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## **Department: Teacher's Corner**



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### **A Gifted Carol**

Not unlike Scrooge and his visit by four ghosts one Christmas Eve long ago, I too was in the company of spirits over my holiday break from the classroom. Their visions of the past, present, and the future of the field of gifted education came alive for me in one night. As part of an IT initiative at NAGC, I found myself accessing and reading many pages at [www.nagc.org](http://www.nagc.org). I was familiar with some of them but there were others I had not visited in quite some time. As the metaphorical chains clanked in the background, I knew I was in for a long evening.

I was propelled through history while reading over the History of Gifted Education timeline, and witnessed the beginning of the field itself. There was too much to recall but a few bits and pieces remain. It was around the turn of the 20th century and new educational thought had brought about questions of intelligence, ways to measure it, and once identified, how to nurture what was there. I walked past halls where hard-working Francis Galton pondered heredity and Lewis Terman sought to develop an intelligence test. I sat in the back of a wondrous classroom at Leta Stetter Hollingworth's Speyer School, where students thrived. I was whisked away to a packed auditorium as J. P. Guilford addressed the APA convention, challenging an examination of intelligence. I even saw NAGC founder Anne Issacs typing away the first issue of NAGC's newsletter in 1950. Nothing prepared me for the explosive 1957 launch of Sputnik by the Soviet Union, which in turn resulted in a flood of activity relating to a

reexamination of the United States' investment in its human capital. I hovered in awe as large amounts of money were invested into the identification of gifted and talented students. The National Defense Education Act passed, The Marland Report was issued, and in 1974, the Office of the Gifted and Talented was conceived. The United States cared about advancing education and sought to do all it could to support the development of talent. You can retrace my steps by visiting the [History of Gifted Ed](#) webpage. It is worth a read.

I was back at my desk as soon as I had "left," feeling groggy, as if on a long drive. Just then my computer went dead and the power went out, as it often does in a northeast winter storm. A light kindled in my mind though and I found myself being led through the most recent times in gifted education. I witnessed the evolution of an educational field where research, creativity, collaboration, and discussion highlighted the importance of recognizing talent in our nation's children, in every field. I beheld the change in perspective of what it means to be gifted, the branching out of conceptions, definitions, and a change in identification methods to include a multi criteria and non-verbal approach. There were so many individuals involved, and a substantial amount of understanding and resources came from their efforts. You can read about some of their work on the [Systems and Models page](#). You can also read about these pioneers in a new book, [\*A Century of Contributions to Gifted Education: Illuminating Lives\*](#), edited by Ann Robinson and Jennifer L. Jolly. I actually observed the signing of the Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act and the creation of the National Research Center!

Something soon began to happen though and I felt uneasy. Even as considerable research was completed, stressing the need for a differentiated curriculum, I saw the general educational community follow a more traditional testing approach. As a result, budget cuts, the perpetuation of gifted education myths, overwhelming misunderstandings, and the end of funding for the Javits Act and the National Research Center, even in the face of several reports highlighting our nation's inability to meet the needs of our most able students.

I did see improvements for gifted students, including new [national standards for programs](#) and for [teacher preparation programs](#), more research that allows us to document what is happening in the classroom, and recently, more conversations about the needs of high-ability students in connection with the [Common Core State Standards](#), but as I returned to my desk once again it was clear that many challenges remain. The most recent [State of the States in Gifted Education](#) report illustrates the patchwork quilt of programs, services, and resources, or

lack of, for high-ability students across the nation. NAGC's summary of the report, State of the Nation, is [available for download from the website](#).

I emerged once more from deep thought and expected to be visited once again. The power kicked on and I sat looking at an empty computer screen. I began to type the following, which will serve as the "ghost" of the gifted future. Instead of what WILL be, let us all look to what MAY be.

To borrow from NAGC's [organizational vision](#): The 21st century is a new era where schools are the place where children with great promise – regardless of background – are guaranteed the educational and psychological support and resources needed to achieve at the highest levels. Educational possibilities are limitless and the future for gifted and talented children may once again become a national priority. In order to educate students to the fullest and develop talent in all areas, educators should focus on enriching classrooms with all that gifted and talented education pedagogy has to offer. With all of the challenges facing our nation's education system, I suggest that gifted education professionals should advocate with school leaders and policy makers that the strategies of gifted education, implemented with fidelity, could provide a new framework for education as a whole, for everyone!

For information regarding Definitions of Giftedness, visit NAGC's [What is Giftedness](#) page.

You might also like to read [Redefining Giftedness for a New Century](#), a position paper from NAGC.