

This issue of the GAMbit is dedicated to Vicky Bennett



We will miss our dear friend and colleague. Vicky was GAM’s Outstanding Teacher of the Year in 2014. She was also a member of the GAM board as a Regional District Director as well as serving as the Chairperson for the Scholarship and Awards committee.

Vicky taught at the Hallsville School District from 1989 until her passing. She was a well-loved Art and Teacher of Gifted. She received the Top Gifted Teacher Award in Missouri. Vicky worked part-time at Addie Jane Originals in Hallsville, Missouri. Arts and Crafts and her four-legged children were her passion. She also loved to ride motorcycles and participate in the Honor Flight rides.

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GAM is committed to the pursuit of appropriate educational opportunities in every Missouri school, for every student, and will perform the following mandate:

- Advocate for gifted students, their families, and their teachers
- Connect students, families, educators, and the broader community in a statewide network of stakeholders with a unified voice
- Educate by providing information and training opportunities to general and gifted classroom teachers, as well as the families of gifted students

Advocate. Connect. Educate.

The GAMbit is published quarterly by the Gifted Association of Missouri (GAM) to inform educators, parents, and others about the unique educational, social and emotional needs of gifted and talented children and the issues that impact their development.

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Sheila_Bonner@idschools.org

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

MO GAM Invites you to join our
Twitter Education chats on the
first Thursday of each month

Twitter Chat

Twitter chats provide a chance to network
professionally, share ideas, and advocate
for our gifted students

@giftedMOchat

#giftedMOchat

January 20, 2018

At this time I would like to announce that I have submitted my formal papers to establish an official retirement date of April 1, 2018.

It has been my honor to represent the interests of gifted students in the Department since July of 1993 as the Director of Gifted Education Programs. I have been tremendously blessed to have been aided in my endeavors by some extremely talented individuals within the Department, school districts throughout the state, the Gifted Association of Missouri, and the Missouri Scholars and Fine Arts Academies. Many of these individuals took me under their wing and patiently taught me the ins and outs of my job as well as the important impact my responsibilities had on the educational experience of Missouri's gifted kids. There are too many to mention by name and I would feel tremendous regret if I accidentally failed to mention any single one of them. Suffice it to say that any success I have had in my position is due to their guidance and "gentle" persuasion to do the right thing for gifted kids.

It is the right time for new ideas and new energy in gifted education.

I take with me a heart filled with appreciation for some great friendships, remarkable memories, and a confident belief that better things are ahead for gifted students in Missouri because of the strong and committed advocates that exist in GAM and the State Gifted Advisory Council.

I will close with one of my favorite quotes.

Margaret Mead, told us to "never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

And every day we need to work diligently to develop another generation of committed citizens willing to change the world for the better of all mankind.

Sincerely,



Gifted Association of Missouri District 9 Conference
Saturday, April 14th 2017
Oak Grove Middle School, 401 E. 12th Street

Student Schedule

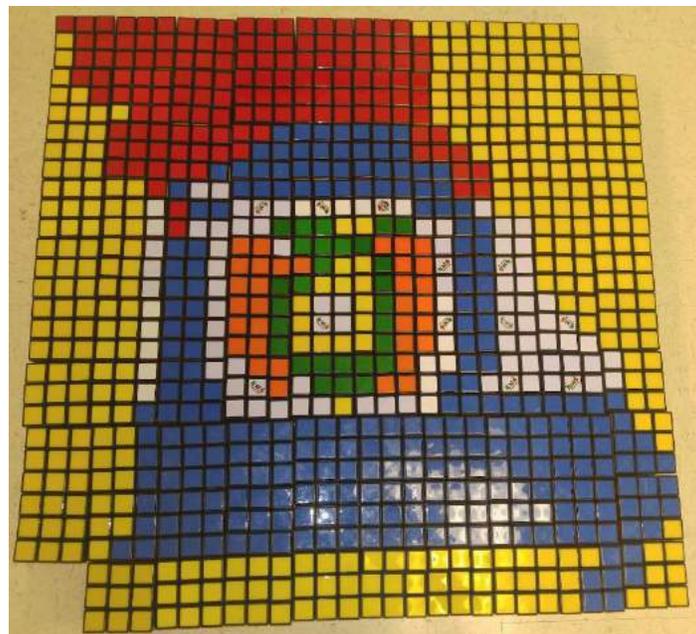
9:00-9:30-Check in/breakfast items/vendors
9:30-10:15-Session 1
10:15-11:00-Session 2
11:00-11:15-Door Prizes and Closing

Parent Schedule

9:00-9:30-Check in/breakfast items/vendors
9:30-10:15-Parent Speakers and question and answer
10:15-10:30-College for Kids presentation
10:30-11:00-Visit vendors
11:00-11:15-Door Prizes and Closing

Follow the Eventbrite link for descriptions of the sessions offered and to register:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/gifted-family-day-districts-9-and-3-tickets-43566717224?aff=eac2>



Finley Knows Elvis!

By Ginger Beard, Explore Gifted Facilitator, Bernie R-13 School District

Finley Watkins, nine year old gifted student in the Bernie School District, was selected out of three thousand applicants to perform on the Nickelodeon show recently. He is an Elvis impersonator, but he performed on the show *Lip Sync Battle Shorties*, season 1 episode 9, with the song “A Little Less Conversation” by Elvis Presley. He had the chance to meet host Nick Cannon and co-host Jo Jo Siwa, as well as meet some really talented gifted kids who performed with him on the show. Finley is in the gifted program, Explore, at Bernie Elementary School, in Bernie, MO.



Check out his performance at this link:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WtiX6QnwG1A>
(picture credits: Nickelodeon, Wikipedia, Facebook).



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GIFTED LEGISLATION REPORT – 3/10/2018

ACCELERATION LEGISLATION: House Bill 1421, sponsored by Rep. Donna Pfautsch (R-Harrisonville), passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 147 – 3. This bill requires any district with an approved gifted education program to have a process, approved by the district's board of education, that outlines the procedures and conditions under which parents or guardians may request a review of the decision that determined that their child did not qualify to receive services through the district's gifted education program.

The bill also requires school districts to establish a policy that allows for the subject or whole grade acceleration of any student who demonstrates advanced performance and emotional readiness for acceleration.

The bill is scheduled for a hearing in the Senate Education Committee on Tuesday, March 13, at noon, in Senate Committee Room 1.

GIFTED REVIEW PROCESS LEGISLATION: House Bill 1371, sponsored by Rep. Chrissy Sommer (R-St. Charles) passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 148 – 3. This bill requires any district with an approved gifted education program to have a process, approved by the district's board of education, which allows parents or guardians to appeal a determination that their child does not qualify to receive services through the district's gifted education program.

The bill is scheduled for a hearing in the Senate Education Committee on Tuesday, March 13, at noon, in Senate Committee Room 1.

GIFTED SERVICES MANDATE LEGISLATION: The House Elementary & Secondary Education Committee heard House Bill 1435, sponsored by Rep. Chrissy Sommer (R-St. Charles). This bill requires school districts to establish a state-approved gifted program if 3% or more of the students are determined to be gifted. Districts with average daily attendance of 350 or fewer students are not required to have a teacher certificated to teach gifted education, but any teacher providing gifted instruction without a gifted-teaching certificate must participate in six hours per year of professional development regarding gifted services.

In the hearing, supporters testified that the number of children identified as gifted is increasing, while the number of gifted programs is decreasing. All children need a challenging curriculum, and it should not be optional to teach gifted children appropriately. Testifying for the bill were Representative Sommer; Missouri National Education Association; Sudhiksha Kumar; Madelyn Becker; Hannah Keely; Sabien Jamal Kent; Lenae Lazzelle, Gifted Association of Missouri; and Beth Winton. There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

The Committee unanimously voted 12-0 to support the legislation. The bill now goes to the House Rules Committee before advancing to the full House of Representatives for full floor debate.

Please continue to contact your legislators to educate them on the importance of gifted education programs for gifted students!!

Gifted Challenges

"Beyond intellect: Exploring the social and emotional aspects of giftedness."

Gail Post, Ph.D. January 8, 2018

Let's get real about gifted kids

Consider this for 2018: Let's stop wasting time debating whether giftedness is real.

So much energy has been expended arguing whether giftedness is an elitist construct, or a parent's choice, or if it exists at all. Debates have raged over the gifted label (admittedly, a controversial term), whether gifted children deserve "special" services tailored to their needs, and if gifted education is even necessary.

According to the critics, if giftedness does not exist, or if it is an achievement that anyone can aspire to with just enough hard work and perseverance (or a boost from wealthy parents), and if providing services for this non-existent intellectual construct deprives other, more deserving children of their education, then let's eliminate the concept - and gifted education along with it. Whew!

These debates appeal to those among us who don't understand gifted people - or envy them - or hold false stereotypes about them - or have been hurt or emotionally threatened in some way by a gifted person. It is easy to blame gifted education (which amounts to a fraction of the cost of special education) for depriving other children of the education they deserve. And after dismantling gifted education, critics clamor to eliminate ability grouping, claiming that it stigmatizes other students (whom these critics assumed were oblivious to their academic struggles until grouping was initiated).

Let's get real; let's accept that gifted children are different.

1. Gifted children possess advanced intellectual abilities

Sounds obvious, doesn't it? But there is push-back against this reality. Yes, we know that many gifted children are under identified, especially minority and ESL children and those from impoverished schools. Yes, IQ testing is flawed, can miss some true gifts, and ignores talents such as creativity, leadership qualities and performing arts abilities. Nevertheless, those who receive an IQ score of 130 or higher account for 1-5% of the population. *Just because we have more work to do within a flawed gifted identification system should not mean ignoring those already identified students.*

How is this push-back manifest? One tactic is the false claim that anyone can become gifted if motivated enough and offered the right opportunities. This fallacy clouds the truth about giftedness and results in disappointment for many hard-working high-achievers. Gifted children's abilities are innate. Of course, exactly *how* these abilities are expressed depends upon and can be modified by environmental influences. A childhood filled with encouragement and creativity will enhance learning more than one plagued by poverty and neglect. But while sound nutrition, a safe and loving home, verbal stimulation, and learning opportunities give every child an edge, **you cannot instill giftedness through hot-housing, flash-cards or prep classes.** Gifted children's brains work differently, as shown [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#). Researcher Marcus Munafo points out how genetic denialism dismisses the influence of genes, despite evidence to the contrary, and reminds us that:

"We are born equal, but we are also born different - we should embrace that diversity and use it to understand ourselves."

A second assumption is that we can somehow "normalize" the gifted child by ignoring giftedness altogether. Yet, pretending giftedness does not exist will not tame the child's burning creative drive and intellectual curiosity, nor will it quell the often co-existing social and emotional complexities or asynchrony. It is time to stop debating whether we have a "choice" in the matter. We can *choose* to work

with what we have - and encourage our children to utilize and improve upon their innate strengths and weaknesses. As I wrote in a previous blog post about choice:

"You don't get a choice. You don't get to decide whether your child is gifted any more than you can choose eye color or athletic ability. Giftedness is a mixed bag of strengths, multipotentialities, and social/emotional challenges that are far from easy. You might decide not to "label" your child as gifted: however, your child's academic and emotional needs will not magically disappear."

2. Gifted children have very real emotional needs

In addition to their aptitude, gifted children often exhibit asynchronous development, multipotentialities, and heightened sensitivities. As they are a minority in most schools, they tend to keep a low profile, and may struggle socially. Gifted children are not trying to stand out, become the target of others' frustration, or deprive anyone else of an education. Many "dumb down" their interests so they can fit in with peers. Others are bullied. Acute sensitivities, existential angst, and a heightened sense of fairness and justice color their views of the world around them. A recent study suggests that they are at risk for psychological and physiological overexcitabilities. According to lead researcher Ruth Karpinski:

"...individuals with high cognitive ability react with an overexcitable and behavioral response to their environment. Due in part to this increased awareness of their surroundings, people with a high IQ then tend to experience an overexcitable, hyperreactive central nervous system."

This overreactivity may leave some gifted children open to anxiety, existential depression, apathy, cynicism, and despair. In addition to coping with others' perceptions and misconceptions about their differences, and attempting to fit in to a social world that may feel alien to them, they must manage these intense feelings that affect their self-esteem and well-being.

3. All children are gifts; not all are gifted

Children are precious gifts to the families who love them, and each child possesses his or her unique traits. But not all are gifted. The gifted label unfortunately evokes controversy, as many misunderstand and bristle over the term, assuming their neurotypical child is somehow devalued if others are identified as gifted. For now, we are stuck with this term. But regardless of the label, gifted children are a small minority of students, and possess advanced intellectual abilities. They are not better than other children; they are just different. As one writer aptly noted:

"Children are not all the same and it does them a disservice to claim otherwise. Just like not all children have special needs, not all children are asynchronous and advanced.

Gifted doesn't mean special. It doesn't mean better than everyone else. Gifted is wiring. Gifted is a brain that doesn't think like the standard brain - that doesn't learn the same way, see things the same way, or act the same way. Gifted is different."

Another writer, Mohan Dhall, noted in a recent commentary:

"There is an oft-quoted educational maxim about students that characterizes them as follows: 'All students are gifted - in their own way'... However, the actual statement is one of egalitarianism pushed to the point of educational idiocy. In one statement the needs of intellectually able students are wholly dismissed whilst simultaneously, the needs of all students are devalued.

All children are unique. They are gifts, undoubtedly. But only very few are academically gifted and these students should be understood, encouraged, supported and valued rather than disparaged, maligned, [or] ignored"

4. Gifted children deserve an education specific to their needs

The NA_GC has highlighted research supporting the benefits of gifted education. Myths about gifted children's needs have been noted and debunked. But gifted services are often an afterthought, provided after other students' needs are addressed. Gifted education is underfunded and unregulated in many areas. Some claim that gifted education is disparaged due to anti-intellectualism, or stigma, or a refusal to appreciate their special needs. Others recommend eliminating gifted education and emphasize improved education for

all children. While a lofty goal, most classrooms already serve those in the middle, not outliers like the gifted, and attempts at differentiated instruction in large heterogeneous classrooms are often cumbersome and futile. Gifted children will not learn on their own; many become underachievers and lose interest in school completely.

Some parents resort to homeschooling. Others opt for private schools, although choosing a school can be fraught with uncertainty. Some parents advocate for academic acceleration. Most try to patch something together to fill in the gaps - extracurricular activities, online programming, enriched learning at home. But many families (particularly those under emotional or financial stress) do not have the time or resources to provide this level of involvement or advocacy for their children. Without mandated services for appropriate resources within the schools, those gifted children will suffer the most.

Let's get real

Let's get real about gifted kids and stop wasting time debating whether giftedness exists or if gifted services are necessary. Let's devote our energy toward ensuring that they receive the educational services, the encouragement, and the understanding they deserve. Just like we would want for any other child.

<https://giftedchallenges.blogspot.com>



Pulling Together for Gifted Education

By Donna Pfautsch, State Representative District 33
Past President, Gifted Association of Missouri

Gifted Education continues to be a force in my life. After facilitating a gifted program in Harrisonville for 34 years, I continue to understand the critical role gifted programs play for students with high abilities. Moreover, I believe these students need a special environment in which to grow and, importantly, to be accepted for their unique talents and humor.

As a class, we pushed the school walls out into the community, district, state, and national levels in order to foster their talents and help them “learn how to learn” – perhaps the most important benefit of gifted education because it stays with them throughout their lives. Many former students tell me they have used the skills learned in our gifted program to achieve success both in their careers and adult lives.

Just in the past week alone, several former students have shared their personal stories and class memories. These students are teachers, engineers, doctors, artists, farmers and business owners. They were given wings to fly and do their personal best.

That is why I am honored to represent and carry solid, researched-based legislation for gifted education in the Missouri House of Representatives. This can be a difficult battle, and it requires all of us pulling together to advance the cause of gifted education in Missouri. I encourage educators to speak up about the value and life-long benefits of gifted education at every opportunity. What you do, and how you teach, matters today more than ever.

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2018 State Advocacy Agenda

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

GIFTED EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Support legislation to increase gifted education programs in Missouri schools.

- 1) Support legislation that mandates every school in Missouri provide state approved gifted education programs for students identified as “gifted” under section 162.675 and that all program services are provided by teachers with a valid certification in gifted education. (**House Bill 1435** has been filed by Rep. Chrissy Sommer, R-St. Charles)
- 2) Support legislation that requires any district with a state-approved gifted education program to have a process that allows parents or guardians to review a determination that their child does not qualify for gifted services. (**House Bill 1371** has been filed by Rep. Chrissy Sommer, R-St. Charles)
- 3) Support legislation that requires all Missouri school districts to have a policy allowing acceleration for students demonstrating advanced performance or potential for advanced performance and the social/emotional readiness for such acceleration. The policy should include subject acceleration and whole grade acceleration, among other opportunities. (**House Bill 1421** has been filed by Rep. Donna Pfautsch, R-Harrisonville, and **Senate Bill 648** has been filed by Senator Gary Romine, R-Farmington. These bills combine the acceleration and the review legislation into one bill.)

MISSOURI SCHOLARS ACADEMY & MISSOURI FINE ARTS ACADEMY

Support state funding for the Missouri Scholars Academy and Missouri Fine Arts Academy for June, 2019. The State Legislature & Governor zeroed out the June, 2018 academies.

- The Scholars Academy is a three-week residential program at MU for 330 high school juniors who are academically gifted;
- The Fine Arts Academy is a three-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 \$3.7 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 215 school districts offering state approved gifted programs.

If you have questions, please contact GAM’s Governmental Consultant, Kyna Iman, at kynaiman@earthlink.net



Wiggle seats, fab labs, drones, school doesn't look like it used to at NKC center

BY KATY BERGEN kbergen@kcstar.com

The trappings of a traditional classroom are gone. There are no walls, no desks, no chalkboards, and no textbooks in this “classroom” space at the Northland Innovation Center, the two-year-old home for North

Kansas City's gifted students.

Instead, on a recent afternoon, a group of kindergarteners and first-graders choose what they work on, and take their pick of what movable, flexible furniture they want to use that day. Some curl up on the floor, while others gravitate to small tables with “wiggle” chairs that allow them to move in their seats. Others opt for wide leather seats, rolling chairs with mobile end tables that can be used as a desk or nooks built into the wall.

For now, a semi-circle viewing couch in front of a projector where students watch videos or critique projects — an area marked only by its bright blue walls — is unoccupied. As is the raised stage down the hall where students or guests perform or speak.

It's not clear where one class starts and another class begins.

“If we were in a traditional school this would be four classrooms,” SAGE Center Principal Danelle Marsden said on a recent afternoon.

But that's a word that educators at the center, which serves roughly 950 North Kansas City gifted elementary and middle school students, have tried to move away from.

“Everything is space,” Marsden said. “I've had to get away from ‘classroom.’”

As educators across the country continue to revamp curriculum to prepare students for 21st century workforces, some school districts have opted to redesign school buildings to put more emphasis on the projects, collaboration and technology.

Lecture-style learning is on the way out.

“(Learning) is much more self-directed. The shift that we are making and trying to help them make is spatially, how do you embody that ideal?” said Julie Michiels, a senior project designer with the global architecture and design company, Perkins+Will.

The company worked with the North Kansas City School District and Leawood-based Hoefler Wysocki Architects to design the innovation center, which opened for the 2016-17 school year and later expanded.

Design changes made to accompany new teaching methods have rapidly gained traction — both in existing public schools that don't have the ability to totally reconstruct their infrastructure and in districts that can build new environments from scratch.

Examples in the Kansas City area include the new Olathe West High School or the Missouri Innovation Campus in Lee's Summit, which was recently named one of 10 finalists in the South by Southwest Learn by Design competition.

The Northland Innovation Center, now in its second year, won a 2017 Excellence Award from the Center for Active Design.

The 33,800-square-foot center more closely resembles a start-up organization or a hi-tech company than the traditional classroom — with rows of desks and a teacher at the front — that most adults recall from childhood.

“Our challenge becomes how to stay above the curve,” Marsden said.



Michiels of Perkins+Will said the center is one of the “most progressive” school designs in her company’s portfolio.

So what does staying ahead of the curve in classroom design look like? Here’s what The Star noticed after an afternoon at the center.

Choice:

More than 900 gifted students visit center’s campus once a week. Each spring students choose six to 10 units of study for the year and spend one day a week at the center.

Sometimes that might mean choosing to do independent studies in a certain

subject. Other times that means improving a certain set of skills through the center’s specialized offerings, like a violin class or working in the student-run broadcast studio.

“We are trying to create teaching environments that can teach kids skills for jobs and careers that we don’t even know exist yet,” Michiels said. “It’s allowed the kids to move a little more freely among the teachers they they want to work with and the kids they want to collaborate with.”

Flexible seating:

Students often choose where they want to sit — on wobble seats, plush seats, mobile stools that can be configured in different combinations.

Besides helping boost creativity and cater to students who might think or learn better, it encourages them to be more mobile throughout the day.

The freedom to move is not necessarily an obvious jump for students, particularly for those who come from more structured classrooms.

“They have to be taught that,” said Chad Sutton, North Kansas City’s assistant superintendent for Pre-K through eighth grade. “But a young age kids needs a high level of trust from the teachers to believe in them and give them opportunities to work independently and be given an opportunity to achieve the goals set for them.”

Open-concept spaces:

There are no walls between classes, though sometimes areas on the same floors are separated by glass partitions or delineated by brightly painted walls.

The concept isn’t entirely novel. Open-concept classrooms became popular in the 1970s, and some carried on for decades, Sutton said.

But open classrooms were still paired with traditional teaching methods without exploring the intention behind using unconventional classrooms. Eventually, the district opted to build walls again.

“I think what’s different today is we’ve really come to understand how to provide kids with learning experiences that can meet the different needs of the kids we have,” Sutton said. “We weren’t good at that 30 years ago.”

Of course, the high ceilings and open space has another advantage, room for student to fly drones indoors.

Makers Spaces:

These laboratories have become a common feature of many schools and aim to provide students with a place to learn new tools, work with their hands and develop creative projects.

At the Northland Innovation Center, the makers space is called the Fabrication Lab, Fab Lab for short, and students can work on various projects after learning such skills as laser cutting, 3-D printing and soldering.

Third graders recently made 3-D characters, took photographs of them, and then put different backgrounds and words with the characters to make storybooks. Fifth graders were challenged to come up with a product that would make the world a better place, and their prototypes were judged by a “Shark Tank” inspired panel of community business leaders.

“They really started thinking outside of themselves and started thinking about what they could do to solve problems using these tools, and being part of the process,” said intermediate gifted teacher Cindy Turner. “Not just going and buying a solution.”

Writeable walls: At the center, quotes from Mark Twain and other visionaries might be imprinted on the glass walls of smaller office-like classrooms. Those spaces, right next to the large open-concept learning areas, are important places for teachers to address students in a more focused setting, like for a mini-lesson before students work on a project related to that lesson, or a more contained elective, like Spanish class.

But in a school without blackboards, the walls become a space to be creative. In addition to mobile whiteboards, students use writeable and erasable wall space to brainstorm ideas.

“It’s an environment that stimulates thinking,” said Jill Hackett, deputy superintendent of North Kansas City Schools. “Traditional schools are probably a little more limited and restrictive.”

Gender neutral bathrooms: It’s simple. There are two areas of single enclosed bathrooms with a communal sink on every floor. Red light indicates its occupied. Green indicates the stall is free. Have there been any issues? No, Marsden said.

Communal culture: Teachers at the center spent a year with Perkins+Will determining what their innovative environment should look like. One of the most difficult hurdles?

“They were very frank about the fact that when they got to day one, we still didn’t know what to do about the walls.” Michiels says. In the various school spaces, there are no designated desks or seating, even for teachers. For many, the communal culture that the design of the school reinforced was difficult to get used to.

“They are used to having a room and ownership and this book is my book,” Michiels said. “We had to work with them to create different scenarios of how they might find harmony and an ebb and flow for them to be able to share things.

There is one locker room for students to store belongings and coats throughout the day. Storage chests that anyone can use line the perimeter. Different spaces are marked through color blocking or other “landmarks” that identify different zones in larger spaces. Soundboards in the ceiling keep noise to a minimum.

“Teachers can see what each other is doing,” Michiels said. “They don’t have a wall between them anymore.”

<http://www.kansascity.com/news/local/article199045864.html>

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Wednesday, April 18, 2018 South Tech High School (limited seating), 8:30 a.m.

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Mon-Fri, July 9-20, 2018

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Curiosity for All

By Steve V. Coxon, Ph.D

Curiosity is a curious subject. It's often mentioned as a trait common to scientists, and scientists certainly need curiosity. Although curiosity is considered fundamental to creativity and creativity fundamental to innovation, curiosity appears to be even less of a focus in education than creativity. This may help to account for curiosity's decline with age for most people. However, science is a natural stimulant for curiosity. The science classroom is the perfect place to foster curiosity.

Picture a room full of kindergarteners studying live, wriggling worms and they are bubbling over with curiosity, peppering their teacher with questions and stories of their own experiences with worms. Now picture those same kids a decade later. While we shouldn't expect them to act like 5 year-olds, our hope should be that their curiosity has matured and not disappeared. That is, older students' curiosity, well-fostered, should deepen as their education progresses. They may now be curious about what factors led worms to evolve five hearts or hypothesize about what would happen if all worms disappeared from Earth. Unfortunately, I don't often find this to be the case: Too many older students are disinterested in science. I think the way we teach has a lot to do with it.

In the traditional science classroom, curiosity is not fostered. Students are generally lead through the curriculum with great breadth, but little depth and little, if any, chance to pursue what they are particularly curious about. Professional scientists, on the other hand, often spend their lives researching a topic of interest in great depth. If students are fortunate enough to be in a setting where their teachers are both willing to lead them in experiments and have the budget for needed supplies, such experiments are usually accompanied by step-by-step instructions that, when followed, produce a result long known to their teacher and to science. Professional scientists, on the other hand, develop novel experiments to help answer yet unanswered questions. To foster curiosity, the science classroom should be preparing curious students in a manner more attuned to the work of practicing scientists. There are many ways this can be accomplished. Two of my favorites are through questioning and field experiences.

Questioning

Much has been written about the importance of asking good questions since Benjamin Bloom and his collaborators first released their taxonomy 60 years ago, but classroom questioning appears to be as focused on low-level student regurgitation now as it was in the '50s. This is ridiculous given the advent of the Internet and smart phones that give students immediate access to simple facts. We need to focus on applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating with those now easy to access facts.

Teachers asking higher order questions is important, but students asking those kinds of questions—and answering them—should be the ultimate goal. Students should be encouraged to ask questions, but it isn't the teacher's job to know all the answers. It's the teacher's job to facilitate students in finding their answers. In this way, their curiosity can be deepened. Some answers may come from the library or Internet—I keep a box with note cards of student questions to research during computer time. Others may be the subject of student-designed experiments, such as in problem-based learning. Others may need an invention in the school makerspace. When students are able to focus their curiosity on an area of interest such as in these examples, they are really beginning to think and work like scientists.

Field experiences

In this period of hyper-focus on minimum competency testing, field trips and other experiences outside of the regular classroom setting have often been removed from the science curriculum. Not only is this a shame from a curiosity standpoint, it harms students' scores on those very tests. When aligned with the curriculum, field experiences have a greater impact on student learning than any other science teaching method according to a meta-analysis of 61 studies (Schroeder et al., 2007). And they're likely to invoke curiosity.

I organized many trips with my 4th and 5th grade scientists to a nearby national park aligned with our study of animal adaptations and food webs. Half the group would spend the first few hours with a volunteer forester, touring around a large pond with plenty of opportunities to get their hands in the water, observe wildlife, and see our curriculum in action—more memorable than any worksheet. I took the other half on a mile hike along a stream to a point of significant beaver activity. Here students had the opportunity to touch (and trip over) gnawed down tree trunks and to observe beaver dams: the results of both behavioral and structural adaptations. After a few hours, the groups switched. Going back in different seasons allows students additional learning opportunities. Such trips could be coupled with stream monitoring, a survey of macro-invertebrates, plant study, and more and can be scaled for any age group. The trip was nearly free, amounting to less than \$3 per child for the bus. Don't have a national forest nearby? No problem. Use whatever outdoor resources are available in your area. Monitoring of an urban stream or observing insects on an empty lot can be just as stimulating for student curiosity.

Curiosity isn't just a thing for young children, but an important trait for success in the sciences. As such, it shouldn't be left to luck, but considered an important facet of science talent development. And I'm curious to see what happens when science teachers take on that challenge.

References

Schroeder, C. M., Scott, T. P., Tolson, H., Huang, T. -Y., & Lee, Y. -H. (2007). A meta-analysis of national research: Effects of teaching strategies on student achievement in science in the United States. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 44(10), 1436-1460.

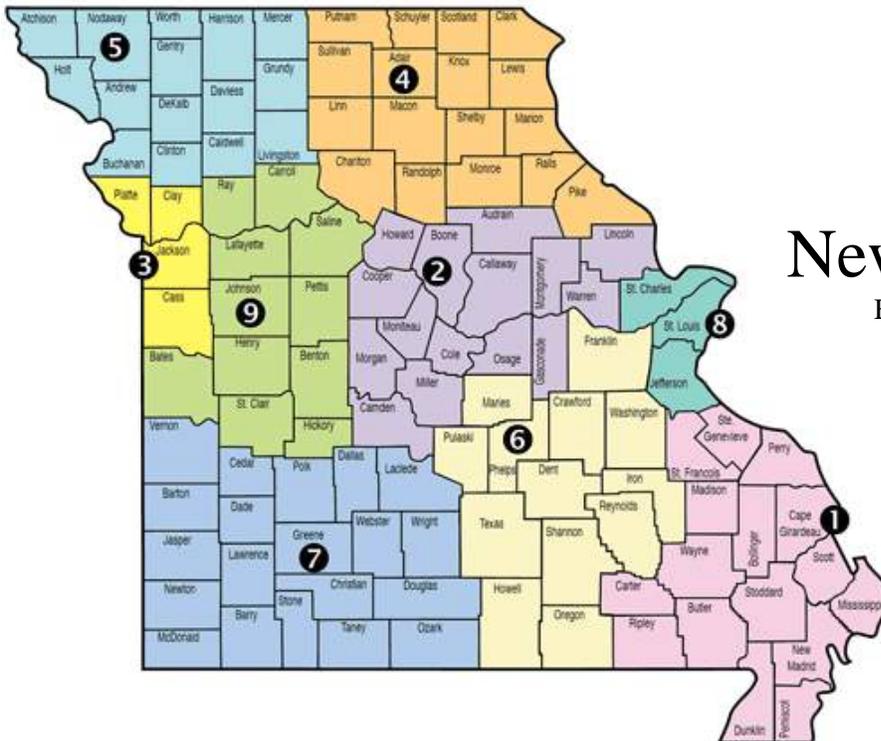
Biography

Steve V. Coxon, Ph.D. is a veteran public school teacher who now serves as associate professor of gifted education at Maryville University of St. Louis where he directs the programs in gifted education including the graduate program and STEM Education Certificate, the Maryville Young Scholars Program to increase diversity in gifted programs, the Maryville Summer Science and Robotics Program for High Ability Students, and the CREST-M math and robotics curriculum development program. Visit him on the web at <http://stevecoxon.com> and follow him on Twitter @GiftedEdStLouis.

If you have information or an article to share
with the GAMbit, please contact the editor:
Sheila_Bonner@idschools.org

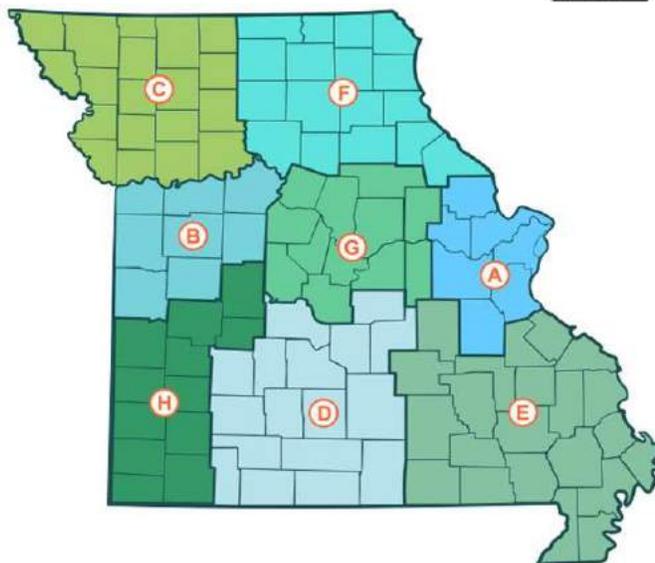
New Districts for GAM!

During the April 2017 board meeting, the GAM board voted to change the GAM districts to align with the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) RPDC. The goal of the change is to align GAM functions with regional resources already utilized within the state by school districts and help future integration of GAM's mission and goals with DESE initiatives. The new districts will go into effect at the 2017 GAM Conference.



New GAM Districts

Based on DESE/RPDC locations



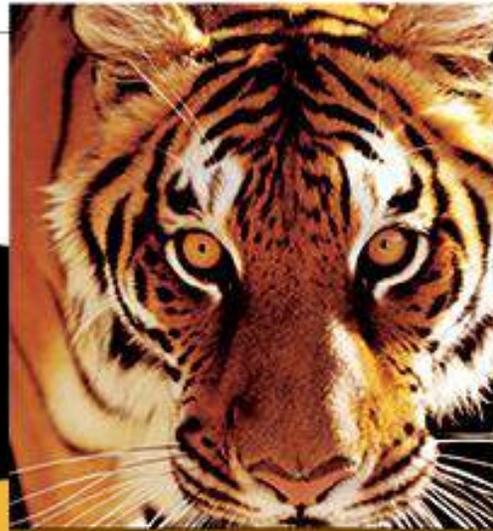
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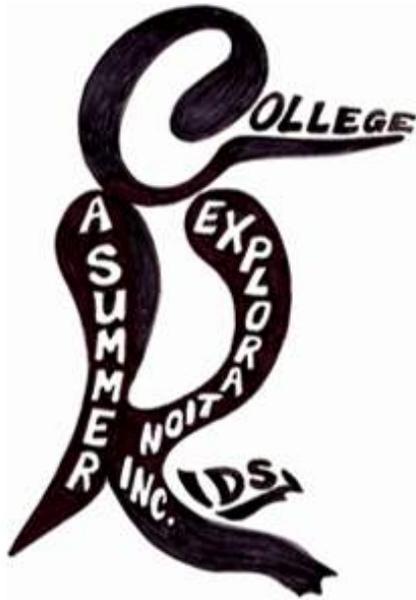
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The GAM 2018 Student Contest

By Dr. Robin E. Lady, NBCT

Legislative Advocacy Chairperson, Gifted Association of Missouri

The GAM 2018 Student Contest, Advocacy Logo Design Contest, was a challenge to all gifted students in Missouri to create a logo for GAM to use to promote advocacy for gifted education. There were nearly 150 entries from all over the state, and the winners were announced at Gifted Education Day at the Capitol on Tuesday, February 27, 2018 in the First Floor Rotunda. All of the 500+ students attending that day were given a handout including talking points for the students with their legislators, and pictures of the winning logos as you see on this page. There were two divisions based on age, division one up to 12, division two 12 and older. This year's winners include the Division I Winner, **J.J. Hawkins** from Edgar Murray Elementary in St. Clair, Missouri; Division II Winner **Ania Kovacs** from Springfield Public Schools, and the Overall Winner was **Claire Bodnar** also from Springfield Public Schools. The overall winning logo will be the new Advocacy Logo for GAM and given out at this year's conference. Not only was the student's logo considered, they had to write a short essay also. Claire's winning essay read:

Advocacy to me means supporting a cause that is important to you. Being a gifted student, to me, gifted advocates are the people who support me and my educational needs. Advocacy is important because it is supporting causes you believe in. Advocacy is also important because it can be used for those who cannot fight for themselves. I came up with the design for my logo by just sketching ideas and finally picking the one I liked best. My logo is about supporting gifted education. I drew a small light bulb with the design to signify gifted children's bright minds.





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Most of these courses are scheduled during the summer months for your convenience.

In addition to these courses, DESE requires “Psychology of the Exceptional Child” for gifted certification, as well as a research course, and an internship. Most teachers completed the Psychology course and a research course during their initial teaching certification, which typically meets these requirements. Truman also offers these courses if you need them. You can complete your internship through Truman at multiple points during the year.

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The Bob Roach Scholarship for New Teachers Sponsored by Drury University

In 1999, GAM created the New Teacher Scholarship to promote the certification of teachers in the field of gifted education. In 2007, the award was renamed the Bob Roach Scholarship for New Teachers in honor of the continuous dedication of gifted educator, Bob Roach. In 2010, the gifted community lost this life-long educator and friend. GAM honors Bob's passion for Gifted Education with a \$250 scholarship awarded annually at the Gifted Association of Missouri Conference. To apply, applicants must be in the process of obtaining certification in gifted education and in their first or second year of teaching gifted. **Submit by September 1**.



The DeDe Smith Friend of Gifted Award

Dede, one of GAM's founders, served as GAM president and GAMbit editor. Under her insightful guidance, the Missouri Scholars Academy was established. Dede initiated and served as Director of Drury's Center for Gifted Education until her untimely death in 1991. The Dede Smith Friend of Gifted Award is awarded by nomination. GAM invites nominations of individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the field of gifted education in Missouri. An individual who is eligible to be a recipient of this award will belong to one of the following categories: legislator or other elected official, administrator, counselor, regular classroom teacher, media person, business person or mentor. **Submit by September 1**.



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The Norine Kerber Parent of Gifted Award

The Norine Kerber Parent of Gifted Award recognizes parents who have made outstanding contributions to the field of gifted education in Missouri. GAM invites nominees who belong to one of the following categories to apply: parent, step-parent, or guardian of a gifted child in the state of Missouri. Submit by September 1.

The student award must be submitted or postmarked by **June 1, 2018.**
The adult awards must be submitted or postmarked by **September 1, 2018.**

Submit nominations to:

Gifted Association of Missouri Executive Secretary – Awards & Scholarships
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Please see the GAM website for directions on how to nominate and submit information.
We look forward to recognizing those who have worked hard for GAM.



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