# Teaching Gifted Students: A Challenge or a Gift?

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He was born in 1879 in Germany. He was a mediocre student who very often looked bored and uninterested at school. He had not finished secondary school when he failed an examination that would have allowed him to study for a diploma as an electrical engineer, which forced him to accept a low level and totally uninteresting government job. He wrote about himself:

"If I were to have the good fortune to pass my examinations, I would go to Zurich. I would stay there for four years in order to study mathematics and physics. I imagine myself becoming a teacher in those branches of the natural sciences, choosing the theoretical part of them. Here are the reasons which lead me to this plan. Above all, it is my disposition for abstract and mathematical thought, and my lack of imagination and practical ability."

Who is this man?

Albert Einstein
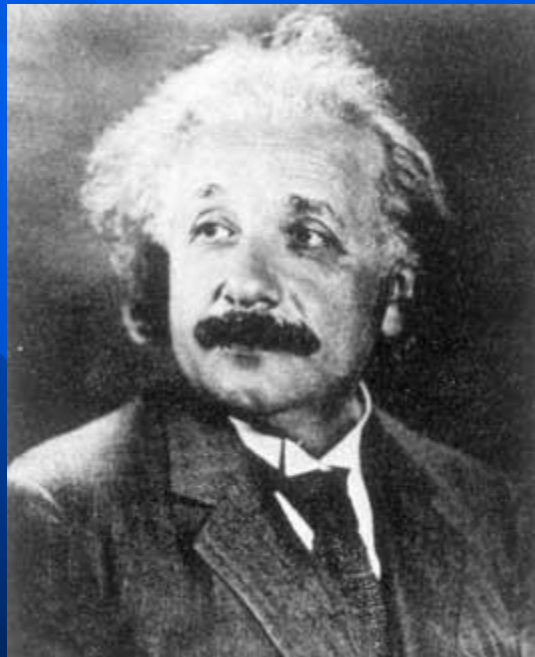
Who is he?

He was born in 1847 in Milan. When he entered school, his teachers considered him to be dreary and an uninteresting student. Due to hearing problems, it was difficult for him to follow the lessons which eventually lead to poor school attendance and drop-out. However, these impediments did not dissuade him from extending self-efforts to become the greatest inventor of his time.
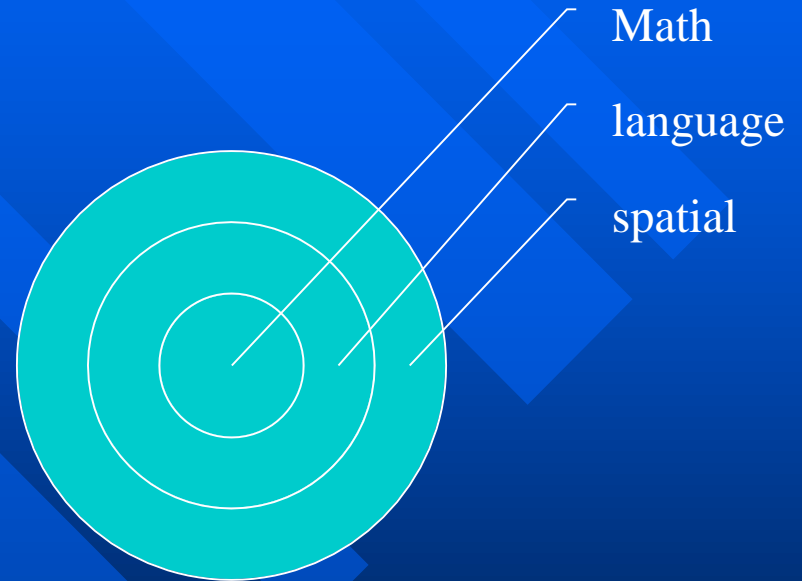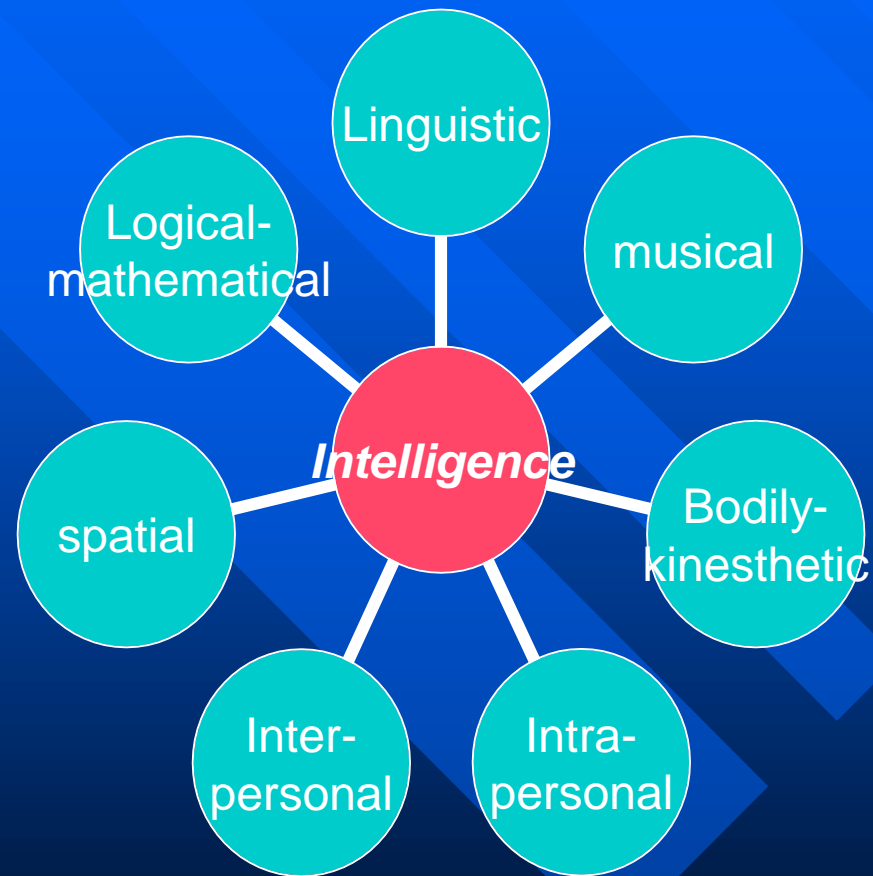
Who is this man?

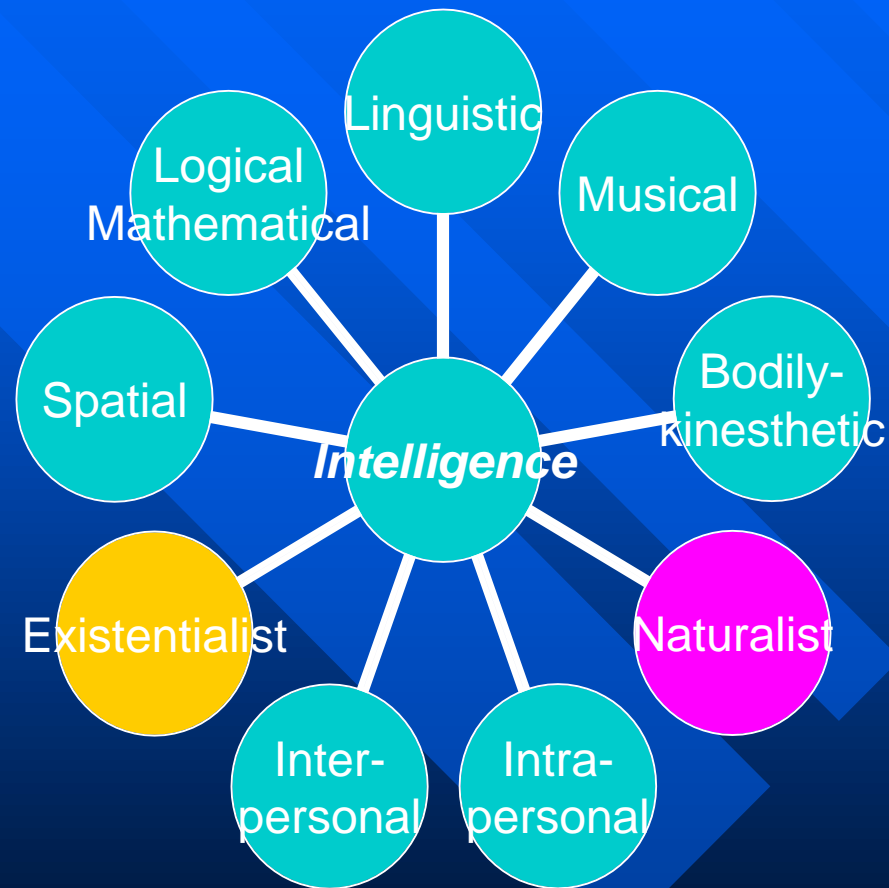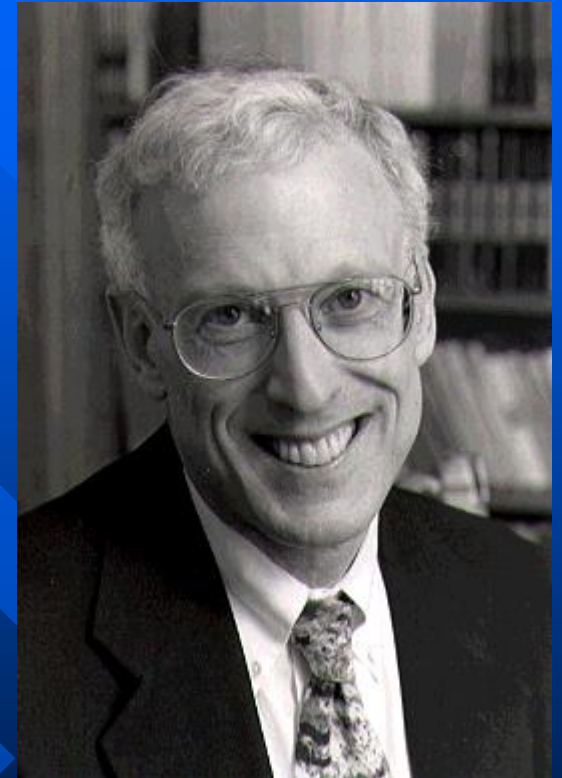# Thomas Edison
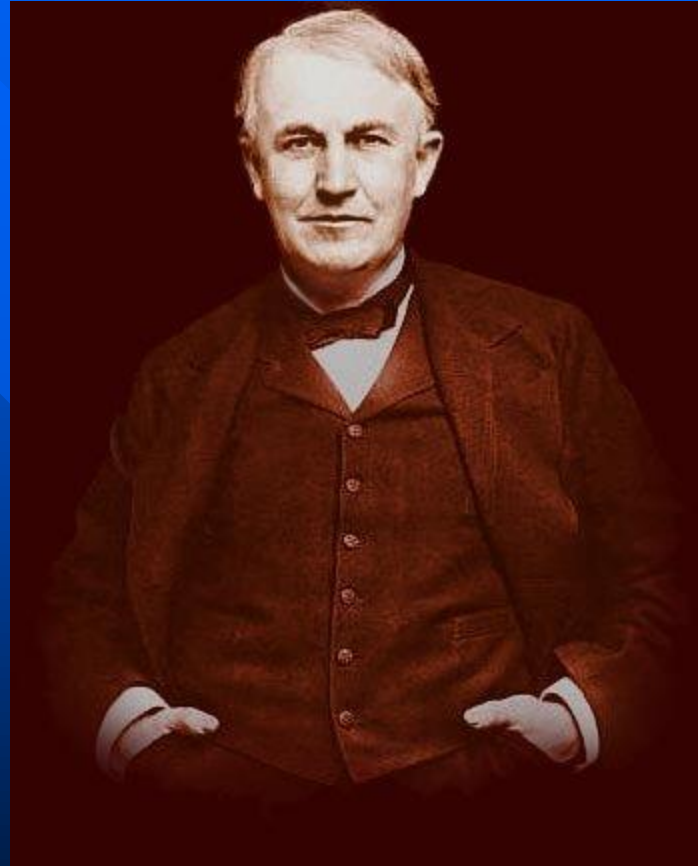
What is Intelligence?

- The g-factor

Math

language

spatial

Gardner's MI Theory

MI Theory Revisited

Sternberg's Triarchic Theory
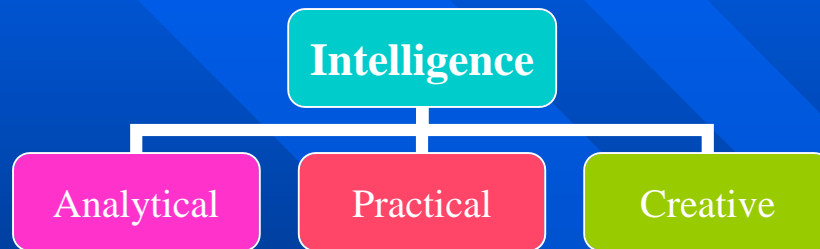
Definition of Giftedness

- The concept has undergone an evolutionary change over the years.

- Historically, giftedness was associated with superior academic ability as measured by high IQ (97th percentile).

- The focus was on school achievement, as evidenced by high grade point averages.

- More recently, a broader view of giftedness has been found in the literature.

Joseph Renzulli

"Giftedness is an interaction between three clusters of basic traits; all three must coexist within an individual for giftedness to occur."
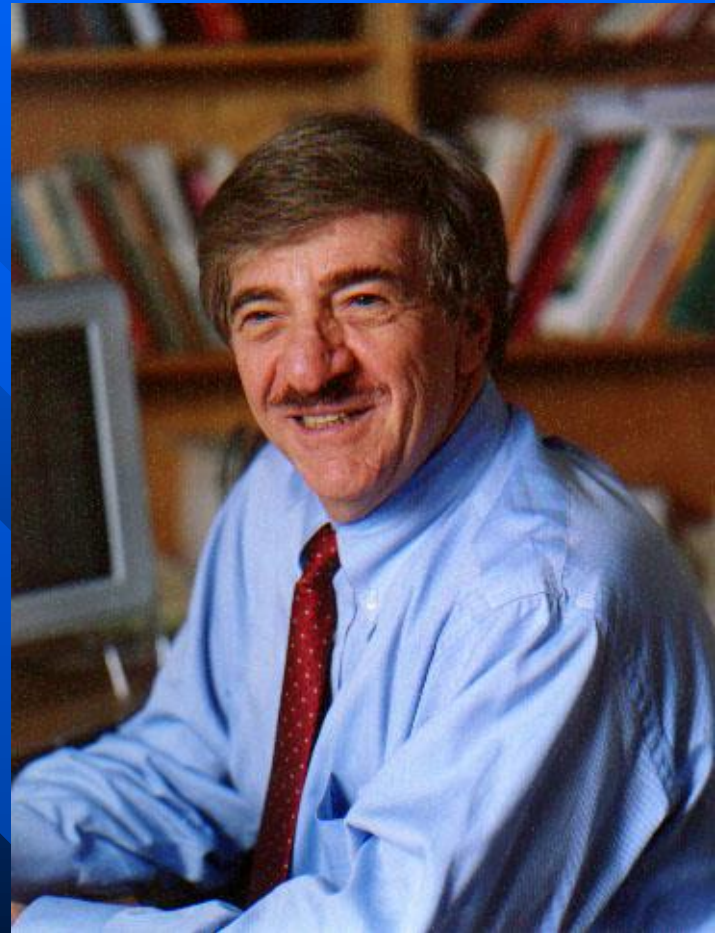
Renzulli's Three-Ring Theory

Above Average General Ability

High levels of Creativity

High levels of motivation
(Task commitment)
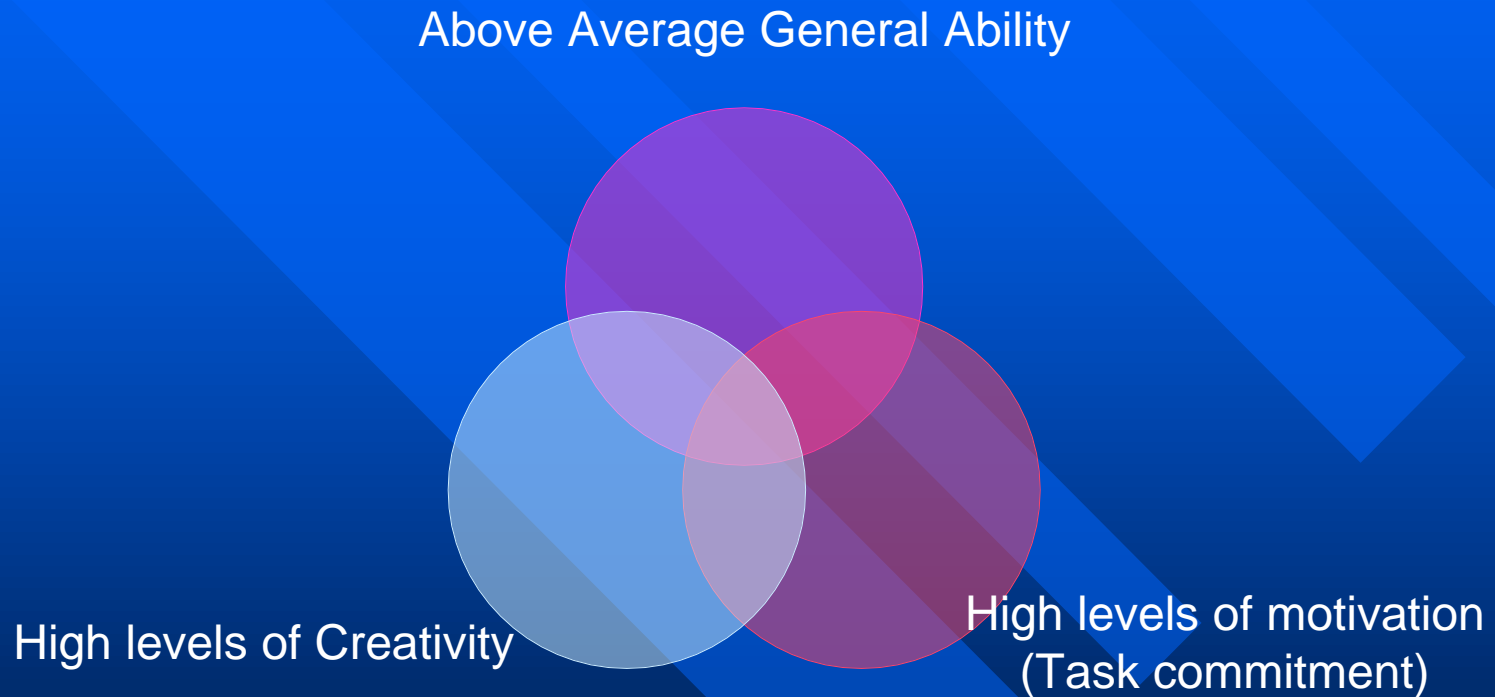
Howard Gardner

"Giftedness involves capabilities that are demonstrated through the creation of original products, problem solving and problem finding."

June Maker

"The ability to solve complex problems in the most efficient, effective, elegant, or economical ways."

Who are the gifted?

True or False

Gifted students are disciplined and rarely show any disruptive behavior in the classroom.

FALSE

True or False

Gifted students are always on task and are rarely a source of trouble to the teacher.

FALSE

True or False

Gifted students show mostly great enthusiasm for learning.

TRUE

True or False

Gifted students excel in every subject-matter.

FALSE

True or False

Gifted students have a great sense of humor.

TRUE

True or False

Gifted students are all "nerds" and lack social skills.

FALSE

True or False

Gifted students do not need much attention, as they will learn with or without the teacher's help.

FALSE

True or False

Gifted students have high self-esteem.

TRUE & FALSE

Characteristics of Gifted Students

- Learn quickly
- Use logical and abstract reasoning
- Are precocious
- Have advanced social skills
- Use a variety of strategies to solve problems

Characteristics of Gifted Students

- Have vast general knowledge
- Are enthusiastic about learning
- Have many interests
- Like to explore and discover new knowledge about the world

Program Accommodations For Gifted Students

- Different Curricula

- Different Instructional Strategies

- Organizational and Administrative Alterations

I. Different Curricula

- Focus on abstract concepts (analysis rather than knowledge, e.g., compare and contrast two cultures rather than just learn about each culture)

- Increase in complexity of content (depth and breadth)

- Added variety (content not usually included in regular program)

Different Curricula

- Comprehensiveness (all aspects of subject-matter are addressed)

- Relevance for the future (e.g., computer literacy, goal-setting, divergent thinking, making predictions, etc.)

- Focus on addressing real problems and finding a variety of solutions.

II. Different Instructional Strategies

- Focus on discovery learning rather than imparting knowledge.

- Use of open-ended questions and activities to stimulate thinking.

- Freedom in choosing issues to tackle as well as freedom in format of presenting product.

- Acceleration of pace when presenting new material.

Different Instructional Strategies

- Use of a variety of teaching methods (e.g., groups, audio-visual aids, computers, etc.)

- Focus on contact with role-models and mentors.

- Focus on developing leadership skills through independent learning and individual projects.

- Avoidance of drill and practice.

III. Organizational and Administrative Alterations

- A. Acceleration
- B. Enrichment

A. Acceleration

- Programs with advanced content that match level of attainment regardless of age.

- Such programs include early admission to college, skipping a grade, or placing students in higher grade levels for some subject-matters (e.g., math, language art, etc.)

B. Enrichment

- Provide students with a variety of materials or references that elaborate on the basic concepts.

- focus on content sophistication (abstraction) or content novelty (solving real problems).

- Group students by ability (homogeneous grouping) for part or all of the day.

Example of an Instructional Strategy

"Problem Types" in which the focus is on finding solutions to problems, but also on finding problems as well as their solutions.

Teachers of Gifted Students

- Must accept the fact that students might have more advanced knowledge about a certain subject.

- Do not have to be gifted themselves.

- Must be resourceful and innovative.

- Must be able to tolerate a certain degree of chaos and lack of control in the classroom.

- Must learn to say: "No, I don't know the answer to this question, so let's both learn more about this subject".