

Interview (1):

Sally M. Reis

Made Real and Sustainable Change in Schools and Classroom Practice

Taisir Subhi Yamin; Sandra Linke

ICIE, Ulm - Germany

Taisir Subhi Yamin (TSY) and Sandra Linke (SL) interviewed internationally renowned scholar Sally M. Reis (SR), Former Vice-Provost, Academic Affairs (University of Connecticut, United States).



TSY & SL: We are very pleased to meet with Professor Sally M. Reis, the Vice Provost of Academic Affairs, of the University of Connecticut, one of the most well-known scholars in gifted education. Our first question: who are you?

SR: Well, I have several identities- I'm a teacher, I'm a wife and a mother, I am a sister and aunt, I'm a professor and for the majority of my life I've been engaged and involved in work and research relating to the education of academically talented and highly creative children and students. Recently I completed a six-year term as the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, in charge of many academic programs at the University of Connecticut. So, like many others, I hold multiple identities in terms of both my work and personal life. But currently, for work, I am The Letitia Neag Endowed Professor of Educational Psychology at the Renzulli Center at UConn.

SL: When did you start working in this field and why?

SR: Like many other individuals who became interested in the education of gifted and talented students, I wanted to know what to do with very high ability and creative students that I had in my secondary English classes. So, my initial interest, believe it or not, goes back all the way to 1973, my first year of teaching. I was teaching English in a junior high school, and I had six classes of eighth and ninth grade students -- six classes of 30 students per class. I encountered a student named Chris who was remarkably bright and extraordinarily advanced, and I had no idea what to do with her. She knew all the answers before I asked the questions, she had already read all of the books that I was going to teach during the first week of a 12-week unit, and I just wondered what do teachers do with students like her? And that led me to take some graduate classes at the University of Pittsburgh and eventually, when I returned to my hometown, this interest led me to finish my Master's Degree, teaching for a couple of years, and then focusing my work full-time with smart kids. After moving back to my hometown in Connecticut, I was committed to trying to make a difference in the lives of advanced learners there. With a really innovative superintendent, I was able to start a gifted program in Torrington, CT, which ultimately led me to the work of Joe Renzulli at the University of Connecticut.

And that really began the rest of my life, with both our work and our personal partnership. The excitement of working with somebody whose work you believe in and whose ideas inspire you motivated me then and continues to do so today. In my life, the beginning of my passion in the work I do all comes back to having a couple of really talented students and not knowing what they have to do with them. That started my journey and my life's work.

TSY: Can you describe some of your most significant contributions in America and also internationally?

SR: I had an opportunity to reflect upon my most important professional contributions for an invited keynote at the World Conference a few years ago. When I was asked to think about this, I decided that these probably fall into a few specific areas. The first is probably the research and practical work that I've done to expand the work our Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM), such as taking the lead on completing the third edition of the book on the SEM. That work is most likely my most important work, in collaboration with Joe in the sense of school-based contributions. Of course, I also coordinate and direct Confratute, which I've been doing for almost four decades. I've loved our work in the Schoolwide Enrichment Model because I believe in it passionately and we have been able to work with such diverse and creative teachers and their students. I believe schools should be places for creative, talented, productive children and that high creative children are often not well served in traditional school settings. Also, our broad approach to talent development has meant that many students from culturally diverse backgrounds as well as those from lower socio-economic backgrounds have been able to have a chance to participate in SEM programs. So, that would be my first area of contribution.

The second contribution, I believe, is my work on a component of the SEM, that is used in many other types of enrichment and gifted programs as well, and that is curriculum compacting and differentiation. I'm proud of the research study that I conducted with my team as it is one of the most cited publications in differentiation in our field. It showed that we can eliminate as much as 40 to 60 percent of regular curriculum content for academically talented students and when we do that, these students do just as well on achievement test scores as academically talented students whose curriculum is not compacted, and so do all of the regular work. That statistic is cited frequently in the professional literature and I'm proud of our work as I believe it has helped more teachers to implement curriculum compacting.

The third area of my work relates to social-emotional development and the challenges creative and talented students and children face with their social emotional development. I edited a book with three other colleagues that was well reviewed in this area. Over time, I have remained very

interested in the underachievement of academically talented students and the reasons for underachievement. And that area has become an area of great passion for me, as has the fourth area, which is the continuing dilemma of gifted girls and women and why we don't have the means to help more of them achieve at levels that are commensurate with their talents and abilities.

Another area has been my interest in twice (2e) exceptional children. I conducted a couple of very important studies in this area, at least to me, and continue to work in this area. I am often invited to do keynotes often about 2e students as it is both a professional interest area and also a personal area of interest. Joe and I have a daughter who was born prematurely and is both extremely bright, and also has dyslexia. My focus on 2e has been very important to me and I'm very pleased to see it getting much more attention in the professional literature over the last decade or so. So, these areas are the areas in which I've done the most work and that I feel most passion about.

SL: What types of competencies contributed to your success?

SR: My work ethic is very strong and I have worked steadily with focus on various research projects across many decades. In addition, I've also been very fortunate in that I have found passionate interests and outstanding partners for my research initiatives. I work best when I feel strongly about something and my passion usually emerges from a personal interest. For example, my passion for the Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM) came from actually implementing a program based on the Enrichment Triad in the 1970's and many conversations with Joe about how this program worked to provide enrichment and develop talents in young people. I implemented one of the first Enrichment Triad Model programs in Connecticut and also worked closely with two or three of my colleagues who were also implementing programs based on this model. I was the first person to pilot what became the SEM. So, for me, this was both a personal interest and also contributed to my emerging sense of self as a young researcher and scholar, and to my belief that I can, with the work that I do, solve challenges and problems.

I also don't like to give up on work that I am committed to completing. For example, I am continuing the work that I started two decades ago on twice exceptional (2e) students, because I understand that if we can't do something to acknowledge and develop the interest and talents of youngsters that are both academically talented and also have disabilities that many of these young people will fail to excel both in school and in life. As I mentioned, I have a daughter who is both extremely talented as well as has a learning disability. For me, personal interests create a personalization of problems to be solved.

In terms of my own competencies, as you asked, I'm very task committed, very determined and have had the blessings of a supportive environment, supportive spouse and family, and passionate and wonderful colleagues. If you really want to work on something you feel passionate about, it's really important to have a support group. And I like working with partners because I think having an exchange of ideas, deadlines, and working with other people that challenge your assumptions is a really powerful way to complete your very best work.

TSY: Why do you think that we have more women in gifted education than men?

SR: Because there are more teachers that are women than men. You know, the research I conduct about gifted women has convinced me that 'if all of the gifted and talented women who have become teachers and administrators leave the field of education, our field would be decimated'. It is so interesting, as so many more women enter teaching, both for all the right reasons and sometimes a few of the wrong reasons, as well. The wrong reasons are often thrust on us by others who told smart women decades ago, and sometimes currently, that teaching is a good career if you want to marry and have children. What they should have told young women is that education is an incredibly challenging, difficult, frustrating and rewarding career for those with interests in this area. I think that some very smart women who enter the field and stay in it are

often the movers and shakers of education. These leaders understand the ramifications of the loss of potential in gifted and talented students, but particularly in smart women and girls, who are unable to realize their potential. And I think that is one reason many smart women stay committed to the field of gifted education.

TSY: In addition to all that you mentioned about, your contributions at both locally and internationally, you also work as an advisor for some politicians, you know, sometimes they approach you to get an advice. Do you think this advice has any impact, on decision-making relating to gifted education and investment in this field?

SR: I was very fortunate to work as the Vice Provost of Academic Affairs at UConn for six memorable years and yes, I was able to work with members of the state house of representatives and the governor. I am incredibly disappointed that we don't have more politicians across the globe, not just locally, but also nationally, who understand how important it is to nurture and develop the talents of our students. Politicians and leaders need to understand the impact of having up to half of our identified gifted and talented students underachieve in school. One major four-year research study that I completed with my colleagues demonstrated that in an urban high school, up to 50% of our identified gifted students are underachieving in high school. And in our suburban districts and rural districts, the impact of that loss of talent on our society is shocking. And I don't just mean talent in the areas you would expect. For example, we expect gifted and talented students to grow up and become doctors, engineers, lawyers and educators, but we lose talent in so many other areas as well. For example, we lose so much creative talent as students learn that creativity is not valued in school. My wish is that the talented young people who are fascinated across so many unrecognized areas have an opportunity to develop their talents. In every area of human performance and endeavor, such as in the arts, our country and other societies lose talents each year. The loss of talent in students who drop out of high school and college, the loss of talent in young people who can't afford to pursue higher education is a national tragedy. So, while I am grateful to have had the opportunity to work with some very good politicians and leaders, I've also been disappointed during my varied leadership opportunities, including serving as President of the National Association for Gifted Children, to learn that many other leaders and politicians are not dedicated to education, and to advocating and funding opportunities for talented students, because we're losing far too many of them.

SL: When we talk about the social-emotional problems of the gifted, we find that you were amongst the very limited number of people who were doing research, writing or, you know, authoring materials and resources in this area. Why?

SR: That is a very good question and I do believe and hope that more people will conduct good and defensible research in this important area in the future. But it's difficult to do this work because constructs are challenging to define. For example, we spend a great deal of time trying to agree on a universally accepted definition of giftedness, and in our work, we have found that it is also difficult to arrive at a universally accepted definition of gifted underachievers. This is one of the dichotomies that interests me, related to gifted girls and women. Let me give you an example - there are more academically talented young women who graduate as valedictorians and salutatorians now than ever before. But, the numbers of women entering and pursuing top leadership roles are fewer now than before. For example, so few women are elected leaders of their countries. The number of women who serve as ambassadors to the United Nations is at an all-time low. A very small number of women hold individual patents. But even now, when women constitute 51 percent of our population internationally, why do so few excel in both their creative productive work and in key leadership positions? Why are so few women achieving at the highest level in so many areas?

Defining the constructs for studying social and emotional research is challenging, given the population that we study. For example, understanding that "underachievement" in a gifted and talented student could really mean we are studying a really smart student who simply chooses to

earn C's in high school. Underachievement for some students might mean that they coast along in high school, don't attend a competitive college, and don't learn to work. But if they are college grads, are they really underachieving? Defining constructs such as underachievement is challenging and that is one reason why some scholars don't pursue it. Also, doing this type of research can be difficult because much of it has to be qualitative. We can't just build knowledge based on anecdotal case studies, we can't just look at numbers and understand the nuances of what we are studying. To continue with the discussion of gifted underachievement, we have to identify barriers, understand when and why underachievement occurs, and also understand that there are different forms of underachievement that call for different types of interventions for academically talented students. In summary, this type of research is challenging.

To continue with the challenges of studying underachievement, we also need to conduct intervention studies and these need to be supported by funding. It is expensive to train teachers to implement interventions that will reverse underachievement. It is expensive to learn how we can help young people develop ways to enhance and increase their self-regulation, task commitment, and self-efficacy. Students who are beginning to underachieve often become less engaged in their academic work in upper elementary and middle school and we need more scholars and researchers to work with teachers to help develop interventions to reverse underachievement, which is challenging and demanding. I believe those are the reasons we don't have more people doing the work, but these are also the reasons why we need more people doing the work.

TSY: Are there differences in the priorities and profiles of gifted men and women?

SR: I believe so. This is a complicated question because at any given point in a talented woman's life, there are other priorities that tear at her heart and so she may be forced to make choices. The book that I wrote on this subject was called *Work Left Undone: Choices and Compromises of Talented Women* and I think these choices and challenges raise the most important questions about the differences between talented men and women. The timelines and discovery of what times you can do your best and most important work have to be considered if you hope to live a balanced, happy life. The challenge that most gifted and talented women face is the notion of putting themselves and their work and dreams last. So, when you have a child, you put your child's interests in front of your work. When you're married, you put your husband's or partner's interests and well-being ahead of your own. The very notion of individual talent development is that you have to place the development of your talents at the forefront of what you do, and to do that well means that sometimes you have to put your talent development first. That is very difficult for women to do and in my work, I've identified a number of external barriers and internal barriers faced by very talented women.

But having lived this life and worked to seek balance, I have learned and deeply understand know that if the most important persons in my life, my husband or my children need me, they are going to come first. And so, if you are going to have a partner and children, the goal for gifted women is achieving balance. As you know, I've interviewed many talented women and their profiles are different because women's creative focus almost always is more broadly dispersed. While most talented men tend to focus most on their work and their family, not always but often in that order, women's focus is much broader. A woman's focus oftentimes is work, children, parents, other family, friends, home, you know, her creativity and perhaps her spirituality. I have a theory called the "Diversification of Talent Theory in Women" as I think that a lot of the single-minded focus that women might need to pursue their work and win a Nobel Prize or to write a Pulitzer prize-winning novel is difficult to achieve because women are constantly pulled in different directions. The diversification of their talents to multiple areas is always a factor in their lives. I have discussed a later time line for the realization of high levels of creative productivity in women - a time line where there's more blocks of time for their own work, a period that I'm in right now in my life. Some talented women in their 50's, 60's, and 70's can have a more singular focus on their own talent development because responsibilities in their lives have changed. Children grow up and leave home. Relatives who are ill get better or pass away. I actually believe that, for highly

creative women, the best time for their talent development might be during their later decades, representing a gift of more time for work they love. We may find in the future, as people live longer, that's actually a very good time for gifted and talented individuals to devote to their work, with a singular and intense focus. But these are some of the ideas that I'm exploring now.

TSY: This implies that women tend to sacrifice more than men?

SR: I think many women do sacrifice more for others more than men. And I think that the way they are raised is to put their own needs as secondary to the needs of others. These actions conflict with what you have to do as a gifted and talented individual to pursue your work. I think it's very, very difficult for women to turn their backs on parts of their life that they believe are critically important, particularly at various stages in their life, such as when their children are young. These constitute very important life decisions and life choices. Women are pulled in many directions by the needs of families, friends, parents, and society. Think about all the volunteers work that women do, without being paid. If women stopped volunteering their time and their energy and their creativity, the social fabric of life in our world would be changed, for the worse. And yet, women often do that work without pay, without any attention, without asking anyone to notice what they are doing. I do believe that many smart and creative women sacrifice their own ambitions and goals so that the ambitions and goals of others, including those they love are realized, as well as for the betterment of the world.

TSY: Does that mean that you recommend women to be a little bit selfish?

SR: I don't believe it is selfish for women to pursue their talents and interests. I like to define this as an unselfish way to gain an understanding of one key idea: if you are going to grow into a person who is happy with your life, you have to devote some of your time to work or interests that you are passionate about. In the work that I've done with gifted girls and women, the saddest thing for me to hear in an interview is that someone looks back at her life with a deep regret about the work and opportunities that they did not pursue. The regrets that I hear from older women that I've interviewed is almost always that they did not pursue a passion or their work with more time and intensity. I will also tell you that I don't think my daughters or husband had any difficulties in their life because I wrote a book, or because I spent time doing something that I love for work, because when I do that work, I am happier and more fulfilled. And when I'm happy with myself I can be better at the other things I have to do in my life, including being a better wife and mother I do think the level of sacrifice that's needed for the ultimate success in one's field are only achieved by a very small number of individuals. Having said that, there have been many more men than women who win the top awards, and there are many more men than women who win other competitions. Men win more awards and more become our presidents and leaders of universities, businesses, in every field. I do feel that's because in the past, it was more difficult for women to live a life that was both personally successful and professionally satisfied.

In summary, the steps one takes and the time that is devoted for women's talent development matters greatly, both to women and men, and to our planet. As more women continue to stay active in their fields and take time for their own talent development and work either when they are younger or later in their lives, they may actually have more time to continue working in their area of passion to pursue the work they want to do. That is a very good thing.

SL: But when we interviewed Nobel Prize winners, most of the time they say I was made by my mother.

SR: Well, that is interesting. Certainly, some Nobel winners do acknowledge their mothers as playing a critical role in their talent development. Still others acknowledge their teachers and their partners. In my conception of talent development in women, my talent realization model, I actually define one form of talents applied as maternal giftedness. My model recognizes and integrates the work of Renzulli and Sternberg, identifying certain environmental factors and

certain personal qualities that contribute to giftedness. But what I've found is that two things have to happen for women to excel when these clusters of environmental and personal traits come together: one is that talented women have to develop a belief in themselves and second, they have to possess the desire and drive to develop their talents. And those things are brought to bear in multiple areas of endeavor, one of which is maternal giftedness. Many gifted individuals would not have accomplished what they did without a woman in their lives – either their mother, their sister, their best friend, partner. So, I do believe in maternal giftedness, family giftedness. If one of my daughters goes on to produce or create or develop something that changes the lives of others, I will believe that I've had a part of that, I've contributed to their development and I think that's why you hear the Nobel Prize winners talking about their mothers and their partners. And certainly, we know that's true of two of the greatest scientists! Edison and Einstein would not have accomplished what they did without their mothers, sisters, or their spouses. So again, we need to understand that there are many women who are part of the backdrop of talent development and their contributory roles are critical. We need to recognize and celebrate those roles.

SL: Even when we invite, you know, parents to come for a meeting in order to discuss issues relating to their gifted children, most of the time you find mothers are coming.

SR: Which is why I believe in maternal giftedness, and also why I believe so much in talented women who are educators. Their gifts and talents may go unrecognized by many other educators and parents, but they're critically important and if you look at the audience today and the audience at most gifted education conferences there are many extraordinarily smart, talented women that are fascinated by this field because they realize they can be a part of helping to develop talents in others. That is a wonderful role to have. It's a role I loved myself in my own life.

TSY: When I meet Robert Sternberg and other scholars, they always say that you and Joe make the right, couple and you are the most influential and successful couple. This makes me asking about what is unique about your approach towards work and, like, what contributes to your international rule and reputation?

SR: I think what's unique about Joe and me is that we've been happily married over 35 years and many people in the field don't even realize we're a couple. I think we're fairly selfless about each other's talents and work. I've never had a moment of anything other than tremendous pride in my husband. He's wonderful and I'm happy for every success that he has and I know he is happy for my success. We know what we do well, we know the way we write together, we understand the way we work together. I think it was very hard for him when I took my six years away from the Renzulli Center to be become part of the leadership team at the University of Connecticut, but I can't really write about women leaders unless I've done that myself. I think you've got to walk the walk. And so, we've always supported each other, we've always cared deeply about each other, and he's been happy that I have my identity and I'm happy that he has his identity. We know each other so well, our strengths, the way we approached ideas, and I am constantly amazed at his ability to continue evolving and wanting to evolve and stay current. He reads constantly and is always bubbling over with ideas! I know that he's always proud of the work that I do even if it's in a slightly different direction from the work we do each other. But we come back to a core of being a family and supporting each other and believing strongly in the work we've done. Joe's broadened conception of giftedness, his tremendous contributions to gifted education at home and internationally, and then the Schoolwide Enrichment Model which we've created together makes us all proud. So, our respect, pride, caring and support for each other are the reasons we are successful as a team as well as individually. I have to say though, it was also important for me to have an individual identity so when people say something like 'well I didn't realize you were married to Joe Renzulli', I'm surprised, but I am also happy because I am known for my own contributions in the field. I think that's very important to my identity as a scholar and as a woman.

TSY: What are the most important paradigm shifts in gifted education?

SR: I believe that the most important paradigm shifts in our field are the movement towards developing some of the enrichment and gifted education pedagogy that we've been researching and piloting since the 1970's. The idea is that this gifted education pedagogy should and can be used for a broader population of students. I hope this doesn't sound self-serving, but if you really consider project-based education, problem-based learning in the United States, often called genius hour, some of this has emerged from the work of the Enrichment Triad and early work on problem-based learning and self-directed learning at UConn. I believe that the biggest paradigm shift is the provision of more opportunities for culturally diverse and low-income students to participate in gifted education pedagogy is one paradigm shift. Broadened identification procedures have also helped to find these diverse, talented young people, but we have more work to be done!

We are also seeing so many more educators adopt a broadened conception of giftedness and this is most likely Joe's greatest legacy. When Joe first published the 3-ring conception of giftedness, he was ostracized in the field. He was not invited to conferences, he wasn't asked to give keynotes, the major journals in our field rejected his article, you know, because they said they didn't agree with it and he was really ostracized in the field for a while. And I think now his success, our success, is really a paradigm shift and it took a very long time. But he rarely acknowledges how courageous he was to come out against the sole use of IQ tests, in his arguments in favor of a broadened conception of giftedness. If Joe hadn't included creativity in his original definition, I think the whole field would be different and the notion of creative productivity and students being able to work on areas of interest would not have had the broad-based impact. In this respect, we were early pioneers in this approach. So again, not to sound self-serving but I think the field has come around to what the research has shown us and that is when a broader talent pool of children and young adults can pursue their interests and follow their passions, they're happier, more engaged and less likely to underachieve.

SL: Yes. What research excites you at the moment?

SR: I mentioned that I have recently stepped away from a very demanding administrative job, and am considering rewriting my book on gifted girls and women. I'm excited about conducting a research project about extremely high levels of creativity and creative productivity in women. I first wrote about women's creativity in the 1990's and it is one of the few published studies on this topic. It surprises me how often people write to me about that article. What I'd like to do is do is conduct a study of highly creative women and explore what creativity means to them, and investigate their creative processes. I think there's such very little research in the field. So that excites me. And I continue to be excited by the work I do with Joe on the Schoolwide Enrichment Model. Renzulli Learning was an early idea that I had, relative to watching so many young people and so many teachers struggle with replacement activities for compacting. I'm interested in personalized learning and I continue to be interested in developing creative productivity from young children to adulthood. I'm interested in understanding what traits in children might predict which students might need more services and which kinds of services we need to provide students to maximize their creative productivity. But I think my next big study is going to be the study of highly creative, talented women.

I am also really excited about a new grant that we received with two of my colleagues, Nick Gelbar and Joe Madaus, on 2e students with autism. So little is known about the academic and extra-curricular experiences of academically talented students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This grant focuses on how these academically talented students with ASD can successfully navigate and complete high school, and specifically, investigate the academic and social experiences that enabled them to attend and graduate from competitive colleges.

SL: I think that, based on your models we are introducing up-to-date, personalized, individualized education and activities... or activities against the conventional out of date curricula.

SR: Yes, I think one of the biggest challenges facing our field now, both nationally and internationally, is the difference between the state and nationally-driven curriculum and a curriculum is based around the interests and talents of individual students. That type of curriculum, to me, makes more sense for academically talented students – one that is based on his or her interests, learning styles, and preferred modes of expression. We continue to fight upstream in that area. I believe that our Renzulli Learning is a huge step forward, but we need schools that focus on talent development as a major goal! Schools should be places for talent development. Every single special education student in the world, on every IEP - individual education plan or program, in every special education program or plan, should include at least one talent development goal and way to pursue student interests. If we had a goal, one goal for talent development for every IEP or special education plan, all 2e students would benefit. All special education students, have a right to develop their talents and interests and the gifted education pedagogy that we've developed at UConn with our colleagues could enhance general education.

We, in the field of gifted education, have the most exciting pedagogy in the world, but we're still not seeing it implemented in many schools that continue to do what their mission is - and that is to drive more advanced information into the heads of children. The challenge is that those students don't always know how to use or integrate that information and they're not always interested in using it and some of them just get burned out with the amount of content they are expected to master, much of which does not interest them. --Also, we're not teaching students how to learn, we're teaching them more stuff! By teaching them how to learn and solve problems and how to be a part of this great new society that we're all experimenting with in this information overload time, we can introduce them to the challenges we face in the future. As for those students who master content in fraction of a time that other students need to master it, what do we do with these talented students? That dual approach is where this whole notion of personalized learning and schools for talent development can really, I think make, the biggest difference.

TSY: You did a very impressive research study. It was, a review of research available and you came up with a very important number of implications. What are the most important implications?

SR: So, I think you're asking about an article that I wrote entitled 'is there still a need for gifted education in our education system?'

TSY: Yes.

SR: I wanted to do that article for a number of reasons. One is, I have people say to me all the time: 'Do we really need gifted education anymore? There here aren't as many programs as there used to be? and you know the answer is - a resounding yes, for some of the reasons I've discussed with you today. In some urban school districts, up to 50% of gifted and talented students are underachieving. In many rural areas or in schools where teachers don't understand needs of gifted students, there are no services at all to challenge and engage gifted learners. There are many, many smart kids who will fail in school, drop out of school, fail to find an interest, not be able to identify a future passion, not do well academically, and these are critical issues. We have very little knowledge of what to do with bright kids when they finish the regular curriculum in a fraction of a time it takes other students. We know that gifted and talented students, as a group, have as good social and emotional development as other students. That is, they don't have more social or emotional problems, but if they have problems, they are fairly specific and very critical, such as underachievement, perfectionism, high anxiety about the world and their role in the world. We have very few places that even know or understand the social-emotional concerns of this group.

The other research we need is more longitudinal studies, such as that carried out by our colleagues at Vanderbilt, Camilla Benbow and David Lubinski. We need increased understanding of longitudinal effects of various types of programming; Joe and I have carried out some studies, and some of our colleagues have conducted other studies of longitudinal impact of programs, but

we need more. We know some of the components that seem to make a difference, but we're not seeing enough of this kind of research being done. We need these programs, and also need to do more research on these programs work. We need to demonstrate that there is still a critical need, particularly for students who don't have support at home or at school.

Some very smart students are going to do very well, they're going to grow up and become doctors, lawyers, engineers, and professors. But, I'm not sure that, without some special kinds of programming, they're going to be as creative or curious or invested in solving the problems of the world. Joe and I have always believed that gifted, talented students and kids with high potential should be the ones that we entrust with the knowledge and the understanding of what to do to make the world a better place. And some of the studies about wisdom by Bob Sternberg, Howard Gardner's good work projects, and Joe's Houndstooth work demonstrate the good ways that people can use their talents to improve the world and the human condition. This research is important for the future of our field because we need to know what we can and should do, as well as the types of opportunities and resources we can use to convince talented young people to use their talents to make the world a better place. These are critical issues and research about how to do this is still necessary in our field.

SL: How could we get more potentially gifted people into the teaching profession? This is a very critical issue when it comes to gifted education.

SR: We can give teachers more leadership opportunities, we can give them more autonomy, we can give them more choices. We can take away some of the administrators who don't understand or believe in talent development and we can enable visionary superintendents who understand that when smart people enter the teaching field, they need to be able to make some choices of their own and have time to do that they feel passionate about.

One of the reasons Joe and I love doing Confratute in the summer, is that we get so many passionate, highly creative teachers that say, 'I was thinking of leaving teaching until I came to your Summer Institute'. This summer institute lasts just a week, but this time with other creative educators just encourages and gives people hope about going back into their profession with renewed enthusiasm and new creative ideas. I think teachers need more autonomy, more freedom and more support for their own creativity and I think in many places we're doing the exact opposite of that, unfortunately.

TSY: We consider you as your role model in gifted education, so what is your advice for young scholars, young researchers?

SR: That's a very good question. My advice for young scholars and young researchers is to find something that they feel passionate about to research and work on. You should do research on things you believe in! I felt so lucky in my life that we had the funding from our National Research Center to conduct a really high-quality study on compacting. But even before I had the money for research and we had the money from the government in the US, I did things I was passionate about. I spent years on my gifted women study, I spent a long time on the 2E study interviewing students at universities who have learning disabilities and looking at the paths that they took and the factors that they encountered that were obstacles.

I think young researchers have to, first of all, find their own interests. Second, I've been blessed with great partners - so having people to work with that will challenge your assumptions, as I said, and inspire you to do well. I've been so fortunate to have special colleagues, like Joe and my friend Susan Baum and my partners at UConn, Del Siegle, Jean Gubbins, and Catherine Little. I have had fabulous graduate students who have become colleagues and friends like Marcia Gentry and Liz Fogarty and Angela Housand and others. To find somebody you can write with always gives you the added benefit of different perspectives and somebody to challenge your work and ideas, which has been very, very helpful. I think also, finding schools to work with. We have

dozens of schools that have welcomed Joe and me, schools and districts because they know we do ethical research, we'd do it well, and we keep our promises. But we started small, doing some of our work in our daughter's school. We started in a school district in which I was working. I have a background as a teacher and a Gifted Program Coordinator, so I think developing a relationship with a school where you can do important research work for that school and keep your promises is also important.

And, last, I would say: do something that you feel is going to have practical importance and meaning. Every study that I've done is something that I believe in. My more recent work and the outgrowth of SEM has been on talented readers and there's so little out in the field on talented readers that I felt I could make a difference to parents, teachers, and students themselves. So young scholars should do something that they feel has practical significance, and will make a difference in schools. That's guided my work, as well.

TSY: And if they are lucky enough, they will have a very healthy, supportive atmosphere in which to work, such as the one you have here at UConn.

SR: We've been very blessed to work at the University of Connecticut, we've been blessed by our donors Ray and Carole Neag, we've been blessed by a University that has given us an environment where we could conduct the kind of research we have done, as well as run our summer programs for teachers and students. So yes, finding an environment for good work is also helpful. But even before I was at UConn, as a teacher in a school district, I always had a curious spirit and was interested in doing research. So, if you wait until all the conditions are perfect, you won't do the work you need to do. Starting small and then working up to conducting research studies that are more nationally based and have more impact is important but starting to do *something* is really critical. Find out where your own students are, ask your students on a regular basis 'Is what you're doing making you happy? Why are you struggling with this?', 'What going on that results in your inability to complete your work?'. Those kinds of question and your interests in students actually help underachieving students because it begins the process of having them consider their own work cycle—their metacognition. So, teachers can conduct action research studies in their own schools and districts if they have willing, supportive administrators and people around them who understand the importance of the work they are doing.

TSY: So, at the end of this interview, first of all we are so proud of you, of your successes and I would like to thank you so much on behalf of the International Centre for Innovation in Education (ICIE) and Lost Prizes International (LPI). We would like to give you a few minutes to conclude this interview with some suggestions or recommendations you would like to offer or to introduce.

SR: Thank you. First of all, thanks for your friendship, as Joe said we have many of our international opportunities and our connections have been because of the work that you've done. We've also been blessed by our partnership with our dear friends Victor Muller and Salome in Switzerland. We are also grateful to our many other colleagues and hosts in Europe and Asia. Our European and other international work has brought us tremendous joy, so we are also very grateful to you and we wish you and everyone in the audience good health and peace during these difficult times. I would conclude by saying that, when you find something that you love, and you have a passion in your field and a passion for ideas, you're never really working—you are pursuing what you love. Follow your passions and try to do what makes you happy.

I've been blessed by being married to and working with a man who loves his work just about more than anything else, maybe except for me and our children and who has been a great role model in that and I wish for everybody an opportunity to find work that they love and then to get to ask challenging questions about that work and, again, to carry on with their own research because it contributes to existing knowledge.

I would say to smart women, do not give up on your dreams, as too many talented women defer their hopes and plans. Two thirds of all people in the world who struggle with low levels of literacy are women and older women also constitute the greatest single block of those who are poor. In order to change these statistics, we need the talents of women to be recognized and developed to change these statistics. So, if a woman has a dream to pursue her doctorate and complete an advanced degree to do work that's very important to her, her school, state, district, country, she should go do it, don't wait. Because, I've interviewed far too many people who look back with regret that they did not take a safe risk (to go back to school or change employment) and pursue a creative opportunity. Taking these kinds of chances occasionally to do something that's out of the box and might make you happier personally will also enable the people that you love understand that talent development is important. And my guess is that many young people with dreams will be encouraged by those they love to pursue these challenges. I'd certainly like to encourage others now - if you get an idea and you want to do something creative, I think you have to go do it. Don't dream about it, but plan and then take the steps to put that dream into action. That is my advice.

TSY & SL: Thank you so much.

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