#) (freely translated: *teachings and didactics in the subject Swedish*). Apart from her work as a SEN coordinator, Ms Liljedahl is active as a lecturer, public speaker and consultant for schools, preschools, and school boards.

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(Freely translated) from the back cover:

The book describes how to detect and identify gifted/most able students in school as well as what necessary educational tools to apply for them. Children who come across as a challenge in the classroom might actually prove to be a great opportunity. With the right educational support, they can become a major contribution to our future.

Gifted/most able children, also called gifted and talented students, have an exceptionally high learning capacity and would therefore be expected to thrive in school. Instead, research shows that these children seldom thrive at all and even learn less than others. Oftentimes, they also develop difficulties due to boredom and mental malnourishment, but few school professionals know who these children really are.

The book is based on research and educational practice as well as interviews with leading experts within the field of giftedness. It is written for teachers, school leaders, and student care teams, but can also be a valuable read for parents who need to learn more as well as for gifted/most able students themselves.

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FOREWORD by Roland S Persson, Ph.D.

Roland S. Persson, Ph.D., is professor in educational psychology at Jönköping University, Sweden, trained at Karlstad (SE), McGill (CA), and Huddersfield (UK) universities. He is also a consultant to Swedish and Hungarian governments on issues of talent and giftedness in education. Member of the International Centre for Innovation in Education (ICIE) and the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children (WCGTC) as well as an active member of several scholarly journal boards, such as The International Journal for Talent Development and Creativity (IJTDC). His latest book is *Evolved Human Giftedness—Reclaiming science from ideology, dogmatism, and self-serving bias* (ICIE, 2018).

INTRODUCTION BY THE AUTHOR

The author explaining why this book is necessary for everyone who works in and around school and students.

Definitions (partly translated and abridged for this excerpt)

This category of students is known by many different names. In the US they're referred to as 'gifted' or 'gifted and talented', in Great Britain as 'most able learners', in Canada as 'exceptional', and in China as 'super normal', a personal favourite.

Sweden primarily uses two terms: 'särbeğavade' (i.e. gifted or intellectually gifted, which is the term used in this excerpt) and 'särskilt beğavade' (i.e. especially able students).

Intellectual giftedness means that the child learns quicker and more in-depth. These children are also driven by a thirst for knowledge, regardless of their performance in the classroom. Their cognitive patterns have a more abstract and complex character, why these children need accommodations and provisions in school accordingly. Children with a high intellectual capacity often have a specific talent or area of skills that stand out, not necessarily noticeable in the regular classroom.

To be a gifted/most able student does *not* mean that to be 'better' in any way, but rather cognitively different. However, children's high intelligence might not be detected until they go through an intelligence test for a psychologist because of what school might perceive as learning difficulties or neuropsychiatric disorders. Oftentimes, these tests reveal that what the child really 'suffers' from is in fact an intellectual giftedness, or a high IQ. This book is written as a help for school professionals to detect children with high intelligence already in the classroom, without them having to go through intelligence tests. The book also suggests methods of teaching gifted/most able students according to their needs.

IQ and Intellectual Giftedness (partly translated and abridged for this excerpt)

Many people tend to think that a high IQ leads to a rather peculiar personality, even a lack of social abilities. This is completely wrong! The truth is rather the opposite. People with high intelligence have a more complex personality and a wider array of abilities. But since they belong to a cognitive minority, their character might come across as incomprehensible to people with a more 'normal' IQ. Their sense of humour can be perceived as too advanced, their thought pattern as well, not to mention their problem-solving skills.

Where to draw the line in IQ points for intellectual giftedness, is a matter for discussion. Basic, or moderate, intellectual giftedness is considered to begin already at IQ 115 – 120, which

sums up about 15 per cent of all people in the world, including students. That group of school children is sometimes called ‘bright’ or ‘high achievers’, regardless of what they actually achieve, and stands the best chance to succeed in school. High intellectual giftedness is considered to start at IQ 130 and sums up to about 2 per cent. Their thinking pattern is so different that they find it hard to fit in the ordinary curriculum. Moreover, there are about 0.5 per cent of extremely gifted children with an IQ above 140 who need extreme accommodations in their education, which schools are not normally used to providing for. Even though the amount of extremely gifted children is quite few, they do exist. However, it is more likely that every teacher has a few moderately gifted children in their classroom. Often without knowing it.

High intellectual giftedness among children is distributed just like ‘the other side’ of the intelligence scale, i.e. children with low intelligence or even intellectual or learning disability. Children with an IQ below 70 have the right to a different school form, a school for students with learning disabilities, in order to provide for their educational needs. The same does not apply for children on the other side of the intelligence scale, even though they are just as far from the norm—or further.

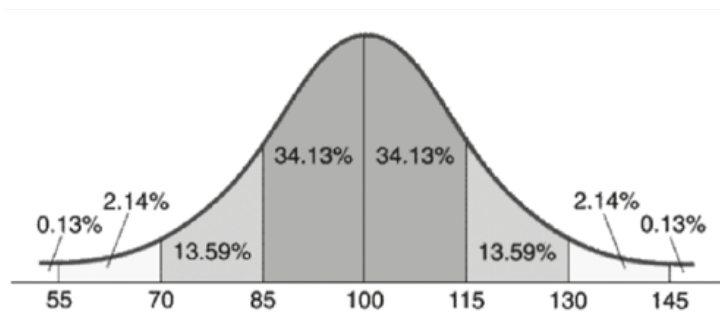


Figure 1 Wechsler Intelligence Scale

Some researches claim that intellectual giftedness equals a high IQ whereas others argue that intellectual giftedness is *more* than a high IQ. The American Ph.D. and researcher Joseph Renzulli mentions a gifted *behaviour* whereas the British Ph.D. and researcher Joan Freeman adds the term ‘spark of life’. However, researchers within this field unanimously agree that high intellectual giftedness is difficult to detect with just any IQ test. The method of testing as well as the tests themselves, are extremely crucial to the reliability of the result. The American Ph.D. and researcher Linda K Silverman claims that it’s difficult for just any psychologist to determine children’s high intelligence through for example WISC-testing. She emphasizes that psychologists who perform these tests need to have extensive knowledge about giftedness and high intellectual abilities as well as actually having compassion for these children. She stresses that there is always a risk that gifted children underachieve in a test situation or that their different way of thinking is misinterpreted. Therefore, an intelligence test performed without the child’s approval or by a psychologist that lacks understanding for the child’s cognitive abilities, can produce a completely inaccurate IQ score.

However, regardless of definitions and cut-off points for a high IQ, the academic field of giftedness/high ability unanimously agree about one thing: Teachers need to learn to detect and identify these children in the classroom—without the proof of IQ scores. Therefore, there is a need for other definitions than IQ, such as typical behaviours and characteristics. A child who learns quickly and reasons at an abstract and complex level is most likely intellectually gifted to

some degree, and consequently has the need for provision and accommodations in school. It takes ‘the right pair of glasses’ to spot these children in the classroom. Knowledge about gifted/most able students’ cognitive traits and characteristics generates these ‘spotting glasses’. Actually, spotting gifted/most able learners in school can be just as simple as the American poet James Whitcomb Riley (1849 – 1916) once wrote:

When I see a bird that walks like a duck and swims like a duck and quacks like a duck, I call that bird a duck.

Restless Minds (partly translated and abridged for this excerpt)

One easy way to describe intellectually gifted children is to say they have a restless mind. Their brains are like high-octane race car engines, with the ignition constantly on, ready to accelerate from zero to one hundred. They might be restless in other areas as well, such as finding it hard to sit still—just like other children. But their minds are the most restless and have the strongest need to be activated. Their thinking is constantly active, in multiple layers as well. Take meditation, for example. To be able to sink into a meditative state of mind, many beginners are advised to let their thoughts come and go, like clouds floating by. This doesn’t work for intellectually gifted people. Their thoughts do not drift by like single clouds, but rather like full storms—hot and cold weather colliding. One thought just brings another association, which brings another one, at the same time as a que of associations and thoughts are honking from all sides to get through, like cars in a traffic jam. Therefore, intellectually gifted people need to become skilled traffic cops since all this restless mindedness easily wears the system down. However, constantly being forced to run on idle in school instead of draining the mind through mental activity, also wears the system down.

School has never been a place where I learn things. If I want to learn something new, I have to do it in my spare time.

Ellen, 7 years old

A lot of intellectually gifted children therefore turn to other methods for exercising their restless minds, especially during night-time when nothing else calls for attention. The left-over mental restlessness from daytime is still there, not seldom in an accumulated form. So, when these children are supposed to go to sleep, the mental traffic jam might finally start moving, honking with thoughts and ideas from all directions. Therefore, it is not unusual that intellectually gifted children start pursuing their interests at night, which can create disrupted sleep patterns. Important to understand however, is that nocturnal mental activities, such as computer gaming and other thought-consuming endeavours, can actually be the child’s only mental stimulus. Therefore, the sleep deprivation that wears the child down can simultaneously be the mere side-effect of what actually saves the child’s mind. That’s how thwarted things can turn out when children with a restless mind are left to solve their own predicament. The solution is to move this mental restlessness to their learning environment. Just like children with a physical restlessness need to engage in daily physical activities in order to drain their energy, so do restless minded children need to exercise their brains.

New Glasses can Spot New Opportunities

Chapter explaining how all that is needed in order to detect and identify gifted/most able students is a new way of looking at performances and behaviours, i.e. ‘a new pair of glasses’ to spot gifted/most able students with.

TO DETECT AND IDENTIFY

Chapter explaining the difficulties and pitfalls when trying to detect and identify gifted/most able students in school.

Experts About Detecting Most Able earners (partly translated and abridged for this excerpt)

Chapter about what international research says about teachers’ ability to detect and identify gifted/most able students.

What does Mensa say? (severely abridged)

Mensa, conclusively:

- Intellectually gifted children supersede same age peers intellectually.
- Intellectually gifted children can be bored and underachieve in school but at the same time passionately pursue interests outside of school.
- Parents who suspect their children are intellectually gifted, are most oftenly right.

What does the Educational Psychologist say? (severely abridged)

The Educational Psychologist, conclusively:

- There can be intellectually gifted children amongst students with a worrisome school absence.
- You need ‘the right pair of glasses’ to spot the intellectually gifted.
- It’s harder to spot intellectually gifted girls than boys.

What does the Researcher say? (severely abridged)

The Researcher (Joan Freeman, Ph.D., UK), conclusively:

- Intellectually gifted children find it easier to make a connection between items, subjects, and concepts.
- Teachers need more knowledge and trust in their own ability to identify gifted students in the classroom.
- Schools need to provide children with opportunities so they can show their intellectual abilities.

What does the Educational Expert say? (severely abridged)

The Educational Expert (Sue Mordecai, UK, teacher), conclusively:

- When planning class—the teacher needs to plan for gifted and talented to show their excellence! This helps to spot these children.
- Gifted/most able students are characterized by their interest in ambiguities, paradoxes and complex reasoning. They want to discuss things and tend to excel in cognitive confusion.
- The teacher can make identification possible by turning questions around in the classroom so that intellectually gifted students can show their reasoning abilities.

What do Teachers say? (severely abridged)

Two (Swedish) **Teachers**, conclusively:

- Intellectually gifted children can question authorities and be perceived as ‘strange’.
- Gifted students often stay behind class in order to ask the teacher questions about the subject. They also appreciate verbal sparring and bantering with the teacher.
- The gain from identifying gifted students is that it gives them an inner peace to be seen and understood.

What does an Educational Anamnesis say? (severely abridged)

In this chapter, the author explains how to perform what she calls an ‘Educational Anamnesis’, i.e. how to discern a high intellectual ability behind a problematic school behaviour by investigating how, when, and why the problems started, as well as mapping out abilities, interests, and other hitherto unnoticed qualities.

Example areas for an Educational Anamnesis:

- The child’s abilities back in preschool and kindergarten (often intellectual and/or artistic).
- Present and previous interests (often passionate and changeable).
- The relationship to present and previous teachers (often complicated and problematic).
- The relationship to present and previous classmates (often a feeling of alienation).
- Emotions and ability to handle setbacks (often highly sensitive and deeply emotional).
- Learning development and relationship to complexity (finds easy assignments and subjects difficult, but difficult assignments and subjects easy).
- Psychological status, such as sleep, dejection, anxiety (often haunted by existential questions).
- Self-image and self-analysis (overthinks, questions, and criticizes themselves).

Difficulties Detecting Gifted/Most Able Students (translated for this excerpt)

Intellectually gifted students can be extremely difficult to detect in school. They may fly under the radar due to our lack of knowledge or intentionally hide their intellect and talents by acting out or withdrawing—i.e. behaving anything but intelligent. As a matter of fact, intellectually gifted students often develop exactly the same educational problems as students on the opposite side of the intelligence scale, and thus devour the same amount of compensatory resources in school. Both categories of students commonly show a lack of motivation, concentration problems, task avoidance, and social difficulties. They may also avoid group work, refrain from handing in assignments, as well as resorting to playing truant or calling in sick. To use our first glance to discern whether a student with these types of behaviors actually hides a high or low cognitive ability, can therefore be very challenging.

Factors that can also hinder detection and identification of gifted students are children’s background and home environment, their performances on tests, especially during time pressure, as well as their gender. Children who don’t know their own abilities and therefore don’t use their (full) potential in school, are the most difficult to detect. These children commonly come from homes where the child’s gifts and talents go unnoticed, and where they even might be considered as odd, provoking, or a bit ‘slow’. Such a child will do everything to hide their capacities in school in order to fit in.

Intellectually gifted students might not at all be prone to performing well on tests, especially if the child comes from a home with a different native language. High intellectual abilities also naturally exist among newly arrived immigrants, but they are the most difficult to detect because of the lack of language skills.

Also, if we try to measure the students' abilities and knowledge from time limited tests, we will not be able to detect (all) of the intellectually gifted. Due to perfectionism, a lot of intellectually gifted children need to take a lot of time to think about the test questions. They have a strong desire to analyze every possible angle and to think everything properly through. That's why time limits on tests can produce incorrect conclusions of the child's knowledge and learning abilities.

Apart from all of this, the child's gender is the most important factor behind whether or not teachers detect intellectually gifted students in school. Girls tend to hide their abilities and talents in school more than boys do, and also find it more difficult to accept their own high intellectual capacities. Furthermore, girls tend to withdraw when bored whereas boys tend to act out, which in turn may actually contribute to boys being detected and identified since they have to be dealt with. Teachers' opinions on intelligence of students, also traditionally favor boys, why teachers appoint more boys when asked about gifted and talented learners, even though the distribution of intelligence is completely free from gender bias. This discrepancy grows with children's age, so that less girls are perceived as intelligent in junior and senior high school. A compromising and frightening fact.

So, when trying to detect and identify gifted students, one needs to know these facts in order to avoid the most common pitfalls.

Characteristics of Giftedness/High Ability

Chapter about how students' characteristics can help teachers and other school professionals to detect and identify gifted/most able students, but also to know the common pitfalls.

I've read and understood the paper the teacher hands out way before she's finished handing it out to everyone. Then I have to sit and wait for the others to catch up, which sometimes takes the whole lesson. So, I work actively for like 30 seconds and wait for 39 minutes and 30 seconds, completely bored.

Olivia, 8 years old

General Characteristics (partly translated and abridged for this excerpt)

General Characteristics, conclusively:

It is very common that intellectually gifted children without provision in the classroom express one or more of the following general characteristics:

- Acting out
- Passivity
- Underachievement
- Odd personality

I already got it in five minutes and then we're supposed to work with the same thing for twooooo more years!

Fanny, 7 years old

Contextual Characteristics (partly translated and abridged for this excerpt)

Contextual Characteristics, conclusively:

Characteristics of intellectual giftedness can be highly contextual, meaning the child's qualities and behaviours depend on the circumstances. These circumstances can be internal or external, or both, and can end up masking the child's intelligence. Most common factors are ethnicity, socio-economic background, and gender. The following characteristics of high intellectual giftedness are therefore contextual, meaning the markers of the child's intelligence are at risk of going unnoticed in school:

- Verbal ability (depends of home environment, language background and emotional status).
- Abstract thinking (requires a will and ability to communicate with the teacher).
- Perfectionism (can present itself as an inability to perform).
- Moral and ethics (can come across as a constant questioning).
- Learning ability (highly related to motivation).
- Memory (can be perceived as distracted and/or nit-picky).
- Concentration (lack of concentration when bored).
- Concept of self (over-analytical and critical to self).
- Androgyny (often questions or opposes gender norms).
- Overexcitabilities (can seem oversensitive and quick-tempered).
- Weltschmerz (worries about worldly matters as well as any- and everything).
- Asynchrony (gaps in knowledge and abilities, emotional and intellectual unevenness).
- Relationships (withdraws from others, feel shunned, not uncommonly bullied).
- Sense of humour (weird sense of humour that other children don't understand).
- Interests (totally consumed by interests, not always shown in school).

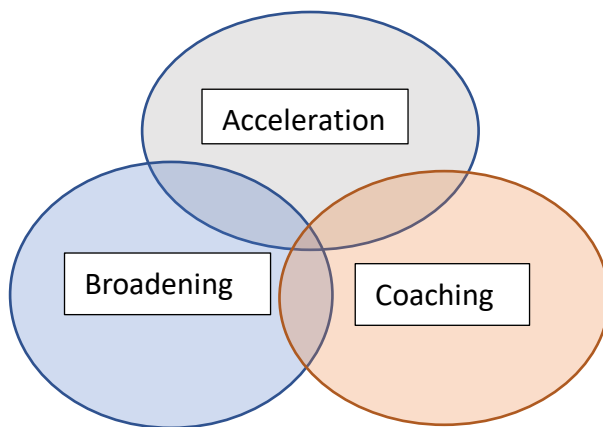
*Mum, I know I don't think like other children, but now I've realized
I don't think like grown-ups either.*

Rachel, 8 years old

EDUCATIONAL ABC—How to Teach Gifted/Most Able Students (partly translated and abridged for this excerpt)

Finally, the school day is over so I can go home and learn something!

Adam, 7 years old



The internationally recommended method for teaching gifted students consists of three components: acceleration, enrichment, and mentoring, which I call coaching.

Added material for the English reader:

In Swedish, the three educational components for provision are called ‘acceleration’ (like the English word), ‘berikning’ (enrichment), and ‘coachning’ (coaching, with an extra Swedish ‘n’). Therefore, the teaching method abbreviates ABC—just like the First Aid acronym: Airways, Breathing, and Circulation (same in Swedish). To keep this acronym, I have decided to replace ‘enrichment’ with ‘broadening’, which still keeps the idea of enrichment while emphasizing a need to offer something wider than the regular curriculum in order to enrich the child’s learning.

Educational ABC is free of charge and completely applicable within any regular school system. All that is required is knowledge and a bit of creativity. Educational ABC can function exactly like the medical First Aid term—as an emergency method for students who underachieve due to boredom in the regular classroom. But Educational ABC also works as a preventive educational method, in order to avert educational emergency resuscitation.

Acceleration (partly translated and abridged for this excerpt)

Chapter about acceleration and inclusion; what The Education Act allows, what experts say, and how to provide partial acceleration, acceleration groups and pull-out classes.

David’s a first grader and doesn’t want to go to school anymore. He says he hates himself and wants to die. The Educational Psychologist is called in and her assessment shows that David is very highly intelligent. From this information, the SEN teacher starts ability mapping and gives David a math test for year 6. David gets such a high test result that he is offered studying math with the sixth graders. From that day, David turns positive to school. His self-hate and suicidal thoughts disappear in an instant.

Acceleration, conclusively:

- **Grade skipping:** moving up one or more years.
- **Partial grade skipping:** moving up one or more years in subjects of interest and/or excellence.
- **Acceleration groups** (pull-out classes): studying one or more subjects on a higher level together with other gifted students.

Felicia in year 7 asks for more challenging material in Science, since the subject interests her. But the Science teacher claims she's not performing well enough to accelerate. Felicia's parents try to reason with the teacher by telling her that that Felicia's lack of performance is caused by boredom. But the teacher persists that Felicia has to finish all assignments first in order to get more challenging material. Finally, thanks to personal contacts, Felicia's parents manage to unofficially enroll her in a Physics course at university in her spare time. Felicia gets an A on her first exam at university, second best in the whole class. At school she still has to finish her assignments before she's allowed to accelerate.

Broadening (partly translated and abridged for this excerpt)

Chapter about what broadening means in terms of enrichment to the student's learning, including an enrichment model in three steps.

Broadening, conclusively:

- **Meaningfulness:** what's meaningful to the child. For example, the child's interests and talents, as well as introduction to new interests and 'real' assignments, such as genuine problems to solve. The goal is to activate the thirst for knowledge!
- **Projects:** Clustering of subjects and grades into real projects that serve a purpose. Peer grouping with other students that need real projects. The goal is to activate self-confidence and to overcome learning hurdles. Requires intense coaching!
- **Audience or recipients:** The student's project is directed outwardly, towards others; an audience or recipients. The goal is to activate the child's sense of purpose, that the child's inborn intellectual abilities are useful to the environment and to him- or herself.

Coaching (partly translated and abridged for this excerpt)

Chapter about the importance of having grown-ups to guide the student through school; what coaching and mentoring really means, and how the individual teacher can perform coaching in the classroom.

Coaching, conclusively:

Coaching strives at helping the child to thrive in school and to further develop his or her learning. Coaching is necessary for applying both acceleration and broadening (enrichment).

The Coach needs to be someone who:

- knows the school system, preferably a teacher or a school leader, someone who also likes the child and stays curious about him or her.

- has specialized knowledge in some way, not necessarily in the child's specific interest areas, but it's a good start. Needs to inspire and challenge the student and search for new roads to knowledge and learning.
- operates as a key figure by keeping in touch with parents, other teachers, school leaders (principals/headmasters), as well as other important persons and professionals around the child.

Testimonies by Gifted/Most Able Students

Chapter with interviews of now young adults, who went through school without educational provision or even knowing that they were gifted/most able students. Each episode ends with the young person's educational recommendations for teachers.

Emil (abridged)

Young man with a very high intelligence and varied array of interests. Ended up in a special needs school for two years in between elementary and middle school, despite extremely high learning ability. Built himself a functioning cell phone out of waste parts from the scrap yard when he was only 9 years old. Stayed at home from school for a year in his early teens and claims he learned more from the Internet that year than he had ever done in school. Diagnosed with ADHD.

Emil's recommendations:

- Apply Simon Sinek's 'Golden Circle' model in every subject: why, who, and what!
- Do 'real' things, not just school assignments, and not just for grades.
- Guide students and grade them from what they already work with or learn at home.

Emilia (abridged)

Young female who was so bullied already in elementary school that she had to change school, despite an outgoing personality. Always felt alienated and unable to fit in with peers, especially with other girls. Learned not to show her thirst for knowledge, but rather to subdue it in order to not provoke the teachers. Bored early with all subjects. Made her own math book in year 2 which she wanted to share with the rest of the class, but the math teacher said the others had to catch up first. Suffered later from severe anxiety disorders and periods of sick leave from school due to depression.

Emilia's recommendations:

- Inspiring lectures.
- The option to go deeper into each theme or subject, or to move forward.
- Co-teaching, so that students can go deeper or forward with either teacher.
- Flipped classroom, preferably with pre-filmed online lectures.
- Humorous and charismatic teachers who love their students.

ABILITY MAPPING

Chapter about how, when, and what to map out in order to unveil what the student really knows and understands, and what level of learning the student has. Explains the difference between qualitative and quantitative ability mapping. (Especially important for methods of tracking.)

It's so easy that I can't understand it!

Elvira, 8 years old

Educational Assessment Versus Testing Knowledge

Chapter explaining the difference between finding out the student's level of understanding rather than testing what he or she has learned in class.

Fundamentals of Ability Mapping

Chapter about what is required in order to finding out what level of learning the student really has.

Anna in year 6 has taken a test in literature with a part that includes writing. The teacher doesn't know how to grade Anna's text since it makes no sense to her, why she's leaning towards not passing Anna's writing. As a last resort, the teacher consults a literature teacher she knows at senior high. The other teacher is filled with awe over Anna's text: It's written in hexameter!

What to Map Out

Chapter about what to look for when mapping out the student's abilities as well as common pitfalls, i.e. how to use the new pair of glasses!

Conclusively:

- Map out the ceiling—not the floor or gaps—by using as advanced mapping material as possible.
- Map out the depth of understanding and ability to connect different aspects and to draw (new) conclusions.
- Map out areas of excellence, even dormant and hidden excellence.

What Not to Map Out

Chapter about what to guard against when mapping out abilities, in order to not map out the 'floor' or gaps in knowledge instead of hidden skills, capacities, and understanding. (Also crucial for methods of tracking.)

Conclusively—ask yourself:

- Does the student need to be resilient to stress in order to perform well in the ability mapping?
- Are parts of the ability mapping time limited?
- Is the student a girl?

Carl takes an entry test for senior high at an International Baccalaureate (IB) school. Since Carl is prone to stress and extremely analytical, he takes so

much time on the test that time runs out before he's even finished answering the first question. However, the friendly test attendant says she's got time to stay, so Carl gets to finish the test in his own time. Nonetheless, Carl feels really beat down afterwards and totally convinced he's failed since he wasn't able to give a perfect answer to all the questions. Later that night, the Deputy Principal of the IB school unexpectedly calls Carl's mother on the phone. She says that Carl's test result is the best their school has ever seen!

Material for Ability Mapping

Chapter about what is and what is *not* suited as material for ability mapping when trying to find gifted students and their (hidden) capacities. (Crucial for methods of tracking.)

Feedback of Ability Mapping

Chapter about how and what to feed back to colleagues, parents, and students in order to make the ability mapping constructive and formative instead of judging or summative.

TWICE EXCEPTIONAL

Chapter about students with diagnoses or hindrances of different sorts together with a high intelligence, which is called Twice Exceptional (2E for short).

Consequences of Being Twice Exceptional

Chapter with historical and contemporary examples of how students may be confused with having clinical difficulties in their learning environment when they're really just intellectually malnourished, and how this affects these children. Even Einstein was called 'an idiot' by his teachers... Also, how school tends to see students' difficulties rather than their abilities.

How to Teach Twice Exceptional Children

Chapter about important 'dos and don'ts' when teaching (or planning for) gifted students with a diagnosis of some sort.

Abbreviated to do-list:

- Feed the intellect *first* by offering something that the student is interested in.
- Offer expert educational coaching regarding the diagnosis together with information about giftedness.
- Skip repetitive assignments.
- Give frequent and highly relevant feedback.

THE STUDENT CARE TEAM

Chapter about the importance of a knowledgeable Student Care Team in school that can support and guide the student in more ways than strictly educational, such as a knowledgeable School Nurse, SEN teachers, Educational Psychologist, School Physician, etc.

Recommendations by the Educational Psychologist

Interview with the Swedish Educational Psychologist Anita Kullander, who has an expertise in the field of gifted/most able children, especially when it comes to examining their intelligence through testing with WPPSI, WISC or WAIS. She offers insight into what to look for in order to identify gifted/most able students, and explains the reasons behind why these children so often end up at the Student Care Team, and gives recommendations as to what to do.

Q AND A

Chapter with the most common questions from (Swedish) school professionals, gathered by the author over time and originally answered through blog posts on the author's website. The blog post on ADHD was written in 2016 and has up until this date been read and shared about 35 000 times.

Gifted or ADHD? (translated for this excerpt)

Question:

The parents of one of my students claim that the child is gifted. However, the child shows clear signs of ADHD. Shouldn't he be assessed by a psychologist?

Answer:

Firstly, the recommendation is to always assume that parents are correct when expressing their child's learning ability, and then to immediately offer the appropriate educational provision without further ado (read chapter Educational ABC). School has absolutely nothing to lose when doing this—rather the opposite. Teachers and school leaders have everything to gain from getting parents to trust school and to cooperate. Parents see our students when they're not in school and therefore know so much more than what is conveyed in the regular classroom.

Secondly, it is important to remember that children with a high intelligence are different from one another—just as different as other children. Also, their abilities are different, as well as the degree of their intelligence. While one gifted student might love mathematical reasoning and hate language learning, another gifted student might feel exactly the opposite. These children come with an assorted array of experiences, circumstances, personalities, and interests. What unites them is an advanced *cognitive* development, however in different ways and with a varied degree of intelligence. The needs of a child with IQ 130 will vary from a child with IQ 150. Twenty IQ points make a big difference for a child's intelligence, even above average intelligence, just as it does for children with an impaired intellectual functioning. But whereas a child with IQ 65 has the right to go to a special school for intellectually challenged, a child with IQ 135 is expected to function within the regular school system, even though they differ the same amount of IQ points from 'normal' (IQ 100). One could compare this with putting a child of average intelligence, say IQ 100, in special school for intellectually challenged with the expectation that the child should use his or her intelligence to adapt and to do really well because of the much easier educational level. That would be totally unthinkable! We would not presume a child to perform well under such circumstances or to develop a healthy self-image. Neither would we be at all surprised if that child started protesting in one way or another, or even stopped wanting to go to school. However, the opposite happens all the time for children with a very high intelligence. But, instead of being met with sympathy and understanding, gifted/most able

students are often confronted with questions regarding their level of motivation and (lack of) performance, and are oftentimes referred for assessment concerning their psychological or neuropsychiatric status.

When a child with a high intellectual giftedness goes through school without even once being provided with education that matches his or her cognitive capacity, the child ends up with a severe mental malnourishment, even intellectual starvation. In order to endure this state of boredom, the child tends to adopt one of two main survival strategies:

1. Cognitive shut-down—the child withdraws into him- or herself by daydreaming or engaging in other mental distractions.
2. Acting out—the child displays a disruptive behaviour, such as acting the class clown, questioning the teacher, creating conflicts, throwing tantrums, etc.

The Student Care Team often gets involved, such as a Special Educational Needs teacher and/or an Educational Psychologist, the latter to examine the child's level of learning capacity with a Wechsler Intelligence Scale (WISC) test, which is a part of a neuropsychological examination. For children aged 2 – 6 years, this assessment is called WPPSI (Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence), for children up to 16 years of age it's called WISC (Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children), and for youngsters and adults it is called WAIS (Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale). Children who apply survival strategy no 1 in school are seemingly often diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, Autism Spectrum Disorder, or ADD. Children who practice survival strategy no 2 seem to often end up diagnosed with ADHD.

Thirdly, it is important to understand that these diagnoses are not determined through any kind of biochemical testing, such as blood samples, but rather through a professional but highly individual assessment by a qualified psychologist—a process that much resembles the procedure used when teachers go through students' performances in order to determine their final grades. A diagnosis, such as ADHD for example, is therefore decided by a psychologist's professional estimation—under the prevalent circumstances, whatever they might be. Normally, the observations by the child's teachers are a part of this neuropsychological assessment, for example as how they perceive the child's performances and difficulties as well as abilities, why it can be crucial how the child comes across in the classroom. Children who have resorted into a state of boredom and underachievement due to intellectual malnourishment, may therefore be reported by the teachers as having different sort of impairments. But just as you can be blind, deaf and dumb, or short of an arm or a leg, or have other disabilities and still be intellectually gifted, so you can have neuropsychiatric disorders, such as ASD, ADHD, etc., which is called to be Twice Exceptional (see chapter Twice Exceptional). Twice Exceptional students have the capacity for so much in school but their neuropsychiatric disorders often get in the way of achievement and performance.

Finally, the answer to the above question is to start with mapping out the student's abilities (see chapter Ability Mapping) and to immediately offer acceleration, broadening, and coaching (see chapter Educational ABC). The more school provides the student with his or her educational needs, the lesser the symptoms of potential disorders.

So, conclusively—yes, of course the child might need a neuropsychological assessment! Self-knowledge is essential for all people, especially for intellectually gifted children, since they

have an extraordinary capacity for self-examination. Many gifted students with the onset of boredom and unhappiness with school, are therefore convinced that there is something wrong with them. This creates even bigger and more long-term problems within the child. An underachieving student, with or without a neuropsychiatric disorder, is very likely to conclude that he or she is ‘stupid’! Because children with the extended ability for self-analysis will rarely come to other conclusions than what circumstances, achievements, and grown-ups present to them. So, if the truth is actually the reverse, the child might never ever find out. A correct diagnosis might therefore help eliminating unnecessary self-criticism—if conducted by someone who knows the cognitive make-up of intellectually gifted children. This is a *must*, otherwise boredom and lack of mental stimulation can easily be misconstrued, even by an experienced psychologist, and therefore generate an incorrect neuropsychiatric diagnosis and thus a faulty self-image for life. A psychologist with knowledge and understanding of the cognitive qualities of children with high intelligence can however not only help the child to understand him- or herself, but also add to school’s understanding of what the child needs, which in turn will support the child’s wellbeing overall.

Lastly, the necessary provisions in school need to take place immediately—regardless of diagnosis—so that the child gets the education he or she needs. Children who are recognized for their abilities and strengths, grow into healthy grown-ups. As the Swedish Educational Psychologist and giftedness-expert Anita Kullander says in the chapter The Student Care Team:

‘Education is a human right, not a reward for good behaviour.’

High or low ability?

Question and answer about how to discern whether a student has a low or high cognitive ability when classroom performances and behaviours seem to coincide.

Grade skipping or not?

Question and answer about whether or not a student should move up one or more years, and how that might affect his or her social development.

Parents are blaming behaviour on boredom!

Question and answer about the frustration when parents request more difficult material for a child that displays disruptive classroom behaviour.

How am I to know who the gifted/most able students are?

Question and answer about what the most common characteristics are.

I’m a Mensa member and I’ve never had difficulties in school.

Question (or rather a remark) and answer about why the difficulties of gifted students appear to be (unjustly) emphasized these days, whereas a lot of people with high intelligence in fact have passed through school with flying excellence, seemingly without any major problems at all. Why is that?

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Etc.