



# WorldGifted

Newsletter of The World Council for Gifted and Talented Children

www.world-gifted.org

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WORLDGIFTED2021.COM

**July 31 - August 1 & August 7 - 8, 2021**  
**Developing the Future of Gifted Education**  
Virtual WCGTC® World Conference



Thank you to each person who shared their ideas on the survey we recently disseminated regarding the 2021 Virtual World Conference. We are pleased to announce that the World Conference will be held virtually over two consecutive weekends, July 31 - August 1 and August 7 - 8. We are still planning specifics regarding registration rates, conference timing, and conference structure. The feedback we have received will be very important as we continue making these plans. We look forward to sharing more information in the new year.



## FROM THE WCGTC PRESIDENT JULIA LINK ROBERTS

*Dear Members of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children,*

The year 2020 has changed so many aspects in our lives and in our organizations. Before 2020 arrived, not all of us knew about Zoom, and today it is a way of communicating that is familiar to most of us – maybe too familiar as we are spending hours each day on the computer in meetings. Nonetheless, we have learned that we can have a meeting with fellow members in countries across the globe. Scheduling a time to be appropriate around the globe is the

challenging decision to make.

I had not participated in a virtual conference prior to 2020, yet that too has changed. Initially, I didn't have high hopes for a conference experienced virtually, but I have been pleasantly surprised about the engagement in the content and the friendships that can be part of such a meeting. I hope you will look forward to the 24<sup>th</sup> Biennial World Conference and participate virtually. I know that I will be there and hope you will as well!

Virtual participation can enhance the benefits of our world organization. Please share your ideas as they will all be welcome.

I hear that the most frequently spoken phrase of 2020 is "You're on mute." I think that well could be the phrase we have all heard as we have participated in Zoom meetings.

Looking forward to "seeing" you at the World Conference held virtually!

Sincerely,

Julia Link Roberts  
President

World Council for Gifted and Talented Children

## WCGTC Headquarters Update



This year has certainly been a very challenging year across the world as the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted life as we knew it. Hopefully life will return to some semblance of normalcy as the vaccine becomes more available. Until then, we continue virtual work as best we can.

As the cover article notes, the 2021 World Conference will be offered virtually, a first for the WCGTC®. We hope a virtual conference will increase accessibility for our members and advocates around the globe. We are working hard to finalize plans, and we will provide more information in the new year. Please mark your calendars to join us for the World Conference July 31 – August 1 and August 7 – 8. I hope you will also share this opportunity with others you know who may be

interested. If you would like to share an ad in one of your upcoming newsletters or on your social media, please let me know, and I will send the material for you to use.

The Teacher Education Position Paper Committee is continuing work on the draft position paper. The committee has reviewed three drafts. A fourth draft will be prepared in the new year for the committee to review and provide feedback. Thank you to Norma Hafenstein for her work as chair and to her graduate students Joi Lin and Kayla Steffens for their work on each draft, incorporating comments from the committee.

I am also pleased to announce that a renewed Headquarters agreement has been signed between the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children and Western Kentucky University. The WCGTC® Headquarters relocated to WKU from the University of Winnipeg in January 2011. The new contract allows for the Headquarters to remain at WKU through December 31, 2025.

As always, thank you for your support of the WCGTC® and gifted individuals around the world.

Nominations for President due January 15.  
Submit at  
[world-gifted.org/2021-president-nomination-form](http://world-gifted.org/2021-president-nomination-form)

## In Memory

### Dr. Michelle Bannister-Tyrell

1958-2020

Dr. Bannister-Tyrell passed away from Motor Neurone Disease on September 3. She had a teaching career spanning more than three decades in primary and secondary education. After spending many years in schools Michelle moved to the University of New England where she lectured in gifted education to undergraduate and post graduate students. Her research included rural and remote gifted issues, twice exceptionality from preschool to secondary students, gifted Aboriginal issues, online delivery for gifted students, metacognition and critical thinking. She served as an Alternate Delegate for the WCGTC. Her contribution to gifted education research is immense, and she will be sorely missed. (Adapted from Gifted NSW, Inc in memory of Dr. Bannister-Tyrell)

### Dr. Victor Mueller-Opplinger

1952-2020

Dr. Mueller-Opplinger was an active advocate for gifted children. He served as director of the Masters in Integrative Education of Gifted and Talented Development IBBF during 2003 – 2017. He was also a professor of educational psychology at the University of Education and Teacher Training of Northwestern Switzerland. Victor served for several years as a Delegate to the WCGTC. He also made many contributions to the European Council for High Ability as a member of the General Committee and Education Board. His dedication to gifted education and kind spirit will be missed.

## Friends of the WCGTC

We would like to express our gratitude to the following individuals for recently giving to the WCGTC scholarship fund either directly or through purchasing a silver, gold, or platinum membership. These donations make it possible to provide more opportunities to interested individuals around the globe to join us at the World Conferences. For more information about giving to the scholarship fund, visit [www.world-gifted.org/give](http://www.world-gifted.org/give).

🍷 Anita Burke (Australia)

🍷 Tyler Clark (United States)

🍷 Margaret Delacy (United States)

🍷 Ivo Licka (Germany)

🍷 April Michele (United States)

🍷 Arnfinn Rismoen (Denmark)

🍷 Kyoko Raguchi (Japan)

## WCGTC unites to stand up against all forms of racism and racial discrimination.

In the last two weeks, we have watched and read news coverage on anti-racism protests across the world as a result of the ongoing systemic racism. This has ignited a global concern that is demanding a response. Racism divides societies, damages students, and hinders education. The WCGTC® shall commit to advance equity, anti-racism, and anti-discrimination in schools, on campuses, and in research.

The WCGTC® offers a platform to engage in open dialogue and sharing of practice. Building on the work already done by researchers of gifted education from diverse ethnic backgrounds, it can bring together the gifted education research community from across the globe as they seek to address injustice.

The WCGTC® remains committed to supporting each country to ensure that gifted learners from all backgrounds and ethnicities have opportunities to access appropriate education through the development of practices that are equitable and inclusive. As an international organisation, the WCGTC® is committed to implementing anti-racist and anti-discrimination policies, engaging in anti-racist practices and research further ensuring our membership and leadership opportunities do not discriminate based on race.

## Member Feedback Summary

In early 2020, the Executive Committee disseminated a membership feedback survey to better understand the experiences of our membership. While 2020 has certainly been an unusual year, it is important to reflect on the 114 responses we received to the survey. Most respondents mentioned they were members to have access to *Gifted and Talented International* (91) followed by networking opportunities (89), the *World Gifted* newsletter (70), and World Conference discounts (67).

The survey also collected information about quality of the current member benefits (*World Gifted* newsletter, *Gifted and Talented International* access, *Roeper Review* access, *Creativity Research Journal* access, Hertz car rental discounts, and World Conference discounts). Many comments were provided on these benefits. Several members indicated that networking opportunities are very important to them. Members found it beneficial to be able to discuss with others from around the world about how they are serving gifted students. These networking opportunities were captured through the World Conference, the *World Gifted* newsletter, and the *Gifted and Talented International* journal.

There were a couple areas of improvement highlighted in the survey. It was noted that *GTI* is more focused for academics, and there is a need for more opportunities to share practical ideas for educators. Additionally, several members indicated the desire to be involved in volunteer positions. Providing more networking opportunities between conference years was also highlighted. Some suggestions included a forum on the website, regional conferences in non-conference years, special interest groups, additional virtual events, among others.

We appreciate each of our members who provided feedback on the survey. While 2020 has been challenging, the Executive Committee will use feedback from our members to plan for the organization. Our website now includes a forum that may be accessed at <https://world-gifted.org/forum>. We encourage you to use the forum for networking opportunities. The EC has also started discussing opportunities for creation of special interest groups and virtual offerings to our membership. We hope as you have additional ideas and feedback that you will share those with us by emailing [headquarters@world-gifted.org](mailto:headquarters@world-gifted.org). Thank you for all of your support to the WCGTC!

## Is Creativity Associated with Mental Health or Mental Illness?

Denise de Souza Fleith and Marina  
Nogueira de Assis Fonseca  
University of Brasilia, Brazil

People worldwide have been adversely impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. For many, this scenario has contributed to developing or increased feelings of loneliness, hopelessness, depression, and anxiety. For others, the crisis opened an opportunity to put creative abilities into action by rethinking their lifestyles, reinventing themselves, and analyzing the situation from new and useful perspectives. In this regard, we must ask whether creativity is a key element in the search for original solutions to social and individual problems generated by the pandemic. This allows us to reflect on the extent creativity has been valued, encouraged, and accepted in our society. Is it possible to state that creativity promotes well-being? Or may creative people experience a risk for some forms of psychopathology?

According to Kinney and Richards (2014), biographies of eminent creators, especially in the arts, have highlighted the presence of mental disorders. It is not unusual for individuals who are known for their highly original productions to be remembered for their extraordinary talent as well as their apparent insanity. In this respect, one of the most frequently asked questions about creativity involves its association with mental disorders.

Would madness be a source of creativity or could creativity lead to madness (Kaufman, 2014; Lubart, 2007)? On the other hand, some researchers advocate that any positive association between the constructs is a myth. They argue that if there is a correlation, it must be negative (Schlesinger, 2009; Simonton, 2017). For both humanist and positive psychologists, for example, creativity and mental health are interrelated: While creativity is a sign of mental health, to have good mental health stimulates creative production (Cromptley, 1990; May, 1975).

But what does the scientific evidence tell us (Bass et al., 2016; Becker, 2014; Beaussart et al., 2014; Carson, 2014)?

- To label a behavior as either deviant or creative, it is essential to analyze the historical and sociocultural context in which it is embedded. It is not possible to consider factors that exist only within the person. Social and cultural standards, as well as taboos, can dictate and highly influence what is considered mental illness.
- The majority of the studies analyzing the relationship between creativity and mental illnesses do not indicate the concept or dimension of creativity they were addressing, nor do they point out which specific disorder they were considering. We need to remind ourselves that creativity and mental illness are both multifaceted phenomena.
- There is evidence that the relationship between creativity and mental illness has been addressed since the 19<sup>th</sup> century when creative actions were still related to divinity. Since then, the beliefs about this relationship have changed significantly, but no consensus has been reached yet, meaning that it is not a direct, causal, simplistic, or global relationship.
- Some studies have found creativity positively correlated with individuals with bipolar disorder and their direct relatives.
- Psychoticism, a personality trait, seems to be positively correlated both with creativity and mental illness, but the correlation is moderated by variables such as gender, age, sample, and types of measures of both constructs.
- The vulnerability to psychopathology explains limited variance in creative performance, which suggests that even if the constructs are related, there are other factors that moderate this relationship.
- Creative individuals appear to share some cognitive abilities with people with some forms of psychopathology such as disinhibited states of consciousness, novelty-seeking, and neural hyperconnectivity.
- Creative work seems unlikely to flourish in severely mentally ill patients
- “Appropriate treatment is likely to enhance, rather than diminish [mentally ill] patients’ creativity” (Kinney & Richards, 2014, p. 313)
- Studies have suggested that the relationship found between creativity and distorted thinking can be due to divergent thinking, a common trait in creative persons.
- Associations between personality traits shared by people with higher potential and those with psychopathologies are more likely to be due to higher creative ability and intelligence than a dysfunctional personality.

**We must not forget that creativity has been considered dangerous because it challenges and transforms societies through disruptive and unconventional ideas.**

We can see that “a definitive association between the broad span of creativity and mental illness is too vast and complex to establish with ease” (Wendler & Schubert, 2019, p. 329). For Forgeard et al. (2014), engaging in creative activities may have therapeutic benefits by promoting flow experiences and positive emotions, and helping people create meaning for difficult experiences. We must not forget that creativity has been considered dangerous because it challenges and

*continued on next page*

transforms societies through disruptive and unconventional ideas. It seems that creativity is socially encouraged, but when a creative product is presented, the creative person might be seen as “the mad genius.” Results of studies suggest that creativity is associated with mental health (Kaufman, 2014), for it allows a different and innovative way of communication and expression of ideas. In challenging times like the one we are living in, the involvement in creative work and activities can be beneficial for the individual and society. Cohen and Cromwell (2020), for example, highlighted the importance of creativity during the direct fight against COVID-19 with innovations like 3D printing face-shields and alternative ways of producing hand sanitizers. Besides, the use of imagination, intuition, and openness to new ideas are essential to cope with stressful situations. It is also an opportunity to nourish people’s inner and outer worlds. We leave you with some suggestions and tips to foster your creativity:

- Be involved in activities that allow you to analyze critical situations from different perspectives, rearranging your cognitions and emotions. Reframe your thinking!
- Develop an optimistic vision for your future. Think positive!
- Try different paths. Changing is not always comfortable but sometimes it can offer you amazing possibilities.
- Encourage collaborative work instead of competition.
- Use an exploratory and playful approach to deal with challenges.
- Focus on strengths and talents, developing self-awareness, and a creative identity.
- Allow yourself time for reflection and relaxation.
- Never lose the amazement! You will need it to value small achievements on a daily basis.
- Do not focus only on the bigger picture. Everyday you have a chance to develop your talents and celebrate your achievements.
- Try to learn a new thing every day.
- Smile! Creativity is not always happening in screens and virtual environments. Be aware of your interpersonal relations and cultivate the beauty around you!

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This year has been such a challenging year for many researchers in gifted education, talent development, and creativity. In many places, research was stopped in all educational settings due to the Covid-19 pandemic, requiring researchers to think about adapting studies or working on different aspects of their research. I am hoping that 2021 will be more promising for all of us!

However, the *Gifted and Talented International* journal has continued to develop in the past twelve months with author submissions coming from the USA, Turkey, Australia, Germany, Paraguay, Bahrain, Canada, China, Lebanon, and Mexico. Based on our Taylor and Francis publisher's report in May we had an increase in GTI article downloads by 23% from the previous year.

These downloads are important as we know that people are reading our GTI articles! Along with citations, this is critical if we want to increase our Impact Factor for GTI, which is important for many academics and researchers in gifted education internationally.



Those of you who are in universities around the world, we need you to find out if your university library subscribes to *Gifted and Talented International*. If not, we recommend that you request that your library subscribe to *Gifted and Talented International*. If we want the Impact Factor to improve, we need more academics and research students in gifted education, talent development, and creativity to have access to our research beyond just the membership of WCGTC members! The good news is that GTI is now indexed with SCOPUS.

Another aspect worth considering when submitting your manuscript to GTI for review, if accepted, you might consider requesting your article to be open access, as this seems to be making a difference for your research to be read. This is possible with Taylor and Francis, but for a fee.



**Learn how to submit a manuscript at:**  
**[www.world-gifted.org/gti-submit](http://www.world-gifted.org/gti-submit)**

I am pleased to say that in the past twelve months we have added two Associate Editors to our committed GTI Editorial team, Dr Alexandra Vuuyk from Paraguay, and Dr Kadir Bahar, who was originally from Turkey and now at the University of Georgia, USA. Also, Dr Claudia Cornejo-Araya from Chile, South America has joined as an Editors' Assistant.

We are always looking for quality reviewers for *Gifted and Talented International* as well. Please let us know if you have a doctorate, research expertise in gifted education, and have time to review manuscripts for us.

The next special issue of *Gifted and Talented International* will be edited by Dr Rena Subotnik, Dr Paula Olszewski-Kubilius and me and have a focus on *Research and Practice on Connections between Talent development and Big C Creativity or Eminence in Domains*. For this special issue, we have selected 16 manuscripts from approximately 50 international submissions, and we will look forward to reviewing these as they are submitted early next year.

Meanwhile, I would like to thank Dr Megan Foley-Nicpon, all Associate Editors, authors, and reviewers who have contributed to *Gifted and Talented International* in the past few months when we have all been challenged in various ways by Covid-19.

For those researchers who are publishing their research work, please consider submitting your manuscripts to GTI!

Dr Leonie Kronborg  
Editor-in-Chief, *Gifted and Talented International*

# making space for able learners

## Cognitive challenge: principles into practice

**New research publication:  
available now!**

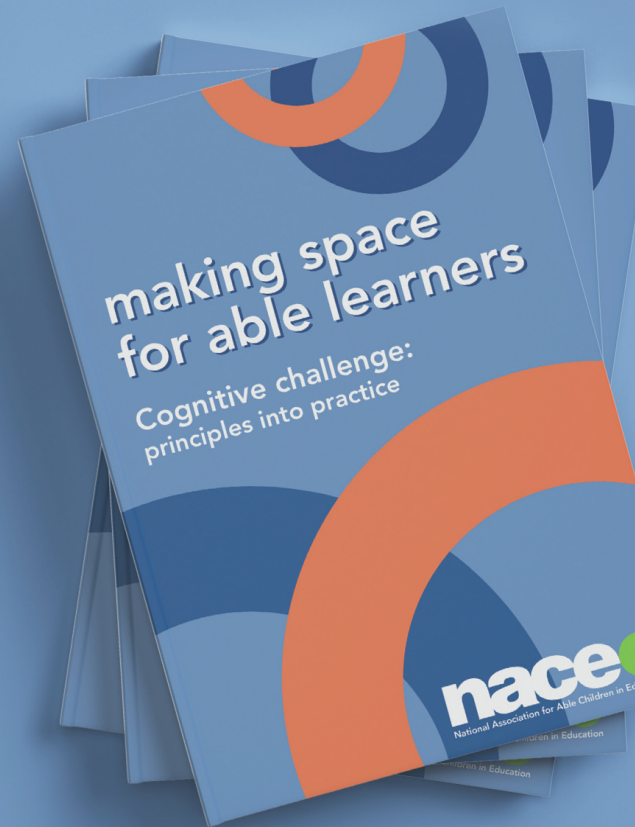
To ensure the best provision and outcomes for their students, school leaders and practitioners seek to base their approaches on sound evidence and proven practice. In the field of education for more able learners, however, this is not always easy to find.

For this reason, the UK-based National Association for Able Children in Education (NACE) launched the “Making Space for Able Learners” research project, aiming to help close the existing evidence gap in policy and practice for the more able. Alongside a review of related pedagogical frameworks and research, the project draws on effective practice at schools holding the NACE Challenge Award – an accreditation granted in recognition of excellent whole-school provision for more able learners, within an ethos of challenge for all.

Summarised in this 100-page publication, the first phase of the project focuses on what NACE refers to as “cognitive challenge” – outlining approaches to curriculum and pedagogy which optimise the engagement, learning and achievement of very able young people.

The report can be previewed online, with copies available for  
£12 (UK shipping) / £16 (outside UK).

**Find out more: [www.nace.co.uk/making-space](http://www.nace.co.uk/making-space)**



## ALGERIA



In 2020, more attention to research has been given to gifted education. Under the supervision of Naima Benyakoub from Blida2 University, doctoral student Nadjet Abdellah has written a thesis entitled, "The relationship of emotional and cognitive characteristics to academic achievement for students at the supplementary stage." This first doctoral thesis in Algeria on the gifted was discussed in November 2020.

Until the current year, the tests for the identification of gifted and standardization in Algeria (Raven and test of gifted's characteristics established by Nadjet Abdellah under the supervision of Naima Benyakoub), have been used. After the first identification process for gifted that took place in some Algerian schools in the context of preparing a doctoral thesis, the Association decided to prepare guidelines to help parents and teachers identify gifted students, whether in a family or school environment.

The Algerian Association for the Gifted and Talented has decided to issue a series of studies on giftedness and creativity in which an international collective of researchers and specialists in the field of gifted studies participated. The first book, currently being printed, is titled "Giftedness and Creativity: Theoretical Frameworks." The second is titled "Counseling and Nurturing the Gifted: Programs and Experiences." Publication and distribution is by the Algerian University Publications Office (OPU).

In 2020, we amended articles of the basic law, amended and enriched the internal system of the Algerian Association for the Gifted and Talented, and renewed the executive committee of the Algerian Association for the Gifted and Talented.

*Submitted by Naima Benyakoub (psy.univb2dz@gmail.com)*

## AUSTRALIA



The COVID-19 pandemic has definitely impacted Australia over the past nine months, but despite the move to online offerings in schools and other educational organisations, opportunities for promoting giftedness were taken wherever possible, albeit in a different format. There were also some unexpected benefits associated with moving activities to an online space, including higher levels of participation for certain events.

In the overall Australian space, the Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented (AAEGT) initiated the first Online Conference on September 12, 2020, with the theme Gifted 2020: Maintaining Well-being. Continuing the focus of Gifted Awareness Week Australia 2020 was essential to the ongoing advocacy for the positive well-being needs of the gifted, particularly within the current climate. Six outstanding Australian speakers (Michele Juratowitch, Associate Professor Margaret Plunkett, Professor John Munro, Dr. Eileen Slater, and Dr. Denise Wood) covered a diverse range of topics and research within an Australian context. The conference provided a platform for dialogue and connectivity when meeting face to face was not possible. During the conference, the AAEGT was pleased to congratulate Professor John Munro, who was awarded the 2020 AAEGT Award for Eminence in Gifted Education to recognize his significant contribution to gifted education in Australia. Further congratulations were extended to Paloma Palacios Gonzalez, who received the 2020 John Geake Outstanding Thesis Award for her thesis on predictors of Mexican teachers' attitudes toward acceleration.

The Gifted Awareness Week Australia Organising Committee announced the dates and theme for Gifted Awareness Week (GAW) 2021, which will be celebrated May 22 - 30, 2021, with the theme Thriving as Gifted. This theme, established in continued partnership with our colleagues in New Zealand, will be a celebration of gifted learners and systems who have thrived and are thriving in every demographic across our nation. It will raise awareness and promote challenges to optimise learning environments so that gifted individuals can thrive. Our international colleagues and organisations advocating for gifted learners are also encouraged to consider joining us in 2021 to promote Thriving as Gifted. The AAEGT also published *Meeting the Needs of Gifted Students Returning to School After Coronavirus Remote Learning* (<http://www.aegt.net.au/wp-content/uploads/Meeting-the-Needs-of-Gifted-Students.pdf>).

Some of the other exciting things that have happened or are happening in various states of Australia include:

The Tasmanian Association for the Gifted successfully delivered several online Zoom sessions on advocacy acceleration, early entry to kindergarten, and opportunities for gifted learners at the University of Tasmania to larger than normal audiences.

*Australia report continued on next page*

*Australia report continued*

The Gifted NSW Committee delivered its biennial Regional Tour during Gifted Awareness Week Australia. Its ongoing advocacy for twice-exceptional students has helped increase the number of students with disabilities being offered a place at selective schools, with numbers increasing from 183 in 2019 to 611 in 2020. In collaboration with The Teachers' Guild of NSW, Gifted NSW has commenced planning for the 2021 Gifted Awareness Forum for Educators (GAFE), which is to be held on May 29.

In Victoria, AGATEVic has sourced and provided many online resources and activities on its website to support parents and teachers during the lockdown. VAGTC is once again delivering online parent seminars and seminars for educators, including a mini online Conference with Debbie Youd on identification and differentiation. In terms of social media presence, the VAGTC website has been totally rebuilt and can be accessed at [vagtc.org.au](http://vagtc.org.au). It has also produced a range of resources, including a 40-minute professional video for parents of gifted and talented children focusing on critical aspects of education, including identification, understanding, advocating, collaboration, and support.

In the ACT, GAW included a presentation by Dr. Peta Hay on "The Whole Gifted Child: Understanding and Supporting Gifted Students' Social and Emotional Needs." In WA, several member events were held, while online coffee chats were particularly well received by regional members. In GAW, the traditional family picnic was held in conjunction with Mensa WA.

To conclude, Australia extends its heartfelt support to our international community as the ongoing battle to support and nurture our gifted learners through the COVID-19 pandemic continues.

*Submitted by Melinda Gindy, Lesley Henderson, and Margaret Plunkett ([margaret.plunkett@federation.edu.au](mailto:margaret.plunkett@federation.edu.au))*

## BAHRAIN



Along with other countries, the Kingdom of Bahrain witnessed school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the education of gifted and talented students has continued virtually. Some of the programs performed by the Ministry of Education in the Kingdom of Bahrain include:

- Specialists in gifted education prepared virtual enrichment programs (Parley, Kahoolawe, digital stories and etc.) and shared them with gifted and talented students via each school's Microsoft Teams Platform.
- The Ministry of Education/Department of Special Education in cooperation with school specialists in gifted education prepared virtual enrichment curricula in various fields of creative problem-solving skills and self-developmental skills, to be shared by gifted and talented students in elementary schools, middle schools and secondary schools via Microsoft Teams.
- The Bahrain Ministry of Education also provided virtual gifted training programs during summer vacation by the Gifted Student Center.

In addition, a wide range of virtual workshops has continued to serve gifted and talented students including gifted students' participation in the 2020 virtual GLOBE meeting in the United States of America and gifted and talented female students' participation in Virtual Sunday Tech Camp, which is currently held by the Supreme Council for Women.

These are only some of the efforts taking place in the kingdom of Bahrain that give attention to gifted education.

*Submitted by Um Jamali ([29jamali@gmail.com](mailto:29jamali@gmail.com))*

## CANADA



Given the full-on disruption of school systems here in Canada as a result of COVID-19, there is not much information to contribute to this report at this time. I expect things are not much different in other countries. Gifted associations and organisations are on hold or operating at a very slow pace. We are trying to cope, adapting to new ways of e-learning, and participating in specific activities online. Training has also switched to video conferences. Schools with special programmes for gifted students are still in operation in some places, although provinces without formal gifted guidelines in education or in giftedness have not made them a priority in these times of COVID-19.

*Canada report continued on next page*

Canada report continued

What I can see as a psychologist in private and public practice with gifted students (in regular classrooms) is that home schooling or part-time home-schooling benefit most gifted students, some 2E with ADHD, and those with social anxiety. In contrast, gifted children who are more social or with less ability to work independently encounter more problems when homeschooled. Procrastination, feelings of being overwhelmed, and anxiety seem to be more elevated, especially for teenagers and the very young. I hope there will be better days ahead for all of us around the world.

Submitted by Andrée Therrien (ataclinique@hotmail.com)

## CZECH REPUBLIC



A year ago, the Association for Talent and Giftedness (STaN) held a successful conference with outstanding invited speakers from around the world. The conference brought participants, from the ranks of teachers, psychologists, and parents of gifted children, a lot of new information and a view of the issues from different angles. In-person meetings and the opportunity to talk with those who really understand the issues are priceless. We would, therefore, like to continue organizing such conferences.

However, the situation changed when COVID-19 restricted all our activities. We used to organize several meetings for parents and teachers of gifted children every year, as well as one or two work days or conferences. We planned to hold these events in 2020 as well, but no meetings were held due to the pandemic.

We used to be active participants in international conferences and meetings. Last year, we attended the 23rd WCGTC conference in Nashville, Tennessee, USA; and, in Hawkwood, England, the third meeting of HELP, a collaborative network of European practitioner organisations dedicated to enabling children with high learning potential to grow in confidence and achieve fulfilment so they can thrive (see <https://www.highlearningpotential.eu/>).

Meeting those who share the same interests and enthusiasm for the cause is always uplifting and rewarding. It always energizes me for further efforts to improve gifted services.

It is a pleasure to see old friends and to meet other enthusiasts on the common theme of gifted children. E-conferences are at least a substitute, but they cannot replace in-person meetings.

Many conference delegates say, „The best parts are the bits between sessions.“ A two-day event, such as the HELP meeting in England, gives us all time to talk with each other about whatever is currently demanding our attention.

As a practitioner, I encounter real problems associated with the education of the gifted and especially exceptionally gifted children. I see that services in many cases fail to meet their specific needs. Research cannot account for everything that affects a child's development. Formal measures for practice are insufficient and often do not meet the real needs of gifted children. In our country, we need to create a fully functioning system. Such a system is still lacking here, as a Czech-British family found out when comparing the offerings and quality of education for their gifted children in Czech and British education.

The extremely gifted are often able to better manage the development of their potential on their own. A formal system can also harm them. If these talented young people are stubborn and persistent enough, they will prevail despite the system. Of course, they also need considerable financial support to do so. This support is either provided by the family, at least initially (see examples from the field of sports: Ester Ledecká in skiing and snowboarding, and young tennis players Brenda (13) and Linda (15) Fruhvirtova — „supertalents“ in [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ester\\_Ledicka](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ester_Ledicka), <https://www.itftennis.com/en/players/linda-fruhvirtova/800485856/cze/jt/s/overview/>, and <https://www.itftennis.com/en/news-and-media/articles/family-affair-for-trailblazing-teenage-sensation-fruhvirtova/>).

Probably the most remarkable personality of the examples I present is Yveta Tulip Hlavacova. She refuses to submit to what she does not consider meaningful. The „system“ therefore punishes her for it. It is admirable what she has accomplished, despite the „system.“ Undoubtedly, she needed not only sports talent and hard training but also high intelligence. Almost no one in our country knows this extremely successful swimmer, one of the best in the world: <https://yvett.cz/en/>.

Czech Republic report continued on next page

*Czech Republic report continued*

These examples are from the field of sports. Cognitive ones are not as popular. But even they need support and a considerable degree of independence. If we do not want to lose the potential of the gifted, we need to give them a chance and not make them just walk when they can fly.

*Submitted by Eva Vondráková (vondrakova@gmail.com)*

## ECUADOR



After confinement and social isolation, the “new normal” has been accompanied by an urgent need to respond to the educational needs of all students. During the confinement required by COVID 19, the habits of children with high potential underwent many changes that impacted their cognitive and emotional development. The lack of an adequate educational context and the presence of family, physical, and learning problems: have influenced the development of cognitive potential and the development of talent.

In the diverse population of schools, it was a great educational challenge to respond to high-ability students; the biggest problem was not knowing how to develop their potential and talent. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have forced ourselves to make changes because although virtual education is an opportunity for some high-ability students, for others it is a limitation. For example, before COVID-19, the educational system did not motivate or encourage students’ independent learning. Now, the system requires intrinsic motivation and the development of self-regulation. Thus, education must be rebuilt, responding to the needs of highly capable children and adolescents.

In the virtual world, children can go further than the content of a book, and this ability gives them the opportunity to develop their own learning at their own pace and research, without school schedules and structure. This change is a positive one for the acquisition of knowledge, but we cannot forget that children and adolescents also need to address their emotional development, which must come from the support of an adequate virtual social network that favors interpersonal contact and that facilitates interpersonal development.

We believe that professionals in the field of education must rethink their educational response to students with high abilities who favor discovery and self-learning. Instituto Fundación Sueño Mágico, from Quito, Ecuador, is aware of this new educational change required by high-ability students and has provided a free program on Saturdays for the development of talent and directed self-learning skills in children and adolescents with high potential.

Our objective is to reduce the effects of the harshness of emotional, digital, social, economic, and cultural inequalities made visible by the virtual education improvisation caused by the COVID 19 pandemic. We also want to increase awareness that the education of students with high potential can be aimed at arousing greater interest in learning if cross-sectional research is used, in addition to the curricular content. We want to raise awareness that the development of talents requires the socio-emotional development of students.

*Submitted by Fanny Alencastro (albanalencastroquito@yahoo.es)*

## GERMANY



The first half of the 2020 school year was dominated by the coronavirus pandemic. In March, schools all over Germany went into lockdown, and children had to be taught at home. This situation caused enormous problems. Some parents were able to continue working because they could work from home, but others had to leave home to work because their jobs were essential and could not be done from home.

The far bigger problem was that children had to learn at home. Homeschooling — in German, *Hausunterricht* (house teaching) — is strictly forbidden in Germany. However, during the pandemic, homeschooling was suddenly a necessity. Germany was woefully unprepared for it. From the start, nobody used the German word anymore, but rather the English expression “homeschooling.” Since then, German schools, teachers, and education authorities have increased their knowledge about homeschooling, but during the pandemic there was a lot of chaos.

There were some schools and individual teachers who were already experienced with online teaching. The problem, though, for the majority of schools and teachers, was that there were websites that offered material

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### *Germany report continued*

that could be downloaded, officially and unofficially, but that did not necessarily fit with what and how teachers wanted to teach. Teachers had to instead develop their own material. The problem on the families' side, especially for poor families, was that many of them had neither the hardware nor the software to do online learning. Most of them had mobile phones, but they were not sufficient.

Germany is a federal state, meaning the 16 individual states are responsible for schooling and not the federal government. However, during the pandemic, the federal government has provided the states with millions of euros to pay for software and hardware where necessary. Not all of the money has been distributed yet.

Some teachers produced educational materials for pen and paper, but that strategy did not always work either. Teachers were not used to preparing material so that children could either do it alone or with the help of adults. One mother said that her son, who was in fourth grade, first received no work for a few weeks and then was given 60 printed pages of math problems.

The question for the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children: What did lockdown mean for gifted children?

Students who were happy at school of course missed it, especially activities and being with their friends. However, there are many gifted children who suffer from a lack of challenge. They were able to work at their own pace while learning at home, not wasting time on waiting and having time for other activities. It was easier for families who lived in a house with a garage; families that lived in an apartment with little chance to go outside did have problems.

Maybe the experience with enforced homeschooling will open the door to relaxing the ban in Germany. In my opinion it would be wrong to rely completely on what the internet has to offer. Pen and paper don't age the way hardware and software do, and it has the advantage that several children in one family can do homework at the same time.

"In 2012, the First Global Home Education Conference took place in Berlin (2012). That was a gesture of solidarity with the families living in countries where home education is forbidden. It was no accident that it took place in Berlin. In this five-day event, around 200 participants from six continents and 28 countries took part – scientists, lawyers, politicians, social activists, and home education practitioners, as well as adult graduates. During the conference, the Berlin Declaration was passed; this declaration calls for human rights defenders, governments and NGOs, government representatives, and all citizens of each country to increase their respect for parents' rights in terms of choice of education and to guarantee that right in both civil and penal regulations" (Giercarz-Borkowska, 2020).

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*Submitted by Annette Heinbokel (annette.heinbokel@swbmail.de)*

## INDIA



The education of gifted children in India is steadily moving towards a full-scale national program. The year 2019-20 has been a remarkable phase in the field of gifted education in India. Gifted education has slowly and gradually developed as an academic field and now is seeing a transition into a systematic provision in the education policy. The country rolled out the new National Education Policy on August 26, 2020, with special mention of support for gifted and talented students. The policy mandated the need to discover, nurture, foster, and develop innate talents in students who show strong interests and capacities. The policy further recommends developing high-level educational programs for gifted students, particularly for those from socio-economically disadvantaged groups.

The Ministry of Human Resource Development started the flagship program Pradhan Mantri Innovative Learning Program-DHRUV to identify and nurture gifted and talented children in various academic and non-academic fields. The first round of DHRUV commenced in October 2019 with 60 outstandingly talented students in science and performing arts from grades 9 to 12 invited to attend a 14-day residential program where distinguished experts from the fields of science and performing arts mentored them. In the future, this program will be organized on an annual basis in a more comprehensive manner, reaching out to more students across the country.

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### India report continued

The national-level Gifted Education Project (2010-19) concluded successfully, having developed comprehensive multi-layered age and grade-specific identification processes for children in the 3-15 age group. Groups of identified students completed multiple rounds of a mentoring program focused on mathematical modeling and basic science research. The National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore, and the Kaveri Gifted Education Research Centre, Pune, also run independent gifted education programs. Janan Prabodhini, Pune offers a one-year diploma program on the education of the gifted. There are other programs for high-ability students at the national and regional level. Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS) are exclusive schools under the Ministry of Education for talented students from rural areas. Similarly, Pratibha Vidyalaya are state-run talented schools under the Delhi Government.

In terms of numbers, India has the world's highest population of 10 to 24-year-olds, with 242 million young people. There are 321 million school-going children in India; even if we consider only the top 3-5% of the children as potentially gifted, 150,000 children would be brought under mentoring and nurturance programs. The mandate of the National Education Policy necessitates the need for a comprehensive and inclusive framework with which to plan and implement gifted education provisions. We will bring the education of gifted children under the Right to Education Act to make stakeholders more responsible. We need to create an ecosystem that accepts, supports, and celebrates individual differences.

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## ISRAEL



### "Gifted at Night"

During the COVID-19 lockdown, several enrichment centers for gifted students across the country joined for weekly online webinars. The "Gifted at Night" online webinar consisted of an opening interactive interview, parallel workshops chosen by the students, and a closing conversation with the enrichment center's director which was designed to help the students process the experience and maintain contact between students and faculty members.

The first webinar, titled "Looking into the Eyes of Reality," focused on the coronavirus and offered various workshops related to economics, civil rights, comics, and other COVID-19-relevant subjects. Overall, 630 students participated. Additional webinars saw thousands of gifted students engage in activities on the subjects of "Liberty and Freedom," "What Changed in Space Technology and Its Effects on Life on Earth," "Brain Research," and more.

### Online Pedagogy

While the schools were shuttered due to the lockdown, the programs' teachers required support for online pedagogy, leading to the development of online pedagogy training for teachers and technical support staff. Enrichment center graduates assisted the teachers with the technical issues, enabling the teachers to focus on the education side of remote schooling.

Parents needed assistance as well; the Division of Talented & Gifted Students at the Ministry of Education provided them with the guidelines they needed to be able to provide better support. We invited them to attend an online workshop which featured a lecture by a senior counselor, followed by workshops with the centers' counselors and directors. Some of the workshops continued for several weeks to meet the parents' support needs. For more than two months, our gifted teams honed their skills and expertise and boosted their confidence levels during weekly webinars comprised of opening lectures in Hebrew and Arabic, workshops, and many more activities.

We added a website and two YouTube channels to our toolbox for supporting students and teachers through these trying times. Doing so helped engage active and committed teacher communities as they navigated a new normal that included night meetings consisting of peer learning and the sharing of successful online practices and content.

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### **An Update from the Future Scientists Center - Ascola**

Ascola is the Future Scientists Center's social and professional alumni network. The network aims to share resources, facilitate activities, and engage gifted and talented alumni. The network operates across three domains: (1) by providing personal support; (2) by creating a supportive collective to help alumni advance each other; and (3) by encouraging our alumni to improve their community and society.

#### *Alumni initiatives*

Since the establishment of the Ascola network four years ago, various initiatives have developed. These include mentoring projects in schools around the country and "Crash Courses" – courses provided by talented and gifted graduates for other network graduates, during which they share knowledge and interests. *Quod Vide* is a new project, a network journal that recently published its second issue. The journal aims to enable discourse on science, art, and philosophy. The journal provides a writing platform on which alumni members can create and share said knowledge.

### **The Odyssey Program**

Future Scientists Center's Odyssey Program is an academic program that enables talented and gifted youth to engage in academic studies in the sciences as well as gain hands-on experience in research laboratories. The program emphasizes the development of cognitive, personal, and interpersonal skills and competencies. The four-year program operates in six leading academic institutions across Israel.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, university campuses were closed. The program was forced to change the way it conducts academic studies for its talented and gifted students. Academic courses were moved online, and supportive online pedagogy was provided, creating new ways for teachers and students to teach, learn, and be supported on personal and emotional levels. This shift enabled supporting program partners at the universities to continue working in these troubled times as well. When the lockdown ended but COVID-19 remained a threat, the program moved to a hybrid learning model that integrates face-to-face and online studies. The program continues to offer support classes, academic mentoring by senior program students, and emotional support.

### **National Mentoring Program - Henrietta Szold Institute Update**

In December 2020, the seventh cohort of the National Mentoring program in Israel will come to a close during a virtual conference of students, mentors, and parents. The goal of this national mentoring program is to cultivate future leaders in Israel across various talent areas.

The program matches highly gifted 10th and 11th-grade students with top-rated professionals from universities, research institutes, industries, and the arts on an individual basis. Students work together with their mentors on a project of mutual interest for a period of one year. Follow up studies have shown that the program enables highly gifted students to produce top-rate innovative products in any area they choose, from physics to animation. The program is implemented by the Henrietta Szold Institute in cooperation with the Ministry of Education's Division for Talented and Gifted Students.

The program traditionally relies on personal communication between mentors and students; students come to the mentor's workplace to collaborate on a joint project. Despite two lockdowns, the program's mentors and students continued to work together via online or hybrid learning. The program provided online social and emotional support via Zoom meetings. We are very proud to see program participants completing their projects on time.

*Submitted by Naama Benny (naama.benny@gmail.com)*

## **ITALY**

In Italy, gifted children are still little known and recognized. Despite the presence of many associations that support gifted children and their families, the culture of giftedness and high ability is still not widespread in schools. The associations, which are always on the, plan many activities to disseminate knowledge about gifted education, such as conferences, specific workshops for the gifted, summer camps, teacher training, etc.

In recent years, great steps forward have been taken at the regulatory level. In November 2018, the Ministry of Education formed a technical table of national experts (I am a member of this table) to write guidelines to disseminate knowledge about gifted and talented education in schools and to provide information to teachers on identifying gifted students and modifying their teaching for these students. On April 3, 2019, the Ministry of Education approved ministerial note no. 562 where, for the first time in the history of Italian school regulations,

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gifted children are mentioned and recognized as having Special Education Needs (SEN). The ministerial note represents the great effort made by the parents of gifted children and by the various associations to have gifted children recognized in society and in school, but the inclusion of the gifted in the SENs emphasizes the difficulties and the discomfort that these students have in school. Therefore, gifted children in our country continue to be recognized mainly for the difficulties they experience in the family and at school, while their talents are neglected.

In Italian public schools, there are no special schools, as we think that “including” means uniting all the children in the same class. Each child is a resource and has the right to be included with other peers. In Italy, therefore, in the same class there could be very different children, such as a child with Down’s syndrome, one with dyscalculia, and one who is gifted. We have 40 years of experience with the best teaching methods to include all children with disabilities or learning disabilities in the classroom, but practices for involving gifted children are not widespread. There are still many Italian teachers who have never heard of gifted children and often believe that they are brilliant children who do not need any attention. When teachers do not take gifted children into consideration, they tend to exclude them. So, we wonder about the concept of inclusion: does it also concern gifted children? Or just children with difficulties?

The number of books on gifted children continues to grow in Italy even if they are mainly written by psychologists. These books are often based on the label of giftedness, thus favoring a medical approach rather than a pedagogical approach. Consequently, even in Italian society, both parents and teachers continue to want to investigate and understand the methods of identification, rather than exploring the educational styles and teaching methods that could be adopted to develop the talents and potential of children.

At our universities, we do not have any specific courses in gifted and talented education. Even today, future teachers do not have the opportunity during their university training to study the topic of giftedness; above all, they lack pedagogical knowledge both on gifted children and on the development of talents. So far, the doctoral theses that have been conducted on gifted education within the universities of education are very few (three or four in total). Only one university, in Pavia, has launched a research center on gifted children, and in 2018, a non-state and Catholic university (LUMSA in Rome) started the first Masters program entirely on gifted education, aimed at both psychologists and teachers.

In conclusion, Italy, thanks to the many associations for gifted children, is progressing and offering more and more services for gifted students and their families. It is important to increase research on giftedness at all Italian universities and to build an Italian scientific literature that is currently in short supply. Furthermore, Italian teachers are increasingly interested in gifted children and in understanding how to support them in the classroom and how to adopt innovative teaching methods.

I am proud that my country is opening up more and more to the themes of gifted and talented education.

*Submitted by Martina Brazzolotto (martinabrazzolotto@gmail.com)*

## JAMAICA



The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has greatly destabilized efforts initiated by the Caribbean Centre for Giftedness and Creativity (CCGC) and its goal of reaching and serving many more gifted students in their schools across the island this year.

The CCGC’s plan to assist teachers, parents, and students in adjusting to the new Ministry of Education (MOE) Primary Exit Profile (PEP) examination modality was successfully launched in 2019 among top primary and preparatory schools in Kingston, the capital, and its satellite communities. The CCGC’s PEP-A-STEM Resource Center concept, launched in September 2019, successfully provided expertise and professional development training for gifted and classroom teachers through master teachers in science, mathematics, language arts, and social studies. The PEP-A-STEM Resource Center functions as a mini-learning commons containing a science lab, a computer lab, a writer’s workshop-reading lab, and a small comprehensive library, with equipped display areas for engineering and design, robotics, physics, and mathematics, etc.

CCGC also began expanding its efforts to reach and establish its Gifted Clubs in Schools and PEP-A-STEM Resource Center programmes in the western region of the island. A total of fourteen new primary and preparatory schools signed on to establish these programmes to accommodate gifted and other students in their schools. As plans were coming into place, the COVID pandemic struck! Schools were ordered to close by the Ministry of

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Education (MOE) in March 2020. This crisis created an unstable climate of uncertainty and chaos in our education system, forcing the government and the Ministries of Health and Education to seek alternative solutions for reaching and providing for the thousands of students now quarantined at home. Jamaica was not prepared for this unprecedented occurrence. We did not have the technology resources such as equipment, personnel, platforms, nor teachers trained to adequately handle the new electronic lesson-delivery to students. Amid mass panic, the new PEP examinations were cancelled for 2019-2020, and major secondary-level regional examinations were postponed indefinitely.

Teaching-learning activity was officially transferred online as the government implemented basic mass electronic lesson-delivery training for teachers at all levels of the education system. Jamaica's schools remain closed. The MOE's proposed introduction of a gifted education programme has been put on hold. CCGC has now resumed talks with pilot schools island-wide regarding establishing and/or continuing its Gifted Clubs in Schools and PEP-A-STEM Resource Center programmes. CCGC now offers classes and programmes for gifted students online.

The Deokoro Magnet Educational Foundation (DMEF) continues to provide Educational Diagnostic Assessments (EDA) and psycho-educational assessments for gifted and other students in general. DMEF is also collaborating with Spelling Bee of Canada to launch a Scholar Tourism academic exchange programme for gifted children of Jamaica and Canada.

This programme is well underway in development, and execution will begin in an online format then transition to physical visitations in the respective countries later in the school year as the pandemic threat is lifted.

The CCGC has been appointed Partner-Associate of the World Giftedness Center's "Global Talent Mentoring Programme," a programme for developing talents in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medical sciences (STEMM) from the University of Regensburg, Germany, supported by the UNESCO-affiliated Hamdan Foundation, Dubai. We are also delighted that Jamaica's sole delegate in Jamaica and the Caribbean Region was selected as one of the committee members appointed by the WCGTC to develop its Teacher Education Position Paper.

Submitted by Vivienne V DeOkoro ([videokoro@gmail.com](mailto:videokoro@gmail.com))

## JAPAN



There was a time in Japan when gifted students skipped grades and attended special science schools, but after World War II, a new school system was developed to prepare a standardised course of study for all Japanese schoolchildren (Sumida, 2017). Japan has developed and will continue to develop high-quality, child-centred education, but it may not be sufficient in terms of meeting the needs of a diverse range of children and reflecting their educational capabilities.

In the past decades, the issue of formally educating gifted and talented children has not received much public attention in Japan. On the contrary, the public may feel Japanese public schools provide high-quality education to some extent for these students. However, interest in educating gifted students is rapidly increasing in Japan. This interest may be because of prominent students who are changing the world as teenagers, such as Mr. Souta Fujii, who is making history in the world of professional Shogi (Japanese chess). In addition, the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo, which was postponed due to COVID-19, featured excellent teenagers on the Japanese national team in many events.

On June 30, Dr. Sumida made a proposal presentation at the Central Council for Education of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) on the possibility of providing science education for gifted students in Japan. The committee members made many favourable comments about the presentation, and the outlines for the report announced on August 20, 2020, from the compulsory education stage stated, "those with unique qualities and abilities aiming to be able to access advanced learning opportunities to fully develop their talents."

Even though progress toward providing specialised education for gifted students is happening in Japan at the governmental policy level, the general public and teachers' understanding of gifted children and their educational needs remains quite limited. To raise awareness about the existence of gifted children and the necessity of supporting them, Japanese delegates from the WCGTC, namely Dr. Manabu Sumida and Yukiko Sakai, collaborated on the

### *Japan report continued*

publication of a new book. Yukiko Sakai made research trips to New Zealand in 2018 and Taiwan in 2019 and conducted online research with educators and scholars from Germany, Norway, Sweden, India, Chile, and the United States in 2020. Based on the research, Yukiko Sakai authored a book and Dr. Sumida provided its technical and academic information. The book discusses four main topics: 1) characteristics of gifted children, 2) ways to nurture and support gifted children, 3) the state of gifted education around the world, and 4) possible future directions for educating gifted Japanese children. The title of the book is *Sainou Hamidashikko no Sodatekata (How to Raise and Support Out-of-the-Box Children)*, and it was published by Shufunotomo Co. Ltd. on September 16, 2020.

We are truly grateful for support from the members of the WCGTC, especially Prof. Tracy Riley in New Zealand for organizing interviews with gifted educators and Prof. Ching Chih Kuo for detailed information in Taiwan. Support was also provided by PhD students who attended the pre-conference workshop at the World Conference at Nashville in 2019. Without the WCGTC's support, we could not have achieved this accomplishment.

Although there is no official definition of giftedness in Japan, there are special programs for gifted and talented children provided by informal educational organisations. As a next step, as Japanese delegates we will start collecting information from such organisations and share it with the public via social network platforms to create a new community of people who want to obtain and share information about education for gifted and talented students.

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*Submitted by Manabu Sumida (sumida.manabu.mm@ehime-u.ac.jp) and Yukiko Sakai*

## JORDAN



In July 2020, the Innovation and Entrepreneurship program (IEP) was launched by the Innovation for Creativity Development Association (ICDA) in cooperation with the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center /University of Jordan. This program was designed for talented Jordanian youth from 14- to 19-years-old.

The IEP youth program is one of ICDA's many programs that aim to build and empower innovators in various fields, focusing mainly on the STEM areas. In the first phase, it provides young people with personal, social, and teamwork skills. The second phase provides innovation, entrepreneurship, and technical skills like media, marketing, product design, fabrication, electronics, and control. The final phase helps them participate in fairs and hack-a-thons and implement innovative projects designed to have a direct impact on the community and solve real life problems.

Since 2014, ICDA has organized the Future Scientists Fair in collaboration with the University of Jordan and the Ministry of Education. From the beginning, ICDA has launched the competition throughout the provinces in Jordan by organizing introductory and training sessions that introduce the idea and aims of the competition, how to prepare for the projects, how to choose a pioneer idea, and how to write and present the project at the fair. Students and teams then submit their written scientific reports for the first round of assessment. The students and teams whose projects meet the criteria of the competition are told to proceed in preparing for a science fair and a second round of assessment, this time a practical assessment in which a group of specialists evaluate the projects and students defend them.

After this round, the winners are celebrated in a high-level ceremony. Since 2018, ICDA and LUMA Center-Finland (Science and Technology Network of Finland Universities) have held a cooperation agreement; one of its terms is to conduct the Jordan Level of the International LUMA StarT competition and nominate the best to represent Jordan at the international level. The Jordanian teams won one of the grand prizes in 2018-2019 and in 2020. The winning teams teachers and students then participate in the international symposium and gala in Finland.

*Submitted by Surayya Ayyad (surayyaayyad@hotmail.com)*

# LEBANON



The summer of 2019 was the first time that more than nine researchers from Lebanon presented at the WCGTC conference in Nashville. They were determined to go back and launch different initiatives to develop gifted education in Lebanon at the research level and the practice level. However, Lebanon witnessed a revolution on October 17, 2019, followed by a severe economic collapse, before joining the world trying to survive the COVID-19 pandemic; Each of these circumstances led to minimizing our plans and postponing several initiatives and activities.

At the research level, several articles were published, among them "Overexcitabilities and ADHD in gifted adolescents: empirical evidence" (2020) and "Gender differences in teachers' recognition of overexcitabilities among gifted adolescents: An experimental vignette study of twice-exceptionality (2019) by Dr. Al Hroub and Krayem; and "Investigating Lebanese primary school teachers' perceptions of gifted and highly able Students" by Dr. Antoun. Another study was published investigating gifted students' performance in an inclusive setting by Nidal Jouni. A number of theses and dissertations are now focusing on gifted education and twice-exceptionality; this focus constitutes a turning point that did not exist a few years ago.

On the other hand, with more than four universities now offering courses on gifted education, awareness about the necessity of addressing gifted students is being raised and voices from the schools asking for help from experts are being heard. In-service training programs related to giftedness were organized across schools on the characteristics of the gifted students, the identification process, enrichment activities, and other related subjects. Additionally, networking between schools and universities is more noticeable as more academics have been asked to offer consultancy and training to schools.

However, Lebanon is going through reform on different educational levels and we, as educators and experts in the field, are working to make sure that this reform will better cater to the gifted and will bring deep changes to policies and procedures in a way that will contribute in making the necessary shifts at the country level.

Lebanon still has a lot to do, but its priorities are as follows:

- raise more awareness about the education of gifted students in the media.
- intensify the workshops, seminars, and conferences on the subject.
- engage more teachers and practitioners in advocating for gifted education.
- adapt gifted programs to Lebanese contexts and needs.
- develop identification tools that are culturally relevant to the Lebanese context.
- engage the government and the policy-makers in making decisions to foster gifted education in Lebanon.
- ensure that experts in gifted education contribute efficiently to the reform process taking place now in the country so that gifted students are given their rights in the new curricula and programs.
- increase networking between universities, schools, and organizations to promote gifted education.
- raise the level of expertise by joining more organizations and institutions around the world related to gifted education.

We hope that when the next newsletter is due, some of these plans will have been executed. On another note, we are proud that Lebanon's former delegate Dr. Anies Al Hroub has been elected as a member of the executive committee of the WCGTC, with whom we are collaborating to promote and foster giftedness and gifted education in Lebanon.

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# MEXICO



Field work and attention to giftedness in Mexico experienced several positive advances in 2020 as well as multiple challenges that were brought by the pandemic, such as the need for virtual education for many gifted but hyperactive students. In positive news, Mexican students and researchers on giftedness from Mexico participated as speakers at a conference on giftedness in California last February; a Mexican education professor working with gifted students was recognized with the 2020 Harvard University Derek Bok Award for outstanding public service activities, an achievement that produced media and academic recognition for a project that sought to make gifted

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education a recognized field in Mexico as part of social advancement; and the first class of gifted children attending the newest premises of CEDAT graduated from high school and were accepted into college at a younger age than expected.

First, a group of researchers and students from Mexico was invited to participate in the 58<sup>th</sup> Annual California Association for the Gifted Conference in Palm Springs from February 26-28. The topics of their presentations consisted mainly of the results of the Intellectual Enhancement Program of Mexico City and the multiple psycho-educative foundations for differentiated gifted schools. The conference brought more than 300 teachers and school administrators to California.

Next, in May 2020, Harvard University announced that it was awarding the Derek Bok Award for Public Service to Dr. Andrew Almazán in recognition of his academic and social impact. This award sought to underline the relevance of the work done to shape federal laws in Mexico between 2014 and 2019 and the wider social impact achieved for a relevant community need — in this case, a focus on gifted students. This prize served as encouragement for continuing work on special needs schooling.

Finally, in summer 2020, the first class of 40 gifted students receiving classes at the new premises of a specialized center of the Mexican Alliance for Giftedness, CEDAT Mexico City, finished their high school studies. Their average age was 16 years old, two years younger than the national average age of entry to college.

This year required considerable transformations in the instruction and delivery of gifted programs nationwide as the COVID-19 pandemic produced a shutdown of schools. As a result, the CEDAT-online program was created in late March 2020. This program, which sought to maintain differentiated classes through a distance-basis education, caters now to 400 students each week from the multiple regions in Mexico that have not been able to return to in-person classes. The potential of this program is considerable; as the pandemic resolves over the next months, the online system will leave a considerable infrastructure for further virtual education for gifted students that may reach those who do not live close to the current schools for the talented. It could become a new solution for serving gifted children whose geographical distance makes access to differentiated education difficult.

Also due to the pandemic, the Fifth International Mexico Conference on Giftedness, which usually hosts more than 850 participants, had to be postponed until May 2021 to safely carry out all the planned events at full capacity. Nevertheless, the Community of Gifted in Mexico this year marked the landmark anniversary of A Ten-Year Celebration of Excellence with multiple virtual and small-meeting events.

In conclusion, 2020 celebrated a decade of continuous work on full-time academic programs for the gifted as well as international academic recognition. The pandemic also brought new, unexpected challenges in serving gifted students whose special educational needs were previously met in person.

*Submitted by Andrew Almazán Anaya (almazananaya@gmail.com), Javier Esquivel, Araceli Robles, and Zayda Acevo Zepeda*

## NEW ZEALAND



In Aotearoa New Zealand, we send our aroha (love) and support to all those in the worldwide gifted community as we all continue to negotiate our way through the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the world changed, those of us at the bottom appreciated the opportunity to attend many global conferences online. This shift meant that the wealth of international conferences and webinars had more of a following from our New Zealand educators than they normally would have.

NZAGC moved its conference online for 2020 and has recordings of the conference available to purchase at <https://potential-to-performance.teachable.com/p/gifted-wellbeing>. Alongside the virtual conference, NZAGC has launched a series of online modules (<https://potential-to-performance.teachable.com/p/nzagc-online-modules>) that are available to its members. These modules are given by NZ experts and are designed to support our gifted students, their whānau (families), and their educators.

Gifted Aotearoa (<https://www.giftedaotearoa.nz/>) has reached the 800 member mark. It is a network for teachers by teachers. There are face-to-face and online opportunities covering a wealth of contexts including, inclusion, transitions, Classroom Challenge Centres, differentiation, and culturally responsive environments.

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The Massey University Specialist Teacher programme ([https://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learning/programme-course/programme.cfm?prog\\_id=93484](https://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learning/programme-course/programme.cfm?prog_id=93484)) has included a Gifted Education endorsement for 2021. This is the first time our government has allocated specialist scholarship awards to gifted education, and five educators will begin their journey in 2021.

Our Ministry of Education (MoE) is continuing with two initiatives aimed specifically at gifted students. It is offering a small number of awards to exceptionally able students to fund individual projects relevant to the further development of their particular talents. Students are able to apply for these awards using a written or video submission (<https://gifted.tki.org.nz/further-support/awards/>).

Eight projects are underway through the Events and Opportunities for Gifted Students, including a programme provided through Otago University's Marine Science Laboratory, a project involving the development of a complex cooperative game for gifted students, and a programme undertaken by the Nga Potiki iwi (tribe) jointly with REACH Education to identify and teach gifted Māori students in ways that recognise traditional cultural parameters.

The Ministry is also continuing with periodically organised expert panels intended to help it clarify the needs of gifted students and the most appropriate methods of identification and provision within the New Zealand context. This undertaking links to the separate establishment last year of the Learning Support Coordinator role that had its first tranche released in 2020.

REACH Education (<https://www.giftedreach.org.nz/>) is about to enter the 16<sup>th</sup> year of delivery of its Certificate of Effective Practice in Gifted Education.

Manaaki whenua, Manaaki tangata, Haere whakamua — (*Care for the land, Care for the people, Go forward*)

Submitted by Brooke Trenwith ([brooketrenwith@xtra.co.nz](mailto:brooketrenwith@xtra.co.nz)) and Deborah Walker

## PARAGUAY



### Laws and Provisions

Before the pandemic hit, we were lobbying for a law that would mandate services for gifted students as well as clarify access to those services. We have been collaborating with the General Direction for Inclusive Education at the Ministry of Education and Sciences, which is the entity responsible for provisions for gifted students, as well as with the Paraguayan Foundation for High Ability (FUPAC – Fundación Paraguaya de Altas Capacidades), an association of families with gifted children, to expand assessments and school services.

With other like-minded professionals, we founded the Network for Professionals in High Ability – Paraguay (Red de Profesionales en Altas Capacidades – REDPAC Paraguay), which I lead. Founding members include the Directors of OMAPA, a national Math Olympics program which serves as a talent Search offering advanced services to detected talents; a high school teacher who started the first enrichment program for gifted students at a public school; a program coordinator in education; a junior researcher from my lab; and me.

### K-12

The first program to support gifted students started in 2017 at the Santa Elena School, a private K-12 school in the capital of Paraguay. Its Program for Support of High Ability Students (Programa de Apoyo a Altas Capacidades) aligns with best practices from the newest findings in the field; instead of cutoff scores to enter the program, we use local school norms and focus on student needs for advanced academics. As such, we prepare individualized plans for students according to their needs (as opposed to single offerings such as pull-out classes), including specialized internships in research labs, advanced opportunities, curriculum compacting, and course credit for advanced work from external sources. Differentiation and enrichment are offered school wide. We advocated for acceleration with the Ministry of Education but did not succeed — yet. With the pandemic and online learning, students thrived: curriculum compacting became simpler, and they turned to MOOCs for advanced courses.

We also created an alliance with a homeschoolers group in Paraguay to support families for whom this is the optimal mode of education, and to advocate for homeschooling as a valid alternative.

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### **Trainings**

In-person trainings for private and public schools on supporting gifted students happened before the pandemic, as well as one-on-one professional support for gifted students. These activities went online after the pandemic, with two large trainings.

For the first training, REDPAC teamed up with the COVID-19 Mental Health Team at the National Council for Science and Technology to provide a three-hour series of webinars on an introduction to high ability, talent development, emotional aspects, alternative pathways, and lived experiences. Families and teachers participated with great success. The second training was through the Ministry of Education and was for teachers in public schools, providing an introduction to high ability and modifications to implement immediately in their classrooms. (See webinar video in Spanish at <https://www.facebook.com/saludmentalcovid19paraguay/videos/858403768022057>)

### **University**

Through an Erasmus+ KA-107 grant for staff mobility, together with the University of Malaga, Spain, I visited Malaga for the second time to learn from its large enrichment and mentoring program GuíaMe-AC-UMA, in which gifted secondary students participate in university workshops. Dr. Serafina Castro, professor of psychology at UMA, was planning her visit to Paraguay to develop a course on Introduction to Giftedness at my university – then COVID came along, and plans moved online.

At the Universidad Comunera, I was invited as a guest professor to teach the first university module on high ability students, at a postgraduate course for higher education professionals. The second edition of the postgraduate diploma is scheduled to start soon.

### **Next Steps**

Priority #1: Continue advocating for academic acceleration. Continue advocacy for gifted students and lawful provisions, so that all gifted individuals can access the education they need to reach their potential.

*Submitted by Alexandra Vuyk ([alexandra.vuyk@uc.edu.py](mailto:alexandra.vuyk@uc.edu.py))*

## **PERU**



As part of our regular work to promote the development of children with high capacities, two presentations were given by prominent former Ministers of Education on Thursday, August 13, 2020. Dr. Carlos Malpica Faustor presented on “Los Peruanos: We Are the Greatest Wealth of Peru” and Dr. Idel Vexler spoke on “Inclusive Education for Students with High Potential and Specific Talents.”

On June 29, 2020, the National Association for the Development of Intelligence, Creativity, and Talent (ANDESICREAT-PERU) held elections for the renewal of its National Board of Directors for 2020-2024. President Dr. Manuel Rodríguez Rodríguez, Director Secretary General Mr. Cesar Pajares Garcés, and other prominent members were chosen to continue in their positions. In addition, its new strategic plan for 2020-2030 was unanimously approved; this plan comprises a rich programme of projects, activities, and actions within the framework of the celebrations for the 200 year anniversary of the foundation of our republic, entitled “Challenges of Talent Towards the Bicentennial of the Independence of Peru 2021.”

In coordination with the College of Teachers, ANDESICREAT, and other institutions, the following academic activities were carried out:

On July 9, we participated in the conference cycle organized by the Professional College of Teachers of Peru (CPPe.) Lambayeque Region Subsidiary, with the conference “Talent Development in a School Enrichment Program.”

On July 11, 2020, we held an international conference entitled “Challenges and Challenges of Talent Heading to the Bicentennial” with the participation of Dr. Joseph Renzulli of U.S.A., Dr. Yolanda Benito Mate of Spain.

On August 14, 2020, Dr. Jorge Jaime Cárdenas, member of the National Council of Education, gave a presentation called “The Teaching Professional Development for the Care of Talented Children,” and Dr. Manuel Rodríguez Rodríguez, gave a talk on “ANDESICREAT’s Role in the Education of Children with High Potential and Talents” aimed at teachers, psychologists and parents.

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On October 15, 2020, an international conference was held where Dr. Rosina Mena Gallagher, PhD, NCSP-certified psychologist and educational consultant in multilingual services, U.S.A., spoke on "Let's Support the Twice Exceptional Student," and Bertha Figueroa Chaves, clinical and health psychologist and alumna of PAENFTS and Colegio Saco Oliveros, presented on "Creativity and Talent: Enhancing the Skills of Talented Children."

October 16, 2020, a conference was held with the participation of Dr. Modesto Montoya Zavaleta, doctor of nuclear physics and principal professor of sciences at the National University of Engineering, who spoke on "Perception of the Scientific Vocation in Talented Children." In addition, Kabir Pajares Garcés, a writer and lecturer for 17 years and alumnus of PAENFTS and the Colegio Saco Oliveros, gave a presentation on "Planet Heart: Entrepreneurial Leaders and Talents for the Future of Humanity."

We held a national literary competition designed to stimulate intelligence, creativity and talent. The competition, "The Bicentennial of the Creation of the Flag of Peru," celebrated Peru's 200th birthday on October 21, 2020, by convening students from public and private schools at the national level with the sponsorship of the Ministry of Defense and other organizations. The prize, an important award, was given in the Plaza de la Bandera by the head of the Joint Command of the Peruvian Armed Forces. The event itself was an historical act, and it promoted the vocation of historical research and encouraged the birth of future leaders of Peru.

We are currently consolidating agreements with the College of Teachers of Peru Filial Region Lambayeque for the creation and implementation of an enrichment program for high capacity and talented children to detect, evaluate, diagnose, and care for children possessing high capacities in the regular schools in our country.

All these efforts have been promoted in partnership with different individuals and organizations in the public sector, civil society, and private enterprise, as we seek to consolidate the creation of a network of enrichment centers at the national level so that each of the 25 regions will have a center for the timely detection, evaluation, and care of children with high potential, talents, and high capacities.

*Submitted by Manuel Rodriguez Rodriguez (marrodd@yahoo.com)*

## SLOVENIA



There are two main aspects of gifted education in Slovenia in 2020 to discuss. The first is the still-unsolved problem of conceptual, organisational, and systemic improvement of gifted education in the formal national education system (i.e., a national strategy for gifted education). Currently, the education system in Slovenia is predominantly public, and gifted education is integrated into it. As part of an inclusive approach, schools offer to gifted students partly adapted teaching through individualised learning plans and a variety of extracurricular and enrichment activities in different fields, from the arts to science. Gifted students also have the opportunity to develop their talents outside school by participating in sports, arts, and other activities organised by clubs, NGOs, and cultural institutions. Gifted students who are enrolled in secondary education or university can apply for scholarships for gifted students. They can also participate in numerous academic, art, and sport competitions.

In recent years, however, it has become clear that the current system, despite its strengths, such as the national guidelines for identifying and teaching gifted students, suffers from some weaknesses. For example, there are some problems with the identification procedure, the competencies of teachers, financial support, evidence-based practice, gifted children in pre-school, and overall transparency of the established system, and there is a complete lack of a national strategy of gifted education (i.e., vision). This strategy was expected in past years to help overcome the existing gaps and introduce social justice that would make gifted education both high quality and equally accessible to students from different parts of the country (for details, see the national reports 2017/19).

The second aspect of gifted education in Slovenia in 2020 to discuss is the COVID-19 pandemic that practically halted activities with gifted students in schools. Overall, this development was not surprising, as the schools were faced with an exceptional situation in which they moved lessons from the schools to the students' homes. From the reports presented at the meeting of ETSN Talent Points related to the Centre for Research and Promotion of Giftedness at the Faculty of Education University of Ljubljana (CRSN) in September 2020, it was possible to conclude that only one fifth of all institutions, from pre-schools to NGOs, were implementing some ideas on how to keep these activities during distance learning. For example, the upper high school, Prva gimnazija Maribor, kept all artistic activities for gifted students online; as the pandemic affected the last part of the school year during which the activities ended, concerts and exhibitions were organised in this way. The other upper high school, Gimnazija Ledina Ljubljana, was able to stay in touch with gifted students online, helping them to complete their

*Slovenia report continued on next page*

research projects and write reports. One of the NGOs, Zavod 404, put its STEM projects online for primary school students, and after the epidemic, the students finished their projects together in their laboratories.

In contrast, the NGO Zveza za tehnično kulturo Slovenije, the main organiser of academic contests for children and youth in Slovenia, could not organise the final competitions online at the highest national level, but they could organise summer camps for gifted students. During the summer, however, the institutions took time to review the situation with COVID -19 and planned more systematic activities on its own (i.e., without any support from authorities) for the next school year, which started on September 1. For example, one of the pre-school institutions, Vrtec Rogaška Slatina, prepared an in-service course in interpersonal intelligence for its teachers to make them more competent in helping children with their social and emotional development and in teaching them healthy ways of communicating in everyday situations. One of the upper high schools, Gimnazija Bežigrad Ljubljana, launched 78 activities for gifted students in September and reported that its teacher mentors are highly motivated to carry out as many activities as possible live or, if necessary, online. Finally, another NGO, e-Hiša, hiša poskusov Nova Gorica, stopped its activities in STEM for students during epidemic, but since summer it has been developing a new network with local authorities and companies, thereby becoming even stronger and with new provisions for gifted students.

To conclude, the exceptional situation of the COVID-19 epidemic showed clearly how important gifted education is for the country. For example, it was possible to observe that gifted students were not once mentioned by national authorities in their guidelines during the epidemic. However, schools and other institutions tried on their own to cope with the situation and to provide gifted students activities beneficial for their development. We could just imagine how strong their influence would be if they were guided by a national education policy in which gifted children and youth were involved.

*Submitted by Mojca Juriševič (mojca.jurisevic@pef.uni-lj.si)*

## SPAIN



In Spain, our educational administrations, such as the official colleges of psychology, education, medicine, etc., as part of enforcing their code of ethics, must guarantee the correct use of techniques, instruments, and resources to ensure that all students are educated according to their needs, hence the importance of training for the various Ministries of Education and Educational Administrations such as the training course for the provinces of Cáceres and Badajoz with speakers Yolanda Benito and Juan A. Alonso of the Huerta del Rey Centre. This course, titled "Intellectual giftedness and high intellectual abilities. Double exceptionality. Evaluation and diagnosis. Proposals for educational intervention" was hosted by the Department of Education, from January 28 - 30 and March 2, 2020, respectively. In total, we have conducted almost 50 training courses for provincial delegations across Spain.

On February 21, Dr. Yolanda Benito participated in the International Symposium on High Abilities, held in Granada, Spain, and organized by the Compañía de María School. Together with Professor C. Perlet, from the University of Rostock, Germany, she discussed the works of Franz J. Mönks and Kurt A. Hellers, among others.

Dr. Mönks, who worked as a professor at the Radboud University of Nijmegen and as the director of the Center for the Study of Giftedness of the university, was Dr. Benito's thesis director. It was with great sorrow that we received the news that Dr. Mönks had passed away on March 10 of this year. We would like to extend our most sincere condolences to his family and loved ones.

On July 11, both Dr. Benito and Dr. Alonso were invited by Manuel Rodríguez, on behalf of the board of directors of the National Association for the Development of Intelligence, Creativity and Talent (ANDESICREAT), to participate with Manuel Rodríguez and Joseph Renzulli at the International Conference "Retos y Desafíos del Talento Rumbo al Bicentenario del Perú 2021."

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, for the past five months the Huerta del Rey Center has considered it appropriate to incorporate within the specific program MEPS (Psychopedagogical and Social Enrichment Model) a series of recommendations and activities for the benefit of children and young people in particular and the family in general. These recommendations have been taken from organizations and entities and from entities to which the Huerta del Rey Center belongs.

*Spain report continued on next page*

The resources provided for homeschooling in this exceptional situation have been as follows:

1. The Applied Psychology Service of the UNED (National University of Distance Education) has generated a guide for psychologically healthy coping with the quarantine and /or isolation related to the crisis caused by COVID-19. The objective is to promote and apply adaptive strategies in this exceptional situation and to overcome difficulties while maintaining psychological balance.
2. From the Madrid Official College of Psychologists, Family Conversations.  
The pandemic is an occasion to talk to and reason with children, and to talk to and reason with adolescents differently than when they were children. During this crisis families are spending more time caring for their children, and that time can generate conversations and gatherings that in times of busy schedules cannot be held or are postponed. Children need to see that the adults in their lives are available.

Children and adolescents need their family, need to feel loved, and need to identify with adults and have clear rules that help create a good family environment. Establish norms and limits, agree with them, and agree on the consequences of non-compliance.

Additionally, in Catalonia, the Working Group on High Intellectual Abilities (GTAC) of the Official College of Psychology of Catalonia made a great effort to achieve the following goals:

1. To make official the title of expert in education/psychology of children with high abilities.
2. Send to all schools in Catalonia an information booklet and training documents for teachers.
3. Carry out teacher training courses sponsored together by the Department of Education of the Generalitat de Catalunya and GTAC.
4. Initiate dissemination through social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram) of information about the myths and stereotypes that society still has of children with high abilities.
5. Study and disseminate in schools the results of a case study on how high ability children have experienced confinement due to the pandemic, and provide resources for parents and teachers on how to treat them socially and emotionally.
6. Prepare the next national conference that will take place when pandemic conditions allow.

Submitted by Juan Antonio Alonso ([c\\_h\\_rey@cop.es](mailto:c_h_rey@cop.es)) and Leopold Carreras-Truñó

## SWEDEN



In Sweden, our work has continued in developing contacts with partners outside of the country. For example, the establishment of a Nordic network for giftedness research, mentioned in the previous newsletter report, is still proceeding. It includes partners from Norway, Denmark, Iceland, and Finland. Our next meeting will be held in November when we will discuss the possibility of joint research projects, among other ideas.

Another example of collaboration is of that between Uppsala University and Groningen University in Holland. In November, Alexander Minnaert, professor of education and educational psychology, gave a guest lecture entitled "Gifted and twice-exceptional students: Blessed with a gift, but also with a psycho-educational challenge." Participants from a number of Swedish universities, networks, and professions signed up for the presentation, indicating both that there is an interest in giftedness inside as well as outside of the classroom and that universities play an important role as a driving force in providing opportunities for people to discuss and analyse issues related to giftedness.

Dr Minnaert's presentation not only brought attention to issues surrounding 2e but also highlighted some of the complexities in the relationship between gifted education and special education. Since the acceptance of The Salamanca Declaration (UNESCO 1994), schools in Sweden have more consciously worked on the concept of inclusion. This effort can be found in attempts to expand accessibility and the acceptance of students from a variety of social and ethnic backgrounds into further and higher education. In terms of teachers' abilities to work with a wide range of students, changes have been made to ensure teachers expand their knowledge and support of students with dyslexia and ADHD and those on the autism spectrum. However, these changes mean that the inclusion policy in Sweden has come to be focused on organisational matters in order to take care of students who fall outside the reach of common teaching practices, strongly linking the work to special education. One such example is how issues to do with inclusion in the national teacher training programs are addressed only

*Sweden report continued on next page*

in courses in special education, rather than courses in leadership or more general aspects of teaching practices (Miškolci, Magnússon & Nilholm 2020). As a consequence, to become covered by inclusion policy, students first have to qualify as in need of special education. This identification, in turn, can be seen as generating exclusion.

Recently, these aspects of giftedness and inclusion have been explored further in an article by Magnússon and Sims at Uppsala University (under review). The analysis is based on a policy document from the Swedish National Agency of Education (2015) meant to be used as support for in-service developmental projects in schools. The document is the only one published by the authority where giftedness is mentioned. In focusing on the description of gifted students, positive aspects are addressed, such as their being creative, fast learners, and possessing a strong ability to reason. However, the policy document is dominated by the description of the students as being at risk, in need of care, and as being deviant or alienated. It reproduces a dichotomy between “normal” and “different” students where giftedness becomes equated to the latter. In turn, this dichotomy leads to a perspective of the gifted student as a problem in schooling, rather than a resource or someone who can develop to a great extent.

The conclusion is that the gifted student remains invisible in policy since he or she is either entirely absent, becomes hidden among more general questions surrounding special needs and or becomes a subject of the discourse of diagnosis and treatment. In addition, giftedness illustrates central tensions within inclusion as policy – in particular as regards “who” is the target of inclusion and “how” inclusion is to be organised. It is clear that a more coherent policy-vision of inclusion is needed in order to address the needs of *all* students, without first having to be defined as an object for special education.

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Submitted by Caroline Sims ([caroline.sims@edu.uu.se](mailto:caroline.sims@edu.uu.se))

## TAIWAN



In order to help twice-exceptional students achieve their fullest potential, a program to strengthen discovering and nurturing talents in twice-exceptional students was created by the K-12 Education Administration, Ministry of Education, R.O.C. (Taiwan). The program focuses on strengthening, discovering, and “counseling, with the following goals: (1) To develop an identification and placement model for twice-exceptional students to increase the rate at which these students are identified, (2) To provide training and professional development opportunities for special education teachers and related services personnel to support the learning needs of twice-exceptional students, and (3) To develop a support system for twice-exceptional students so they can function effectively.

According to the statistics acquired from the Ministry of Education’s Special Education Transmit Net, there were 376 students identified as twice-exceptional at the 1-12 grade levels in 2019. In a sample of 100 gifted and talented students, 1.34% of the population was identified as twice-exceptional. In a sample of 100 students with disabilities, however, only 0.4% of the population was identified as twice-exceptional. The identification rate need to increase, and twice-exceptional students need more attention.

Professor Ching-Chih Kuo from the Department of Special Education, National Taiwan Normal University (NTNU), has been entrusted by the K-12 EA, MOE in 2020 to develop a project in 2020 to create a model to discover and identify students, to investigate the population of twice-exceptional students in Taiwan, and to develop a counseling model and subsidy disciplines for better services.

During this yearlong project, expert advisory panel meetings were held three times, in May, June, and July. The panel was composed of experts and professionals highly respected in the fields of gifted education and special

Taiwan report continued on next page

education. They provided expert advice on developing the identification model to ensure its appropriateness and feasibility. They also provided expert advice on the questionnaire survey design.

The online survey started in October. We first investigated the number of potentially twice-exceptional students in each city and county as well as the needs the schools have for identifying and nurturing twice-exceptional students. We hope to identify more twice-exceptional students and offer appropriate educational services to better support their learning needs.

In addition to the identification model and online survey, three sessions of the seminars were held to raise awareness and enhance understanding of twice-exceptional students and how these factors relate to developing the students' superior ability. The seminars were held separately in northern, central, and southern Taiwan. Positive feedback was received that motivated and encouraged us to keep going.

We are moving toward the development of a counseling support system for twice-exceptional students. Based on Susan Baum's Talent Development Model for Twice Exceptional Students (2009), differentiated instruction through small group or enrichment programs, mentoring programs, or independent instruction is a viable option to meet the needs of twice-exceptional students and help them unlock their talent and fulfill their potential. The K-12 EA, MOE will provide schools with related financial aid for identification, teaching, and counseling services which will ensure that schools are able to continue to help twice-exceptional individuals.

Currently, Taiwan takes this issue seriously. The Special Education Center at National Taiwan Normal University just hosted the 2020 International Conference on Special Education with the theme of "Inclusive Education and Career Development in the Asia-Pacific Region" on November 2-4, 2020, in Taipei. Both Professor Pamela Heaton from the University of London, UK, and Professor Susan Baum from Bridges Academy, USA, were invited to present the first two keynote speeches. They looked at opportunities and trends underlying the field of education of twice-exceptional learners.

*Submitted by Ching-Chih Kuo (kaykuo@ntnu.edu.tw)*

## UNITED KINGDOM



Like most countries, because of the pandemic, organisations in the United Kingdom working in the field of gifted and talented support have had to think creatively about how they deliver services to children and young people, parents and caregivers, and schools.

As a result, many of the services delivered face to face have moved online and new services have been developed to fill the void. These have included hosting webinars, training courses, and online meetings on key subjects; funding children and young people to enable them to participate in activities online; and providing online experiences directly to children and young people.

In addition, organisations have taken the opportunity to develop strategies to take them into the future - conducting research, writing new websites, and meeting online to discuss new initiatives and approaches. Some organisations, such as nasen ([www.nasen.org.uk](http://www.nasen.org.uk)) and the Scottish Network for Able Pupils - SNAP (<https://www.gla.ac.uk/research/az/ablepupils/>), have made or are making membership free. This decision is as a result, at least in part, of a recognition of financial difficulties in the economy.

One of the major areas of joint work for some of the specialist organisations in the UK has been around Dual and Multiple Exceptionality (DME or 2e in some countries), and this work has continued during lockdown.

In May, Professor Adam Boddison of nasen and Denise Yates of The Potential Trust published the school handbook about Dual and Multiple Exceptionality <https://www.routledge.com/The-School-Handbook-for-Dual-and-Multiple-Exceptionality-High-Learning/Yates-Boddison/p/book/9780367369583>. This book explores the UK context for DME, looking at such issues as why it is important to support DME in the first place, a short history of recent support for gifted and talented education, how supporting DME pupils can be incorporated into policy and practice in school, and the importance of parents and caregivers and how they can play a more equal part in the support needed for a child with DME in school. An important part of the book is a range of stories about children and young people with DME, told from their beginning to the stage they were when the book was written. These accounts give a powerful reminder to all of us that these children

*United Kingdom report continued on next page*

are individuals with a range of characteristics and needs. Another book aimed at parents and caregivers is planned for 2021 and is currently being written with Potential Plus UK ( <https://www.potentialplusuk.org> ).

The Potential Trust, along with others, has been exploring how other professionals can be encouraged to understand and support DME. Training for occupational therapists took place in 2019, and this year work began to encourage professionals in “alternative provision” in the community and also those in early years’ settings (pre-school) to recognise and support children and young people with DME in their settings as well as to think about their needs in different ways. The Potential Trust was also hoping to hold another European conference but, because of restrictions on travel, this plan has had to be postponed for the time being.

The gifted and talented network does not involve only non-profit organisations. Nisai Education (<http://nisaieducation.com/> ) is a private company that has embraced online and other learning for children and young people who do not fit easily into schools or current approaches to education (including those with DME or who have gifts or talents).

In 2019/20, Nisai Education established The Nisai Education Trust. This not-for-profit subsidiary exists to answer emerging questions across the globe around maximising the potential of learning in a post-industrial education system. It connects research and practice so that innovation can take place and proofs of concept can be worked through in partnership with others around the globe.

The Nisai Education Trust has a clear focus on maximising the potential of those who are unable to access the current system, focusing on non-traditional education models and looking for ways to reach individual learners. Its members think it is important to support young people in exceptional circumstances when traditional education is unable to meet their needs and where a non-traditional opportunity will make a real difference. This work includes looking at areas where support for the young person would help to improve their education experience, such as housing and online learning.

This report provides a brief snapshot of things happening in the UK around gifted and talented issues. What it shows is that most of us have used the lockdown in productive ways which, we hope, will strengthen all our work in this area in the future. As venues slowly begin to open (within strict health and safety guidelines), those organisations supporting all aspects of gifted and talented issues (which have formed the Above and Beyond Group) hope that a face-to-face meeting will be possible to discuss where we go next.

*Submitted by Denise Yates (denise.yates2@btinternet.com)*

## USA



### Javits Directors Meet in October to Participate in a Plenary Session

The Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Program is a federal program in the U.S. Department of Education. The focus of the program is to support competitive research and demonstration projects, particularly projects that serve underrepresented groups of talented students. It is the only federal program in the U.S. devoted solely to gifted education.

On October 29, the Javits Team Leader at the U. S. Department of Education, Ms. Mildred (Jeanette) Horner-Smith, convened project principle investigators, co-principle investigators, and their project teams for a meeting. The agenda included a special plenary session featuring project leaders who shared lessons learned from implementing school-based projects during a pandemic. The speakers included Kiriko Takahashi from the University of Hawaii, Del Siegle from the University of Connecticut, and Jane Snyder from Greenville County Schools. Across the projects, directors reported they pivoted to online professional learning, developed strategies for online data collection in face-to-face and online classrooms, and explored creative ways to deliver both teacher professional learning and student instruction just in time.

*USA report continued on next page*

## US Gifted Education is Committed to Racial Equity

Gifted education organizations around the US have responded to violence against Black Americans with statements of solidarity. A majority of US state and national organizations have posted their statements on their websites, making commitments to improve practice within their own organization and also to redouble their efforts to close the Excellence Gap. The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC), the largest US organization serving professionals in gifted education, is providing a model to others on how to move from a statement of support to concerted action. After publishing Championing Equity and Supporting Social Justice for Black Students in Gifted Education: An Expanded Vision for NAGC, the Board of Directors engaged in several activities to ensure that their words have lasting impact. Included among their efforts are 1) a comprehensive review of organization policies to remove unintentional barriers to involvement and to insert intentional supports to improve diversity of perspective and participation across the organization, and 2) a series of town hall meetings with different constituent groups to discuss the implications of the statement, to hear feedback from membership, and to gather ideas from one and all as to how to proceed.

## Annual National Association for Gifted Children Convention: Reimagined for 2020

NAGC hosted the 67<sup>th</sup> annual convention as a “reimagined” and virtual event—and a very successful professional development and networking opportunity with almost 4,300 participating. Attendees came from 48 U.S. states and the District of Columbia, as well as 13 additional countries, and benefited from almost 300 presentations. The first fully virtual convention featured many of the same elements as in-person conventions, including educational pre-conference workshops, keynote presentations, choices of invited and concurrent sessions, posters, and NAGC Network and Special Interest Group (SIG) meetings. The reimagined convention also included new ways of participating in events, as well as new opportunities: an expanded timeline, from four to six days for the convention; virtual lounges in which to drop in and visit with others; table talks, sponsored by Networks; and access to all of the concurrent sessions and posters, available on demand through the end of May 2021.

Having access to presentations for six months is an extraordinary benefit to busy teachers, counselors, administrators, families, and university faculty who advocate for gifted and talented learners. For keynote and special sessions, participants could type in questions during the session that presenters addressed, and they could discuss content with each other using a chat feature provided by the platform. Presenters for concurrent sessions took advantage of a platform provided by NAGC to capture their sessions, complete with PowerPoints, comments, and, often, handouts. Even poster sessions had recordings to amplify their content. While participants attending an in-person convention must choose among an array of interesting sessions, participants at our virtual conference now have access to all the sessions!

The concurrent sessions this year are identified as “on demand,” and the majority of these feature topics selected through a blind review process conducted by volunteers for each Network. These sessions provide a wide variety of topics, from encouraging artistic expression and critical and creative thinking to “speed geeking” and virtual reality; from cultivating psychosocial skills among advanced learners to building better educator capacity to recognize and develop talents; from tips for parents to successful advocacy at local, state, and national levels. All categories of presentations featured sessions that highlighted the critical importance of equity in gifted programming and the need to identify and serve underrepresented populations of gifted children in the United States as well as enhance best practices for talent development for all children.

Submitted by Laurie Croft ([laurie-croft@uiowa.edu](mailto:laurie-croft@uiowa.edu)), Shelagh Gallagher, and Ann Robinson

**Upcoming  
Events ?**

**Share your upcoming events  
on our calendar. Submit at  
[world-gifted.org/calendar](https://world-gifted.org/calendar).**



# WORLD COUNCIL FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED CHILDREN

## **World Gifted**

*World Gifted* newsletter is the bulletin of the World Council. It contains the latest news and information concerning the organization, its membership, and the international gifted education community.

We invite all members to contribute and report on anything that would be of interest to other members, such as events and initiatives, news about regional organizations, profiles of individual members, or announcements.

Submissions should include the name of the author, title, and country of residence. Send contributions for consideration to: Tyler Clark, Editor, at [headquarters@world-gifted.org](mailto:headquarters@world-gifted.org). Please give us enough lead time if the submission concerns an upcoming event.

## **Gifted and Talented International**

*Gifted and Talented International (GTI)* is the official journal of the World Council. *GTI* is refereed by an editorial review board of leading international educators of the gifted. It is published twice a year.

The purpose of the journal is to share current theory, research, and practice in gifted education with its audience of international educators, scholars, researchers, and parents. Articles for the journal are welcome and may be submitted at any time.

Prospective authors are requested to submit inquiries and manuscripts to:  
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