

# The GAMbit

*An official publication of the Gifted Association of Missouri*

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## A Letter from the President

*by Dr. Tracy Bednarick-Humes*

**Dear GAM Members,**

With my term as President of the Gifted Association of Missouri drawing to a close, I find myself reflecting on what an incredible journey these past two years have been. It has truly been an honor and a pleasure to serve Missouri's gifted students, their passionate educators, and their families. Together, we have championed the needs of gifted learners and supported initiatives that help them thrive, and I am proud of all that we've accomplished as an organization.

# President's Letter

*continued from Page 1*

One of the highlights of my presidency has been supporting two in-person conferences, which allowed us to come together to share ideas, connect with colleagues, and foster deeper support for our gifted students. Seeing gifted education become a state mandate was another pivotal moment, as it now ensures every gifted child in Missouri has a pathway to be identified, supported, and challenged. This milestone reinforces our commitment to creating equitable opportunities for all gifted students across the state.

Although I am stepping down as President, my work with GAM continues as I transition into the role of Conference Vice President. I am actively searching for an inspiring location for our 2025 conference, and I would love to hear any suggestions you may have! I'm envisioning a STEM-focused theme for this conference, one that will encourage hands-on exploration, critical thinking, and innovation—qualities that resonate deeply within gifted education.

Additionally, I look forward to continuing my involvement on the Bylaws Committee. As we work to update and streamline the GAM Bylaws, our goal is to create a solid and accessible framework that supports our members well into the future. I am excited to be a part of this process, which will strengthen our organization and clarify our operating goals and standards of operation.

Thank you for allowing me the privilege of serving you. I look forward to many more opportunities to support gifted education in Missouri and to continue this connection to all of you through GAM and our desire to make a difference for the gifted children of Missouri! I'm excited to hand over leadership to Heather Tomicich as GAM Executive President and Amanda Sauerwein as GAM Executive Vice President.



Warm regards,

**Dr. Tracy Bednarick-Humes**

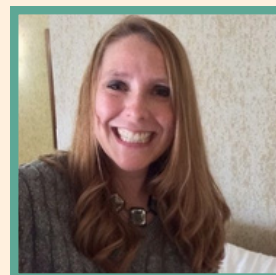
# President's Letter

*continued from Page 2*

## A Note from GAM's Next President!

Hello GAM Membership. I am excited to step into this new role as Executive President to continue the work for Gifted Education in the state of Missouri. There is much appreciation for everyone who has helped forge the path for Gifted Education, but still know that we have a long journey to go with accomplishing our future goals. I look forward to working with all of you the next two years. It truly takes a village so, please reach out if you would like to help us with Gifted Education across the state.

Fondly,  
Heather Tomicich





## CONGRATULATIONS TO BROOKE BILBY AND KYNA IMAN!

### **Brooke won NAGC's Gifted Coordinator Award!**

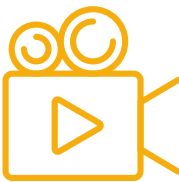
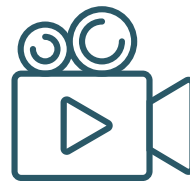
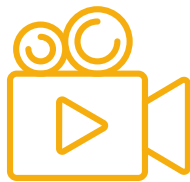
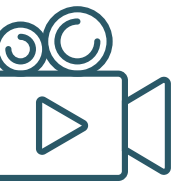
Up to three awards are given to a current (or serving within the past year) district coordinators/administrators whose primary focus is on gifted education and who have had a significant and positive impact on the gifted students in their districts. Find more information about Brooke [HERE](#).

### **Kyna won NAGC's David W. Berlin Advocacy Award!**

Presented to an individual inside or outside the field who has been a consistent advocate on behalf of gifted students and a voice for supporting gifted services in school settings. Kyna currently serves as GAM's Governmental Consultant! See her winter legislative update [HERE](#).

# GAM VIDEO CONTEST!

## 50 Years of Gifted Education in Missouri



### Submission Instructions: Ready in just 3 STEPS!

**STEP 1:** You (student or a team of up to five) produce a maximum length 2 minute video using this year's theme: "50 Years of Gifted Education in Missouri!"

**STEP 2:** Your parent/guardian will complete the release form.

**STEP 3:** Your teacher or parent/guardian submits the video and release form on your behalf. Entries can be submitted on the GAM Video Contest Google Form [LINK HERE](#)

If submitting as a team, each student must have a separate release form.

If you have any questions, please email [meredith.gam@outlook.com](mailto:meredith.gam@outlook.com)

*\*\* Please have all entries include the video upload with release form, with all appropriate signatures of approval. \*\**

See [LINK HERE](#) for video contest release form.



# PARENT SPOTLIGHT!

## Supporting Gifted Children

The theme for the winter GAMbit issue is parents! Most articles within this issue relate to parents of gifted learners and include advice for parents, helpful information for parents, and much more. Check out some of the sites below that provide various resources for parents of gifted learners.

### **National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)**

[Parent Tip Sheets](#)

### **Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**

[Parent and Student Resources](#)

### **U-CONN Renzulli Center for Creativity, Gifted Education, and Talent Development**

[Websites for Parents](#)

### **Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth**

[Bright Now Blog for Parents and Educators](#)

### **Gifted Support Network**

[Family & Professional Resources](#)



# Twice-Exceptionality

By Emily Kircher-Morris, M.A., M.Ed., LPC (*Unlimited Potential Counseling & Education Center*)



Twice-exceptionality refers to the coexistence of giftedness with a disability, such as ADHD, autism, or SLDs. Twice-exceptional (2e) learners can slip through the cracks in our educational system because they are frequently able to compensate for their areas of weakness with their overall cognitive ability. Twice-exceptional learners are also often difficult to identify and support. The complex layering of their ability and disability makes it more difficult to notice their struggles because they frequently manage academic requirements sufficiently. Twice-exceptional learners are often identified or diagnosed with a neurodivergent diagnosis such as autism, ADHD, or SLD when they are much older because the areas of concern go unnoticed longer due to their cognitive ability or background knowledge.

For example, a twice-exceptional gifted/dyslexic student may have a depth of background knowledge and ability to memorize words that hides their struggles with phonological processing. A gifted/autistic learner may fly beneath the radar because they appear “quirky” but are able to compensate for their difficulties, at least for a while. The DSM-5 (2013) notes that concerns related to social communication, specifically, “may not become fully manifest until social demands exceed limited capabilities.” In fact, research shows that autistic individuals are one-and-a-half times more likely to have cognitive ability that measures in the superior (gifted) range, meaning a higher proportion of autistic students are cognitively gifted than allistic students (Billeiter and Froiland 2022). Gifted/ADHDers may slip through the cracks in a similar fashion. Their high intelligence and ability to quickly grasp new concepts can mask their challenges with attention and impulse control. It is only when the complexity of the material or the organizational demands exceed their coping strategies that their difficulties become apparent. ADHDers are often creative and can have advanced problem-solving skills, but these strengths can overshadow underlying issues related to focus and executive function.

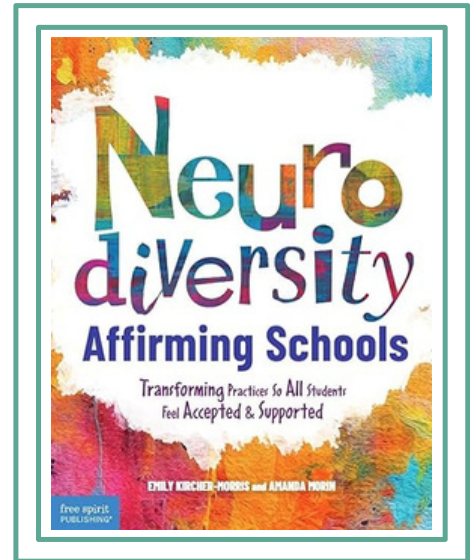
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# Twice-Exceptionality

*continued from Page 7*

Twice-exceptional learners' giftedness can also sometimes be obscured by their disabilities. In these cases, the focus may shift entirely to the disability, leading to a failure to recognize the underlying cognitive abilities that also need nurturing and support. This lack of recognition can stifle the student's intellectual growth and lead to frustration and underachievement. Universal screening tools (processes where schools assess every student in a single grade level for gifted identification, rather than relying on teacher recommendation) have been an asset in helping identify 2e learners who, in the past, wouldn't have been identified by their teachers as possibly gifted.

Twice-exceptional learners may have both intellectual strengths and challenges and social and emotional differences.



**Intellectual strengths and challenges:** Twice-exceptional students may display advanced cognitive abilities alongside specific challenges. Here's how this might look:

- A 2e student may excel in mathematics while struggling with reading or writing due to a coexisting disability.
- A 2e student may experience frustration or confusion in traditional learning environments, reflecting a need for tailored support and understanding.

**Social and emotional aspects:** The complex nature of twice-exceptionality often involves nuanced social and emotional aspects, such as these:

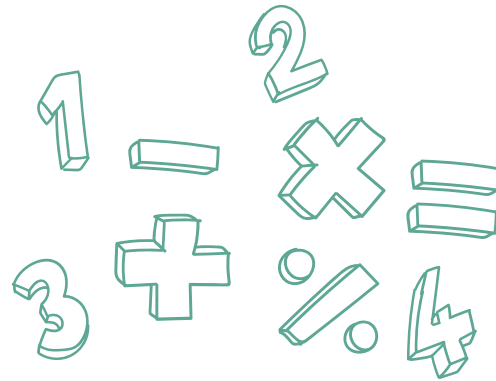
- A 2e student might feel pressure to conform to labels or struggle to understand their unique capabilities. The contrasting areas of strength and challenge might create confusion in self-identity, leading to frustration or a lack of self-confidence.
- A 2e student may find it difficult to connect with peers because they may not fit stereotypes of "gifted" or "disabled," leading to feelings of isolation or rejection.

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# Twice-Exceptionality

*continued from Page 8*



## AMARI

Amari's remarkable talent in solving complex mathematical problems was apparent from an early age. While Amari quickly absorbed advanced material beyond their grade level, they often felt disconnected from classmates due to their unconventional thinking and intense focus on personal interests. Amari's teachers identified their cognitive giftedness and discovered that Amari was twice-exceptional, excelling in logic and mathematics but struggling with a coexisting disability in reading. By tailoring support to meet Amari's unique needs, educators were able to nurture Amari's mathematical genius while addressing their challenges.

Encouraged to embrace both their strengths and weaknesses, Amari flourished academically without losing sight of their individuality. Amari's teachers' understanding of Amari's cognitive giftedness and twice-exceptionality allowed Amari to thrive in an environment that appreciated their brilliance and provided support where needed.

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- ED 605 G – Psychology of Exceptional Children^
- ED 619 G – Gifted Internship^
- ED 626 G – Creativity\*
- ED 633 G – Research in Gifted Education^
- ED 652 G – Affective Needs of Gifted\*\*

\* Offered first 8-week session

\*\* Offered second 8-week session

^ Full semester

## SUMMER 2025

- ED 550 G – Introduction to Gifted and Talented (1st or 2nd, 5-weeks)
- ED 605 G – Psychology of Exceptional Children (1st or 2nd, 5-weeks)
- ED 626 G – Creativity\*
- ED 650 G – Identification of Gifted\*\*
- ED 652 G – Affective Needs of Gifted\*
- ED 653 G – Programming and Administration of Gifted (1st or 2nd, 5-weeks)

\* Offered first 5-week session

\*\* Offered second 5-week session

## FALL 2025

- ED 550 G – Intro to Gifted\*
- ED 604 G – Professional Learning: Gifted Policy, Practice, & Research\*\*
- ED 605 G – Psychology of Exceptional Children^
- ED 619 G – Gifted Internship^
- ED 633 G – Research in Gifted Education^
- ED 651 G – Curriculum for Gifted (1st or 2nd, 8-weeks)

\* Offered first 8-week session

\*\* Offered second 8-week session

^ Full semester

Learn more at:  
[gifted.truman.edu](http://gifted.truman.edu) or



Email  
[gifted@truman.edu](mailto:gifted@truman.edu)



# Parenting Overexcitabilities. There's Hope!

By Summer Cowick (Owner, Brilliant and Then Some, LLC)

Tantrums over darning on socks.

Being told your child is a liar.

Catching vomit in my hands because of a strange texture in her mouth.

Sharks. Sharks. Sharks! I know more than I would ever have liked to know, thanks to my daughter's info-dumping!

None, and I mean, none of these were on the list of things I looked forward to about parenting. But, looking back, I'm so thankful for these frequent "experiences" because it made me ask questions. I needed answers. Why was my brilliant daughter having such visceral reactions to things that seemed so trivial? Did she have ADHD? Sensory Processing Disorder? Autism? WHAT WAS IT!?

As most parents do, I started with an unhelpful pediatrician. I decided to turn to a inevitably slippery slope...Google.

Through some searching, I stumbled upon the concept of Overexcitabilities, and bought the book "Mellow Out They Say, If Only I Could," by Michael Piechowski. Within seconds of seeing and reading the very basic levels of information, I was hooked! It explained my daughter!

Her overexcitabilities were strong! For example, her imagination would run away with her. She would tell outlandish stories about an amazing bird that landed on the playground, bringing a shiny object for all to see. The kids gathered around, and the bird told stories of the magical item. She wasn't lying, per se. A bird did land on the playground which made her think of what she knew about crows and how they like to bring gifts to people they like. Exaggerating? Yes, but she was telling the story of how it happened in her head.

# Overexcitabilities

*continued from Page 11*

I learned to ask her if things happened “in real life or in her head.” It seemed a relief to her, to be asked that instead of being told something didn’t happen. She still drifts off and daydreams, gets distracted by the story in her mind—both of which look a lot like ADHD, but aren’t. Such an imaginal overexcitability.



When she wants to know something, she can’t let it go until she knows it. She is a shark aficionado! If she sees a picture of an anatomically incorrect shark, she must point it out and it really bothers her! It looks like autism but is also a tell-tale sign of intellectual overexcitability.

Lastly, maybe her sensory issues are a form of a sensory disorder. But we’ve been able to mitigate her responses to the appropriate time, place and intensity so we never felt the need for occupational therapy.

Looking back to her pre-5-year-old years, I wish I’d known more about OEs. It would have made me a better parent and someone who could understand their child better. BUT, I’m so thankful that I did find them because we are able to connect over them (I just might have a few OEs myself!). While the world of education and psychology might balk at the concept, being able to name what makes us different also made my daughter not feel broken.



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Washington University in St. Louis

# Questions as a Pathway for Inquiry and Connection

By Kathryn Fishman-Weaver, PhD.



*Kathryn Fishman-Weaver works with an elementary student in Itu, SP (Brazil)*

Questions help build connection and inquiry in our classrooms and our homes; however, not all questions are equally effective with all gifted learners. In this article, Dr. Kathryn Fishman-Weaver explores strategies she uses as a parent and an educator to leverage the impact of questioning with gifted learners.

Mother (to student): What is the best thing that happened today?

Gifted Third Grader: ... [Looks up from book. Looks back at book.]

Mother (to student): Come on, what is the best thing that happened today?

Gifted Third Grader: ...

This parent and I have a great relationship, and she asked me for some suggestions to help connect with her daughter during exchanges like this. I offered to try a different question.

Me to Gifted Third Grader: Jenna, what are three cool things that happened today?

Gifted Third Grader: [Considers for a moment.] We played Four Square at recess. I finished reading the Keeper of the Lost Cities book. My dad taught me a new word: aplomb. It means cool and confident even when things are tense.

**Sometimes asking a different question can make all the difference. The questions we ask matter. For gifted students, our questions can make the difference between overwhelm and certainty, apathy or connection, and disinterest or engagement.**

## Questions as a Pathway *continued from Page 14*

The interplay between perfectionism and anxiety is complex in gifted populations (Guignard, Jacquet, & Lubart, 2012). In this case, asking for “three cool things” elicited a more robust response because that question gives the student an accessible starting place. This second question doesn’t ask her to analyze everything that happened to her today and then select the most significant. It also doesn’t ask her to qualify what made something the best. Sharing three cool things also doesn’t require any parameters about when a day starts or ends. For example, what if we haven’t gotten to *the best part yet*?

Great questions give young people an entry point—what I call a *connecting spark*. Young people need a place to start forming their answers. Prior knowledge and experience give them somewhere to build from. Once we start building connections with gifted learners, the possibilities are limitless.

Landing on a powerful question can change the tenor of an afternoon, the direction of a conversation, and the things we notice thereafter.

In my book on *Brain-Based Learning in the Gifted Classroom*, I write that questions stir curiosity and learning. “Often one question leads to another question and then another and so on.” I tell middle-grade learners, “Once we start wondering why something is the way it is or imagining new possibilities, we find there is a lot more we want to learn.... Asking interesting questions is how inventions are made, how new solutions are found, and how we make progress as people (2021, pg. 44).”



Kathryn Fishman-Weaver responds to a student’s interesting question in Sorocaba, SP.



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## FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

**Jena K. Randolph, Ph.D.**

Assistant Professor and Special Education Online Program

Director, Department of Special Education

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## Questions as a Pathway *continued from Page 16*

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The NAGC position paper (2009) on nurturing the social and emotional development of gifted children reports that gifted children may have few available mind-mates at school. As different thinkers, gifted children also have different psychological and social characteristics. I use questions as a vehicle to navigate some of these neurodiversities.

“

Combining big conversations with physical activity, like walking, relaxes the rules around patterns of speech, reduces intense eye contact, and gives more space for processing time.

”

Kathryn Fishman-Weaver, PhD

My daughter, a gifted middle schooler, likes to “play questions.” This is a tradition we started when she was very young and it has persisted. We play questions while kayaking, hiking, or walking. Combining big conversations with physical activity relaxes the rules around patterns of speech, reduces intense eye contact, and gives more space for processing time. This is why I often held walking conferences with high school students in my gifted advisories. The rules to “play questions” are simple. The questions can be about anything, and we take turns asking and answering. Lately my daughter’s turns have covered a lot of range. She has asked big philosophical inquiries (Are humans innately self-serving?), social-emotional wonderings (What is something you worry about, Mom?), and practical questions (When Grandma comes over, should we have ice cream or brownies for dessert?).

I am as interested in her questions as in her answers. Neuroscience has shown us that we pay attention to the things that most interest us. Her questions give me insight into the ideas capturing her attention. In our best moments, the questions we ask also give us an opportunity to practice perspective-taking, learn more about a concept, and, most importantly, learn more about each other.



**Kathryn Fishman-Weaver, PhD** serves as the executive director of Mizzou Academy and as an associate teaching professor in school leadership and community engagement. She is a sought-after international speaker and the author of several books on education and inclusion in schools.

# Questions as a Pathway continued from Page 17

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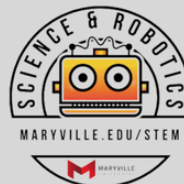


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# A Teacher's Perspective on Navigating the Educational System with a Gifted Child

By Ronda Egbert, MA (Rockwood School District)

As a gifted education specialist, teacher, and proud parent of gifted children, I've experienced the unique joys and challenges of educating precocious students in a variety of settings—from highly ranked public school districts to rural communities, private schools, and homeschooling. I hope to share my perspective to assist you as you navigate your child's educational journey.

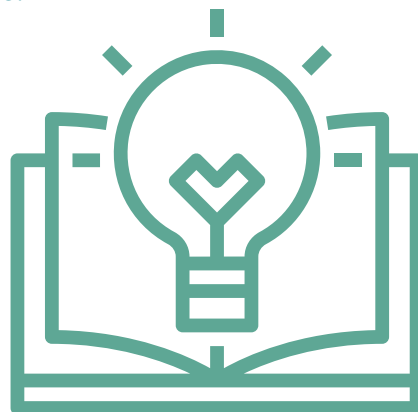
## Advocacy is Key

First and foremost, advocate for your child. You know them best. Don't allow others to label you as "pushy." Educate yourself about giftedness through research, journals, and books. Garnering knowledge is essential in understanding their special needs (and gifted children *do* have special needs).

There may be times when your local school district's offerings don't align optimally with your child's needs. In such cases, consider options like private schools or homeschooling. After careful research, don't hesitate to go offroad and create your own educational path. Remember what works best can change over time, so flexibility and regular re-evaluation come into play.

## Expect Frustration

You will likely encounter frustration on this journey—it's almost a given. To provide some insight, I've created a fictitious letter (see next page) which I believe reflects a typical public school teacher's perspective, revealing thoughts which would never be openly expressed. My hope is that it helps you understand their position as you navigate your child's educational landscape.



# A Teacher's Perspective *continued from Page 20*

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Dear Parents of Gifted Students,

While I am committed to meeting the needs of all my students, the needs of gifted students can sometimes be overlooked. They often appear self-sufficient and don't usually create disruptions, leading me to focus more on those who appear to need additional support. Sometimes, I may not even be aware of a need unless you communicate it to me specifically. Unfortunately, I lack specialized training in gifted education, making it challenging to effectively address their unique needs. I may mistakenly believe that gifted students will "be okay" with little effort on my end. I may even believe gifted students' advancements "will all even out" years later with their peers, so extra support for them isn't of utmost importance.

Teaching is a demanding profession that extends beyond the standard workweek. With 24 children in my classroom, coming and going all the time, ensuring adequate support for everyone is challenging. Many students require specialized assistance for various needs, and I often prioritize basic and remedial support.

I am also influenced by district mandates and state performance assessments, which evaluate my effectiveness as a teacher primarily based on student outcomes. Consequently, I often direct more attention to students who require additional support, as your child has likely already mastered much of the curriculum.

I would love to understand your child's perspective better. As students are learning to self-advocate, please share your insights, concerns, and specific suggestions for improvement on their behalf, in a respectful manner. I am eager to support your child's learning experience to the best of my ability, despite limitations. I really do care!

If you have concerns, I kindly ask that you discuss them with me first before approaching administration. Bypassing me can hinder open communication, as it may put me on the defensive. I truly wish to partner with you in supporting your child's growth, and your respectful communication is invaluable in this effort.

Thank you for your understanding and support. I want to make this year a positive one for your child.

Sincerely,  
Mrs. Johnson  
Public School Elementary Teacher

# 2025 GAMbit Call For Articles!

Whether you are a parent, educator, administrator, or play another role in gifted education, GAM would love to hear from YOU! Potential article topics could be parent involvement, teacher tips, best practices in gifted education, and so much more!

## ARTICLE REQUIREMENTS

- 250-500 Words
- Related to Gifted and Talented Education
- Times New Roman, Size 12 Font
- Double Spaced
- Submitted via Word or Google Docs
- Includes 3-4 photos of author and/or related to topic

**2025  
DUE  
DATES**

SPRING: FEBRUARY 1, 2025

SUMMER: APRIL 1, 2025

FALL: SEPTEMBER 1, 2025

WINTER: NOVEMBER 1, 2025

Questions? Email  
[gambitpublication@gmail.com](mailto:gambitpublication@gmail.com)

If interested in  
writing an  
article, please  
fill out our  
interest form  
[LINK HERE.](#)

# DESE Gifted Education Update November 1, 2024

Christine Nobbe  
Director of Gifted Education  
[Christine.Nobbe@dese.mo.gov](mailto:Christine.Nobbe@dese.mo.gov)



## Missouri Scholars and Fine Arts Academies

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It is time to work on nominations/applications for the Academies! [Missouri Fine Arts Academy applications](#) are due on January 31. [Missouri Scholars Academy nominations](#) are due on February 2, 2025.

## The Advisory Council on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children (Council)

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This year the Council will present to the State Board of Education (SBE) at the December 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting. Information about the meeting is available on the [State Board's webpage](#).

Council meetings, past SBE reports, and white papers are available on the [Council's webpage](#).

## Statute, Rule, and *Gifted Education Program Guidelines*

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Because of new provisions in the state statute Section [162.720](#), MoRevisor, the gifted education rule and *Gifted Education Program Guidelines* were updated. The amendment is focused on the fact that in schools with an average daily attendance (ADA) of 350 or less, teachers providing services are not required to hold K-12 gifted certification. The [amended rule](#) and updated *Gifted Education Program Guidelines* will go in effect on November 30, 2024. If you haven't studied the changes, you can read the document shared at the [April State Board of Education Meeting](#). The **red font** indicates changes. An Administrative Memo is being prepared and will be sent to school administrators. I will also share it in the Gifted-Ed listserv. Please [join the listserv](#) if you are not already subscribed. (Yes, I am aware that the webpage is retro-looking, but it works!)

DESE has updated the District Assurance Checklist (DAC) to reflect new legislated requirements and other feedback. Districts are required to complete and submit the DAC each school year. By completing this checklist, the district assures that it has or will comply with state and federal law and State Board of Education regulations during the 2024-25 school year. **Gifted education made the checklist!** The [Administrative Memo OQS-24-010](#) included gifted education as a highlighted update!

## Data

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The 2023-24 gifted education reports, the map, and the report cards are in "test" and will be released in December. Some items I found interesting:

- more gifted programs in 2024 than the previous year;
- the map currently on the gifted education page is now available in the data dashboard ribbon on the main data page, making it more visible;
- the report cards provide additional information about gifted students; and
- studying the school report cards within a district is very revealing.

When the data is publicly released, I will communicate via the Gifted-Ed listserv.

## GAM's Annual Conference

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A big shout out to the committee members, presenters, vendors, and the University of Missouri for hosting a fabulous conference! Attendees, thank you for your time and effort – I know it is a challenge to make lesson plans and find care for your family, including pets. See you next year!

## Gifted and Talented Tuesdays 2024-25

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Gifted and Talented Tuesday events are planned for the 2024-25 school year and will continue with the same general layout:

- First Tuesdays will be Space Talks for Students at 10:00 AM (not 11:00 AM).

- Second Tuesdays will be Information for Gifted Education Leaders at 9:00 AM, focusing on guest speakers.
- Third Tuesdays will focus on classroom ideas at 3:30 PM and will include guest speakers.
- Fourth (and Fifth) Tuesdays will focus on a book study, which is typically a free online book or report.

The Winter/Spring flier will be posted on the Gifted Education [webpage](#) in the Quick Links box.

## Powerful Learning Conference

Registration for the Powerful Learning Conference will open in early November. Information will be on DESE’s Powerful Learning Conference [webpage](#).

## Ten Strategies to Support Gifted and Advanced Learners

1. Provide accessible front-loading for all students in pre-K and kindergarten through classwork focused on complex reasoning, and through after-school, weekend, and/or summer enrichment opportunities.
2. Re-think the gifted program identification process so that more students are identified and served.
3. Adopt universal screening to identify students with potential.
4. Use data from universally available assessments at all grade levels, so that identification is on-going year after year.
5. Accelerate students in particular subjects, allow grade skipping, and offer competency-based pathways.
6. Provide advanced courses in as many subjects as possible in grades 6-12 online or in-person.
7. Provide high-quality professional-learning opportunities for educators about evidence-based advanced learning strategies.
8. Empower teachers to use data to support advanced learners.
9. Develop (or purchase) pre-differentiated curriculum where unit plans and lesson plans include activities, materials, and resources at a variety of academic levels.

10. Implement a plan for supporting advanced students’ mental wellbeing.

These ten strategies are from a list of 36 in the [Building a Wider, More Diverse Pipeline of Advanced Learners](#) published by the Fordham Institute. A follow-up study, [The Broken Pipeline: Advanced Education Policies at the Local Level](#), analyzed how many of the strategies are being implemented in districts. The survey the districts completed is not included in the report. However, districts could use this table to estimate their scores:

Policy Domain	Policy	Points
Identification	Universal screening based on standardized assessment	+ 150
	Students identified based on local norms	+ 150
	Identification based on multiple indicators, including standardized assessment	+ 75
	Students identified in additional PK-8 grades (after one, max 5)	+ 10
	Auto-enrollment to advanced courses for high-performers	+ 50
Teachers	Early entry to kindergarten if high-performing	+ 25
	All teachers receive PD in advanced pedagogy	+ 50
	More than 25 percent of advanced teachers credentialed	+ 25
Services	Credits in upper grades for advanced coursework in lower grades	+ 50
	Each Honors subject offered (max 5)	+ 20
	Distinct advanced curriculum	+ 50
	Online Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses offered	+ 50
	Offer advanced enrichment outside of school day	+ 50
	Full-time advanced school, grade or subject acceleration, or special advanced classes	+ 125
	Part-time pull-out program	+ 50
	Cluster grouping within classrooms	+ 25
Total Possible		1,000

(The table can be viewed more easily on the report [website](#).)

How many of the policies are being implemented in your district?

## Staying Connected

With the change in the state gifted education statute, small school districts with an ADA of 350 or less are starting gifted programs. My teaching experiences were in districts ranging from about 700 to 20,000 students. In November I am visiting several schools so that I can better understand the unique needs of educators and students in small districts.

## It is the Holiday Season!

*May your walls know joy, may every room hold laughter, and every window open to great possibility."*

—Mary Anne Radmacher

*-Christine*



# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



## Missouri State Capital Report

By Kyna Iman (GAM Governmental Affairs Consultant)

### 2025 Legislative Session:

The Missouri General Assembly will convene at the Missouri State Capitol, on Wednesday, January 8, at noon, to swear in 163 newly elected and re-elected State Representatives and 34 State Senators. I will need lots of help from GAM Advocates in order to educate the 54 new state representatives who have never served in the legislature before about the importance of gifted education!

Missouri voters elected Mike Kehoe as Governor, as well as Lt. Governor David Wassinger, Secretary of State Denny Hoskins, Treasurer Vivek Malek, Attorney General Andrew Bailey, US Senate Josh Hawley.

If you would like to see who your new State Representative and State Senator will be, you can check the election results on the State website: [State of Missouri - Election Night Results](#)

Please send them a note of Congratulations and let them know that you are the Expert on any issues relating to gifted education, and you would be happy to help them in any way.

Please let me know if you have any questions at [kynaiman@earthlink.net](mailto:kynaiman@earthlink.net)

**2025 GAM DAY AT THE  
CAPITOL IS  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 19,  
AT 10:00 AM**



You can find your legislators by visiting the Missouri Senate website.  
Legislative Look-Up: [www.senate.mo.gov/llookup/leg\\_lookup.aspx](http://www.senate.mo.gov/llookup/leg_lookup.aspx)

It will give you contact information and a webpage on your Legislators.

If you have questions, please contact GAM's Governmental Consultant, Kyna Iman, at [kynaiman@earthlink.net](mailto:kynaiman@earthlink.net)

# Legislative Update

*continued from Page 25*

## **GAM 2025 State Advocacy Agenda**

The Gifted Association of Missouri requests your advocacy on the following issues:

### **PROTECTING GIFTED EDUCATION LEGISLATION**

In 2022, GAM was successful in passing their priority legislation, that will require all school districts in Missouri to offer programs and services to students identified as gifted and talented. GAM continues to advocate for these programs, and continues to work with DESE and all school districts to implement these programs and any rules and regulations governing implementation in 2024/2025.

### **PURSUE “WEIGHT” FOR GIFTED EDUCATION FUNDING**

GAM supports adding a “weight” in the foundation formula that would include funding specifically for schools with gifted education.

### **MISSOURI SCHOLARS ACADEMY & MISSOURI FINE ARTS ACADEMY**

**Support \$1 million in state funding for the Missouri Scholars Academy and Missouri Fine Arts Academy for June, 2026, in House Bill 2.**

- The Scholars Academy is a three-week residential program at MU for 330 rising high school juniors who are academically gifted;
- The Fine Arts Academy is a two-week residential program at MSU for 150 rising high school juniors and seniors who are gifted in the arts.

### **MISSOURI SCHOOL FOUNDATION FORMULA FUNDING**

Support increased funding for the Missouri School Foundation Formula. Support \$4.1 billion appropriation in House Bill 2 for the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education.

### **OTHER GIFTED FACTS & FIGURES**

- \$24,870,104 was appropriated for gifted education in FY2006. There were 295 school districts with state approved gifted programs. In FY2007, this amount was rolled into the new foundation formula. Without this line item providing earmarked funding for state approved gifted programs, those funds can be spent on other programs, and there are now only 200 school districts offering state approved gifted programs.

# 2025

## DRURY UNIVERSITY PRE-COLLEGE PROGRAMS

# CAMP



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417.873.7386

### SIGN UP NOW FOR WINTERSCAPE

**REGISTRATION IS OPEN!**

**WINTERSCAPE 2025 February 22**

**SUMMER PALS & SUMMER QUEST July 7 – 18, 2025**

Grades PK – 5<sup>th</sup>, 8:30 am – 11:30 am

**SUMMERSCAPE July 13-20, 2025**

Grades 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> classes and residential

**DRURY LEADERSHIP ACADEMY July 13-20, 2025**

Grades 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> classes and residential

Hoping to see you in 2025! Financial need scholarships available. Please contact me with any questions.

Mary Potthoff, Director  
Center for Gifted Education  
[mpotthof@drury.edu](mailto:mpotthof@drury.edu)



## 2024-25 Gifted Association of Missouri Upcoming Virtual Speaker Series Monday Nights 7-8 pm Central Time

### Monday, January 13–New Gifted Education Program Guidelines with Christine Nobbe (State Director of Gifted Education)

Happy New Year! Happy New Gifted Education Program Guidelines! Happy New State Statutes! Join Christine Nobbe, DESE's Director of Gifted Education, for an update on Gifted Education in Missouri. Beyond the new guidelines and statutes, the Portrait of a Gifted Learner and Missouri Gifted Learner Outcomes will be discussed.

Register [HERE](#)

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### Monday, February 10–Managing Expectations and Anxiety with Pam Washington (Webster Groves Schools Gifted Director)

Using the facets of emotional intelligence, we will discuss ways to support our children with managing expectations and anxiety. We will also discuss ways parents and educators can strengthen their emotional intelligence to best support their children.

Register [HERE](#)

---

### Monday, April 14--Supporting Gifted Kids in a General Education Classroom with Jennifer Hawkins (GAM Executive Secretary)

As gifted educators, it's important that we make sure our students continue to learn when they go back to their general education classrooms. Learn ways to differentiate curriculum using interventions and extensions for "Those Who Already Know It."

Register [HERE](#)

**FREE  
PD!**

# MFAA 2025: Journey

GAMbits  
and Pieces

By Dr. Fatih Benzer (*Director of Missouri Fine Arts Academy, Missouri State University*)

I am delighted let you know that Missouri Fine Arts Academy (MFAA) is now accepting applications from freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior high school students for 2025. MFAA is tuition-free thanks to the continuous support of the State of Missouri and private donations. This year, we encourage freshman high school students to apply as they will be considered incoming sophomore during the summer of 2025. A committee of artists and arts educators will evaluate all application materials to select the qualified participants. We estimate to accept 120 students for the 2025 Academy.



The theme for “MFAA 2025” is “Journey”. Let “MFAA 2025” be a remarkable journey of self-discovery. Create art, collaborate, and connect with your peers and our experts to learn and grow as young artists. Join the journey by exploring various forms of art such as music, visual arts, creative writing, dance, and theatre to express who you are. Let MFAA be the gateway to expand your horizon through many interdisciplinary, discipline-specific, and elective courses and meaningful workshops. Take full advantage of attending performances in the evenings by acclaimed artists and musicians to enrich your experience at MFAA. Get ready to be challenged by our outstanding faculty to step outside of your comfort zone while earning college credits. Make MFAA your destination to start your artistic journey.



MISSOURI

FINE ARTS

ACADEMY

# GAME OVER: Finding Inspiration in Cain's Cardboard Arcade

GAMbits  
and Pieces

By Jennifer Blank (Gifted Education Specialist at The School District of Clayton, Assistant Director of the St. Louis Region of the Gifted Association of Missouri)

The viral video, "Cain's Arcade," took the internet by storm in April 2012. In the 10-minute Youtube video, created and directed by Nirvan Mullick, a 9-year old kid named Cain spends the summer in his dad's auto parts shop in Los Angeles and uses the spare boxes to create his own arcade. Using not much more than cardboard, duct tape, and a sturdy set of scissors, Cain found inspiration in the building materials around him to recreate his favorite place - an arcade. He created a soccer game where you flick a ball past a goalie, a Pop-A-Shot basketball game, and many more, and sold passes for a number of plays. You could earn tickets, distributed by him crawling into the bottom of each box and pushing the tickets through a slot, and could exchange those tickets for prizes. It's a wonderful example of the imagination and innovation of a child.

As this video's popularity soared, schools all over the country created their own cardboard arcades. This moment became a movement, and Nivan and Caine created The Global Cardboard Challenge in 2012. According to their website, over 750,000 children in over 77 countries have been introduced to creative play due to The Cardboard Challenge.

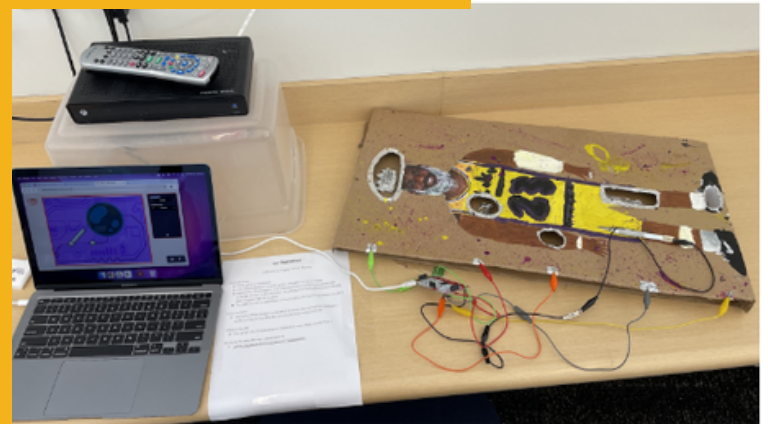
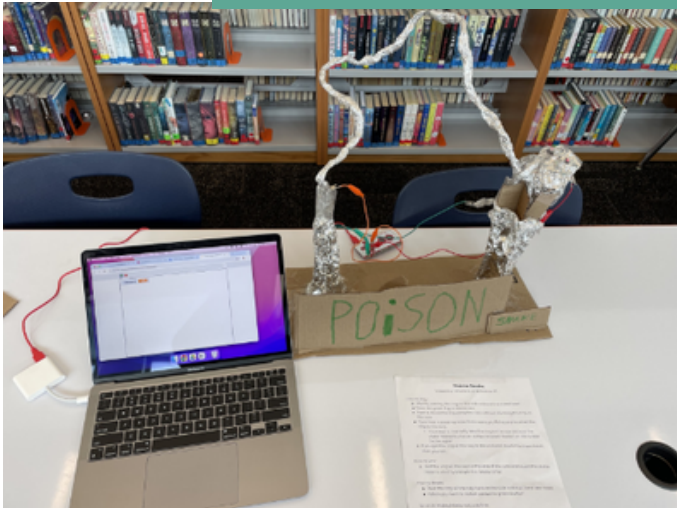
But how do we bring cardboard arcades into the rapidly changing world? How do we add one more layer of rigor and critical thinking to our creative engineering exercise?

This year my students created their very own cardboard arcade, but unlike Cain's arcade, their arcade kept score of each goal, made sounds with each blunder, and counted down final game seconds with timers. Through the integration of Scratch and Makey Makey, we leveled up the cardboard arcade project and brought it into 2024.



# GAME OVER

*continued from Page 31*



We began by learning how to code in Scratch. Whenever I talk to fellow teachers about coding, this is always the part they find the most daunting. Scratch is a wonderful coding platform, where students can learn the basics of coding using the Blockly coding language, which just requires students to choose blocks and snap them together in order to create their code. This teaches students the logic of coding, without the frustration of breaking an entire code by missing one symbol. The best Scratch-teaching resource I've found is Google CS First, which uses engaging step-by-step videos to teach students how to program using Scratch. They have tons of lessons options to provide to students, ranging from 1 hour to multi-day units, and also with difficulty levels from beginner to advanced. Each video talks students through the basics of creating something in Scratch, from their own video game, a musical talent show, or even an animated talking painting.





# MSA

## — *Missouri Scholars Academy* —



**A three-week residential program for  
330 of Missouri's gifted students held  
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new activities, I got to discover  
so much, including things about  
myself. If you do anything new  
during your summer, I'd say  
MSA is the #1 best choice."*

*- 2024 Alum*



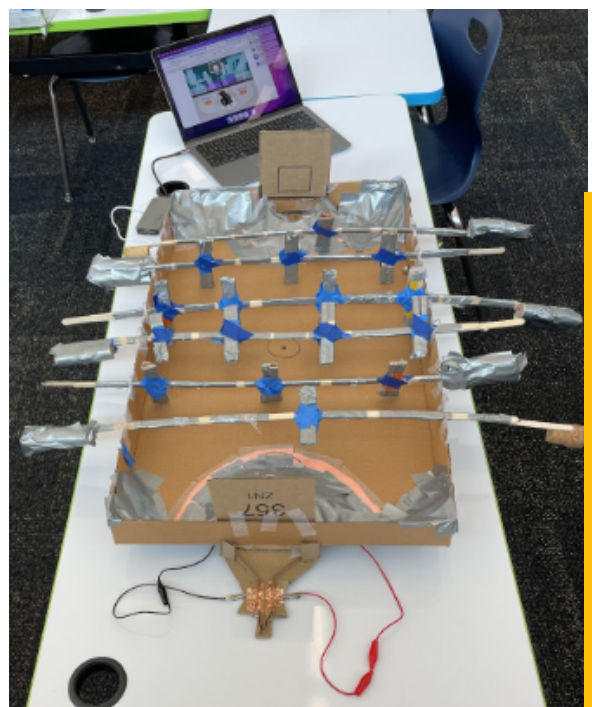
**MOSCHOLARS.MISSOURI.EDU**

# GAME OVER

*continued from Page 32*

The next step was to teach basic circuitry through the use of MakeyMakey. MakeyMakey, billed as “The Invention Kit for Everyone”, is a basic breadboard. Clip one end of an alligator clip into the various holes in the MakeyMakey and complete the circuit by clipping the other end of the alligator clip to something conductive, like pencil graphite, foil, bananas, or yourself. When plugged into the computer, your computer interprets the MakeyMakey as a mouse click or various keystrokes on a keyboard. MakeyMakey makes the lessons easy; they have ready-made teacher lessons and lesson slides on their website. I began by having students complete a simple circuit using only a battery and a LED light, progressed through students creating switches and keyboards, and then students created their own musical instruments. This all culminated with students creating their own controller for a computer game. Their controller could be modeled after a video game console controller, an old-school joystick, a steering wheel and pedal, or something from their own imaginations.

The last, and most important step was to teach the engineering design process. We had been focusing on the 7 steps of the Equity-Centered Design Framework for most of the year: Notice a problem, Empathize with the people who are affected by the problem, Define the problem, Ideate a solution, Prototype a solution, Test a solution, and Reflect upon the process. We had practiced this cyclical process throughout the year, from small design challenges to big invention competitions.



# GAME OVER

*continued from Page 34*



The only thing left was to pose the challenge. Like Cain's Arcade, we would create a cardboard arcade, but our arcade would be leveled up: each arcade game must be connected to a Makey Makey and computer, which would then serve a function. I specified to the students that the screen of the computer could not be the main event; we already create game controllers. These MakeyMakey & computer screen combos would have to serve a purpose to enhance the cardboard game, like sounding a buzzer, keeping score of points, or starting and stopping a timer. Students used all types of recycled goods in order to create their arcade game. Their biggest struggle was creating a product that was durable enough for repeated plays over several days. With creativity and perseverance, they tested their designs and made modifications as they went.

Most of them replicated classic arcade and carnival games, like SkeeBall, Pop A Shot, FoosBall, and more, while others created their own iterations or merged two games together. One of my personal favorites was a replica of that carnival game where you move the metal ring around the curved metal wire without touching one to the other. If you touched the metal ring to the curved metal wire, then the circuit would be completed, causing the MakeyMakey to sound a buzzer on a computer and display "Game Over" on the screen. What a great application to complete a circuit with a MakeyMakey! Another creative use was a cardboard version of Operation, complete with a MakeyMakey buzzer if you touched the tweezers to the edges. Players would always startle after concentrating to lift out a funny bone, only to hear a loud buzzer sound their mistake! The whole school was invited to visit our cardboard arcade the last few days of school, and the guests all loved the kick-off to summer!

Those students will never forget their version of the cardboard arcade, or the creativity, problem solving, and perseverance the project required. Inspiration can strike from the real world, and is especially relevant to students when they can see other students doing amazing things. We found the words on the Cardboard Challenge website to be true: "It's a worldwide celebration of the genius of every child and the simple things adults can do to foster it."

# GAME OVER

*continued from Page 35*

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## ADVERTISE/SPONSOR

The GAMbit is the official publication of the Gifted Association of Missouri. It is distributed quarterly via email to a targeted list of members and influencers in gifted education. It is also posted to mogam.org for all to read.

**Advertising Opportunity:** GAM is excited to continue GAMbit's annual special insert for summer camps/ programs in the Spring 2025 GAMbit issue! If your organization has a summer camp or program, GAM can help you spread the news by advertising in this special insert.

GAM hosts two main events each year. Sponsorships are available at the Platinum, Gold, Silver, and Friend Levels for the New Teacher Workshop and the Annual Conference on Gifted Education.

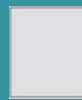
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Members of the Gifted Association of Missouri are teachers, parents, administrators, or anyone who wants to support advanced learning in Missouri. Help us advocate for gifted and advanced learners by placing your advertisement or sponsorship today!



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## GAMBIT QUARTERLY DEADLINES

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Summer 2025: Ads due May 1; published on or before Jun 1.

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## SPONSORSHIP AND VENDOR OPPORTUNITIES

Boost your advertising by sponsoring or booking a booth at GAM's New Teacher Workshop in July or Annual Conference in October.