

The GAMbit

An official publication of the Gifted Association of Missouri

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A Letter from the President

by Heather Tomicich

Last year was a significant year for Gifted Education in Missouri. It has been 50 years of addressing, advocating and pursuing Gifted Education services across the state for students. Many have come before us to help pave the way for gifted students, teachers, and parents. In August 2024, the gifted mandate went into effect and this will help keep & establish future gifted programs in all school districts around the state. This was a dream I had when I started my teaching career in Gifted Education and it makes my heart happy to see it come to fruition. We have come a long way, but there is always more work to be done.

President's Letter

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During the week of February 10-14, we celebrated Gifted Education Awareness Week. This week is always a good way to recognize this population of students and their unique needs. Also, it is a great time to recognize all the Gifted Education Specialists, Gifted Coordinators, gifted advocates, and the parents of gifted children. These individuals are working hard to help support gifted children by challenging them academically, supporting their social-emotional needs, and keeping their gifted programs funded. Please take some time to thank them for all the work they do to help support our gifted students.

Though we were unable to have our Gifted Education Day at the Capitol this February due to the Missouri weather, it is never a bad time to reach out to your legislators to share with them what you are doing in your gifted programs. Feel free to invite them to your schools to share all the wonderful things that your gifted students are doing each and every day. If you do have the chance to stop by Jefferson City this session, please feel free to contact Kyna Iman and she will be happy to meet up with you and your students when you come to visit.

As we prepare for the end of the school year, there are still many PD opportunities available across the state. There are several local get togethers and the New Teacher to Gifted workshop on July 21-22, 2025 in St. Louis, MO. Our annual GAM conference will be October 17-18, 2025 at MO State University in Springfield, MO. We are accepting conference proposals at this time until May 23 and would love to learn from you. Start planning now for these wonderful learning opportunities. Please check out the GAM website for more information. www.mogam.org

I hope you have a great rest of your school year and look forward to seeing you soon.

Best,
Heather Tomicich
Executive President





Dr. Kathryn Fishman-Weaver

Kathryn Fishman-Weaver, PhD is the Gifted Association of Missouri featured writer for 2025. She 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.

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What does it mean to be a GAMbit Featured Writer?

We are excited to introduce our new "Featured Writer" section, which will spotlight one exceptional leader who is making significant contributions to gifted education in Missouri. This annual showcase will highlight innovative teaching methods, groundbreaking research, and inspiring success stories from professionals who are shaping the future of gifted education in our state. Through consistent articles from these leaders, we aim to share best practices, foster collaboration, and celebrate the dedication of those who are advancing gifted education across Missouri's schools and communities.

Expanding Inquiry and Impact through Action Research

By Kathryn Fishman-Weaver, PhD.

Our Spring 2025 GAMbit explores “Gifted Research.” As we consider the research questions and methodologies that matter most to our field, let’s listen to the voices that matter most in our field—our students. Their research has the potential to transform teaching, learning, and community action.

High school junior, Isaac Silva, has had many conversations with his grandfather about water scarcity in Itabuna, the rural community where they live in northeastern Brazil. For his family, this issue is personal, and Isaac wants to help. He believes that artificial intelligence (AI) technology can help farmers improve water management and automate irrigation. To explore this possibility, he interviewed a focus group of Itabuna farmers. Isaac told me that his research gave him a better understanding of the challenges and possibilities for helping farmers in his hometown.



Isaac Silva presents his research on water irrigation in rural Itabuna. (Photo from ESPM)

Isaac is one of nearly sixty high-ability student researchers I met at the action research showcase I led in Brazil. Our Mizzou Academy Poster Showcase: *The United Nations SDGs in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*, was held at Escola Superior de Propaganda e Marketing ([ESPM](#)) in December 2024.

Youth Participatory Action Research

Often the only exposure high school students have for conducting empirical research is through labs in their science classes. Youth participatory action research (YPAR) methods offer an alternative approach to sense-making. As the former chair of a large gifted program and now as a school director at [Mizzou Academy](#), I have been struck by the ways action research (especially YPAR) can expand inquiry and impact in our classrooms.

YPAR encourages students to work *with* their communities on projects that matter to them (Ozer, Martinez, Abraczinskas, Villa, & Prata, 2022; Call-Cummings, Sheanain, & Buttner, 2022). Central to this approach is the guiding premise that young people are capable researchers who are ready to impact change in their communities.

Action Research

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Making Interdisciplinary Connections



Isaac Silva presents his research on water irrigation in rural Itabuna. (Photo from ESPM)

High school juniors Mirela Cruz and Israel Xavier are such researchers. They live in an under-resourced neighborhood in São Paulo, SP, and have developed a machine called “Coleta AI.” This machine leverages technology to promote recycling and transform waste management by reducing barriers that contribute to waste challenges in our communities

The user sets their trash on a shelf, and the AI system that the student team developed sorts the item(s) into recycling, waste, and compostable categories. It also tells the user why the waste was sorted this way.

Israel and Mirela have iterated their project to the point that it is now a usable solution in their K-12 school. It was also our solution to waste sorting at the action research poster showcase.

Mirela shared that when they started their research, they were focused on increasing sustainability and recycling; however, the more they learned, the more they discovered that global issues such as those outlined by the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) are interrelated. Today she and Israel are exploring how technology and education can help solve [SDG 1: Eliminate Poverty](#).

Critical Thinking and Creativity

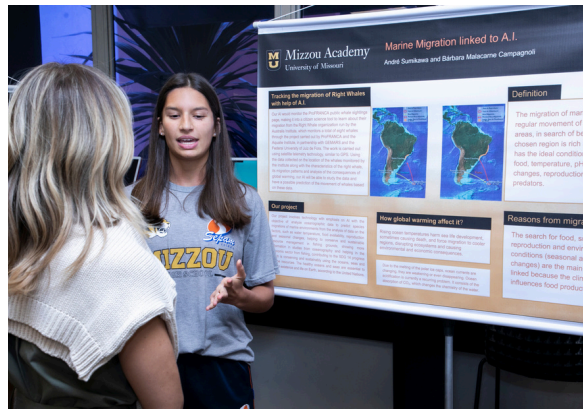
High school sophomore Bárbara Malacarne Campagnoli lives in Ponta Grossa, PR, in southern Brazil. She and her classmate André Sumikawa share a passion for climate action. Through their research, they hope to create “a citizen science AI tool” derived from existing sources including the [ProFRANCA public whale sightings page](#), [the Australian Institute](#), and the [Aqualie Institute](#).

Action research encourages students to ask and answer the questions that matter most to them and their communities (Fishman-Weaver, 2018; Khawaja, Bagley, & Taylor, 2024). André is an aspiring marine biologist, and Bárbara is a competitive swimmer. When students have the opportunity to engage in their own research, they gain critical thinking skills, agency, and leadership.

Action Research

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As an educator, I have had the humbling delight of seeing this work lead to surprising solutions, new methods, and creative connections. When students have the opportunity to engage in their own research, they gain agency, leadership, and critical thinking skills.



Bárbara Malacarne Campagnoli speaks about her research on whale migration. (Photo from ESPM)

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

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

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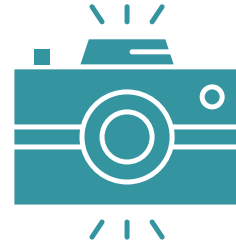
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Gifted Research at a Glance: Scholar Snapshots



Are you curious about ways to access the most up-to-date research in gifted education without being a graduate student? See suggestions below!

National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) Membership: Members of NAGC can log in with their member credentials to access Gifted Child Quarterly (GCQ), Teaching for High Potential (THP), and Parenting for High Potential (PHP).

- Gifted Child Quarterly (GCQ) is the official journal of the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC). As a leading journal in the field, GCQ publishes original scholarly reviews of the literature and quantitative or qualitative research studies. NAGC members can log in with their member credentials to access GCQ online.
- Teaching for High Potential (THP): NAGC's quarterly magazine written for educators of high-ability learners. It is published in February, May, August, and November.
- Parenting for High Potential (PHP): NAGC's quarterly magazine written especially for families of high-ability learners. It is published in March, June, September, and December.

Council for Exceptional Children-The Association for the Gifted Division (CEC-TAG)

Membership: Members of CEC-TAG receive four issues of the Journal for the Education of the Gifted (JEG) per year, as well as have online access to every past JEG issue. Members can also receive online or print access to Teaching Exceptional Children, a research-to-practice journal that covers all exceptionalities.

- JEG: The official publication for CEC-TAG. This journal provides diverse ideas and points of view on gifted education, counseling, and parenting.

Open Access Articles: An open access article is an article that is available online for free, with few restrictions on how it can be reused. If you are needing help finding open access articles, the sites below can be very helpful.

- Digital Commons Network (DCN): <https://network.bepress.com/>
- Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ): <https://doaj.org/>
- Google Scholar: <https://scholar.google.com/>

Contact Article Author: Another great option to access articles that are not open access are to contact the article author directly. Many times, they will be willing to share their work with you.

The Early Advantage: What Research Reveals About Front-Loading

By Kathy Poole (Rockwood School District)

Two pioneering programs, Project EXCITE and Young Scholars, have demonstrated the power of front-loading approaches in education. Both programs utilize data-driven decision-making, early intervention (at or before grade 3), broad inclusion, family partnerships, and enrichment outside of school to transform student outcomes (Olszewski-Kubilius & Steenbergen-Hu, 2017; Horn et al., 2021). Project EXCITE has significantly expanded access to honors and AP courses, while Young Scholars has increased representation in gifted programming. Their success offers valuable insights for Missouri schools striving to close achievement and excellence gaps.

What is Front-loading?

Front-loading is intentionally designed preparation for later advanced learning. Typical preparation before a child's first day of school is not equal or fair. Picture two students: one who has been exposed to enriched learning experiences since birth and another who has not. The difference in their academic trajectories is often significant. Students who begin their educational journey without the background experiences, family resources, or early environments to nurture talents and abilities within are often the same students overlooked for advanced learning opportunities.

Early differences contribute to both achievement and excellence gaps. While achievement gaps are well-known, excellence gaps refer to disparities among high-achieving groups. These gaps arise when certain student groups are underrepresented in gifted programs, leadership roles, advanced courses, and other opportunities for high-level development. Using data to identify excellence gaps is a first step in closing them.



The Early Advantage

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In an analysis of front-loading interventions, Meyers et al. (2024) identified key factors for success: a multifaceted approach, supported learning experiences, social support networks, and vertical alignment of content and skills with the excellence gap. A well-designed front-loading intervention can “allow students to see their possible futures” while positively impacting their trajectory (Meyers et al., 2024, p. 54).

While distinct from talent development, front-loading is often misunderstood as addressing basic skills deficiencies. Instead, it empowers students to become independent learners by fostering thinking processes and psychosocial skills toward confidently accessing advanced learning opportunities. It is an adaptable intervention to any school or district.



Current gifted education practices, reliant on universal screening, local norms, and nonverbal assessments, often miss students with hidden potential. These practices typically identify students after their abilities have already manifested. Front-loading, by contrast, equips all students with skills and thinking processes that foster high-ability development before screening and identification. This proactive approach, recognized by Plucker and Peters (2016) in their Excellence Gap Intervention Model, ensures more equitable gifted identification.

The Early Advantage

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Front-Loading in Practice

Inspired by research, our team created Explore, a front-loading program to build capacity for first- and second-grade students in four Title I schools. Program components were modeled after Project EXCITE and Young Scholars: data-driven decision-making, family partnerships, collaboration with school staff, and curricular goals that support the development of critical and creative thinking strategies, cognitive risk-taking, and perseverance.



Thinking strategies were modified from the Young Scholars program: divergent and convergent thinking, systems thinking, visualizing, mind mapping, analogies, encapsulation, questions, and point of view. Skills are explicitly taught and embedded in problem-solving tasks, an effective approach for supporting critical thinking (Kettler, 2016). These skills were selected to build capacity in thinking processes, strengthen visual-spatial skills, and build self-efficacy toward the goal of students becoming independent learners and able to demonstrate their hidden abilities.

The Early Advantage

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The Explore program has shown remarkable strides in nurturing hidden potential and identifying students from diverse backgrounds who would have likely been overlooked for gifted services without the front-loading intervention. Nearly half of student participants were identified for gifted services. Teachers and parents observe increased student confidence, cognitive risk-taking, and perseverance. It was through adapting the front-loading intervention to student needs, despite limited resources, that we are making progress in closing opportunity and excellence gaps.

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Love I.Q.

By Lauren Huff (University of Missouri Student)

Introduction

I participated in gifted programs throughout my childhood, but adulthood presented a new set of challenges without specialized support. Being gifted has influenced every aspect of my life, my romantic life being no exception (Figure 1). Noticing similar patterns in other gifted individuals around me, I scoured the internet for resources, but could not find answers to my questions.

The Harvard Study of Adult Development is one of the longest ongoing research studies in the world. Spanning more than eighty years and counting, its aim is to discover what will lead to a happy and fulfilled life. The number one finding to date:

relationships and community.

Figure 1

I am a senior at the University of Missouri, studying psychology. Conducting scientific research is a critical component of my degree. My freshman year, I studied romantic relationships; motivated by my desire to answer questions about giftedness, I constructed a study in 2023 that explored the factors contributing to a successful relationship for a gifted individual.



Love I.Q.

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Research Methods

I analyzed thirty-five narratives from public Reddit forums, in which gifted individuals discussed their romantic relationships. Others offered commentary on the original posts, sharing their own anecdotes. I used a software called MAXQDA to begin a process called coding (identifying and assigning themes to segments of the narratives; Figure 2). Codes assist in identifying data patterns and potential correlations. I coded the narratives until reaching saturation, when no new codes emerged from the data. I then began a thorough analysis of my results.

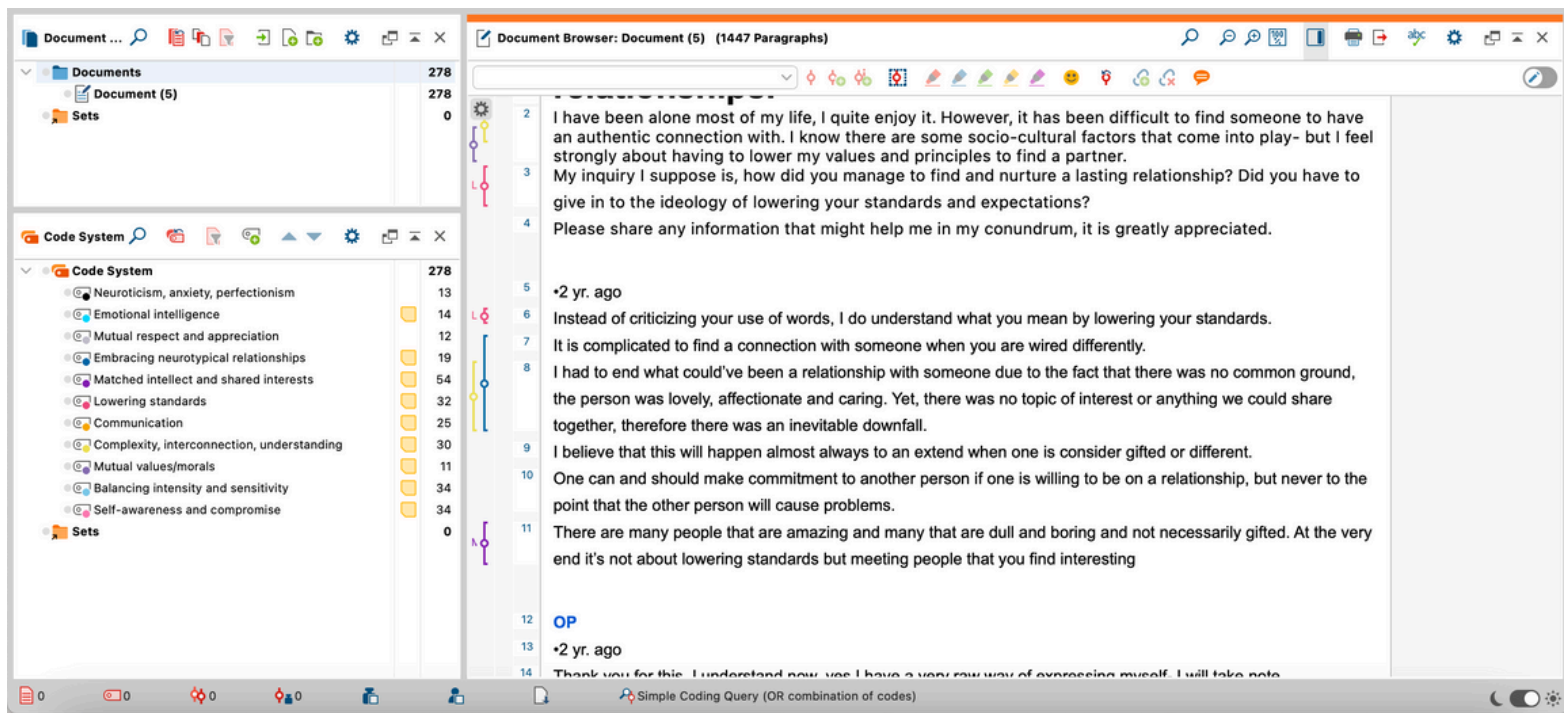


Figure 2

Results and Application

My codes and examples are outlined in Figure 3 on the next page.

Love I.Q.

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Code	Description	Exemplary Quotes
Self-awareness and compromise	Participants expressed the importance of compromise. They felt that this meant adapting to another person and being aware of their own flaws.	"Nobody is perfect and there will always be some compromising of the 'self' to adapt to living with another human. Some of that change has been good though, I think my 'standards' were probably unrealistic even if I were to find a gifted partner. We are all on our own journey, sometimes it's nice to share it."
Balancing intensity and sensitivity	People enjoyed relationships with those who could balance to their intensity. Gifted individuals are often intense and more sensitive in thoughts, emotions, and conversations.	"I think one of the most important factors is finding someone who wants to understand you and appreciates the 'different', but can also balance out some of the intensity."
Mutual values/morals	Individuals stressed the importance of shared values and morals.	"I am also open to negotiating as long as it does not violate my core values and principles."
Complexity, interconnection, understanding	Gifted people sought a partner who could embrace their tendency to see complex patterns and understand deep concepts.	"I get sad when he doesn't pick up on my passion or just writes off something I say I really wanted to get into. I'll get... really hurt to the point I'm holding back tears and even in the moment I know it's ridiculous. It feels lonely ultimately."
Communication	Participants wanted smooth communication and hoped to find someone who would converse with them.	"After a bad friend breakup I now tell my partner and friends what my wants/needs are in a relationship and ask what their needs are too. As they say, communication is the key. Also, people constantly grow and change. Communication is essential to navigate that constant state of flux."
Lowering standards	Individuals felt they had to lower their standards when it came to intelligence in order to find a suitable partner. However, they also worried then that this person would not be able to understand them and fully connect with them.	"Yes, I adjusted my standards in terms of intelligence (not in the million other aspects of a person), because if I looked for a guy as intelligent as me who also matches me in other areas, I'm sure I would be forever alone."
Matched intellect and shared interests	Many people sought partners of similar intellectual ability as them. However, others commented on wanting someone who was intelligent in different ways than them. This relates to Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences - there are many ways in which a person can be gifted or smart, and these are not restricted to the stereotypical ways in which people often perceive giftedness.	"My success in my relationship is related to my wife bringing traits and experiences to the table that I don't have."
Embracing neurotypical relationships	People felt their relationships with neurotypical provided a fresh perspective and balance to life. Neurotypical individuals are typically less sensitive and think less abstractly than their gifted counterparts; a relationship between neurotypicals and gifted people can be beneficial for both parties as it allows their strengths and weaknesses to be balanced.	"I think I've realized that dating a gifted person can be just as much of a challenge for neurotypicals as we see it the other way around. When I first started dating my now husband, our relationship was shallow intellectually. I knew he was smart, but he just didn't want to share his thoughts or opinions with me."

Figure 3

Love I.Q.

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It is important to note that mutual respect and appreciation, along with shared values and morals, are some of the greatest factors in any successful relationship. But a gifted person's strong convictions of their beliefs and sensitivity to perceived disrespect can make this a dealbreaker. But conflict occurs in all relationships; it is how we communicate and resolve conflict that makes a true difference. I know many reading this are likely parents or educators of the gifted, so I will provide ideas to translate my findings into action.

- 1** Conflict is unavoidable. Gifted people are often perfectionistic, but accepting conflict can lower unrealistic expectations for oneself or a partner. Remind yourself that conflict and failure are opportunities to grow.
- 2** Utilize physical grounding techniques. Deep breathing techniques, identifying things felt through the five senses, going on a walk, utilizing doodling or fidget toys, or a hug can be helpful in many circumstances.
- 3** Turn criticism into effective communication. Use "I-feel" statements: I feel ____ when ____, because _____. Or try "XYZ" statements: When you X in situation Y I feel Z. These help prevent scrutiny aimed at your partner.
- 4** Remind one another that you are on the same team - it is not you against your partner, but you and your partner against the problem.
- 5** Practice active listening. Listen to your partner and rephrase their words back to them, signaling that you are truly paying attention. It also ensures you have correctly interpreted their words.

Teenage relationships often require additional care - the following can help you provide support to the teen in your life:

- 1** Remember what is 'normal' for teens during adolescence. Typically, teens crave independence, autonomy, and increased risk. Their brains are attuned to feedback and influence from peers. Adolescence involves identity formation; it is typical for teens to explore who they are.

Love I.Q.

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2

Asynchronous development (a characteristic of giftedness) can impact teenage relationships. They may seem more mature than peers, yet simultaneously less mature. Connecting with peers can be challenging. This can emerge with romantic partners and manifest as self-criticism, emotional outbursts, feeling inadequate, or ruminating over problems. They may be especially sensitive to criticism from a partner.

3

Gifted people are imaginative - but at times may struggle to remove the rose-colored glasses. Adolescents may idealize their partner. Experience is often the best teacher, but you can ask thoughtful questions to help your teen evaluate a partner's words and actions rather than focusing on an ideal.

4

Consider age appropriate boundaries that shift as your teen matures. Avoid instating unnecessary rules - gifted teenagers will see right through this. Instead, discuss boundaries together, asking what they think is appropriate and why. Thank them for sharing, and give thorough reasoning for the boundaries you place (try using "I-feel" and "XYZ" statements). Even if you veto their requests, they will appreciate feeling that you view them as the independent, autonomous person they are becoming.

5

In the classroom, it may be unrealistic to discuss romantic relationships. Instead focus on skill development. Encourage self-reflection and emotional regulation through journaling, analyzing relationships in media or literature, or discussing ethical dilemmas and conflict resolution. These concepts can be addressed in education but applied outside the classroom.

I hope that my research and the suggestions included in this article are insightful and useful for you. On a final note, please remember that the suggestions I have listed are for use in healthy relationships. *If you or a loved one is experiencing abuse or domestic violence, please reach out for help. National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE.*



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- ED 652 G — Affective Needs of Gifted*
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- ED 619 G — Gifted Internship^
- ED 633 G — Research in Gifted Education^
- ED 651 G — Curriculum for Gifted (1st or 2nd, 8-weeks)

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Identifying Psychosocial Concerns of Upper Elementary Students with Gifts and Talents

By Katherine Rottjakob and Jessica Harris (William & Mary Doctoral Candidates)

Research shows that psychosocial competencies are crucial for long-term achievement and talent development, particularly for students with gifts and talents (SWGT) who have unique psychosocial needs compared to typical learners (Lipnevich et al., 2016; Subotnik et al., 2011; Subotnik et al., 2023; Shaunessy-Dedrick & Lazarou, 2019). It is necessary for schools to take a more proactive role in supporting the psychosocial development of SWGT alongside academic mastery (Lipnevich et al., 2016; Subotnik et al., 2011).

Theoretical Framework

Erikson's theory of psychosocial development provides a framework within which we can place essential targeted skills for development, ensuring that curriculum can be developed according to prescribed stages and identified needs (Burrus & Brenneman, 2016; Robinson & Tabler, 2016). Erikson's theory emphasizes specific stages where social experiences have a lasting impact on the individual. These are identified as psychosocial crises, and how the individual resolves each crisis contributes to normal or abnormal development. This study's needs assessment was developed in alignment with Erikson's psychosocial crises identified in the School-Based Psychosocial Curriculum Model (Cross et al., 2017). It included interpersonal and intrapersonal indicators and potential negative manifestations of those skills within the classroom context.



Psychosocial Concerns

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Methodology

This study followed a convergent mixed methods design (Creswell, 2015). A convergent mixed methods design compares different perspectives drawn from qualitative and quantitative data. The primary data collection method for this study was a needs assessment survey. A needs assessment is a “systematic process for determining goals and establishing priorities for action” (Briggs, 1977, p. xxiv, as cited by Richey & Klein, 2009). This study aimed to create a needs assessment instrument to identify the most prominent psychosocial concerns among upper elementary SWGTs from the perspective of their teachers.

Research Question

1. What are the most prominent interpersonal and intrapersonal psychosocial concerns observed among third through fifth-grade students with gifts and talents in the Midwest School District, as reported by teachers?

Participants

The anonymous online needs assessment survey was conducted with 3rd, 4th, and 5th-grade general and gifted education practitioners within one school district. The needs assessment distribution included 224 teachers, 14 within the elementary gifted program context and 210 within the district’s general education settings. The teacher participants provided insights based on their perceptions of their SWGT in elementary gifted programming and district general education classrooms.

Psychosocial Concerns

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Results

The survey elicited 29 responses, a 13% response rate. There were a total of 29 survey participants, 6 were third-grade teachers, 9 were fourth-grade teachers, 9 were fifth-grade teachers, and 4 were teachers who teach grades 3-5. The top interpersonal concerns highlighted by teachers were (1) considering others (64.7%, n=11), (2) cooperation and working in groups (59%, n=10), (3) identifying resources and barriers (47%, n=8), (4) trying new things (47%, n=8), and (5) positive failure (47%, n=8). The top intrapersonal concerns highlighted by teachers were (1) self-concept (63%, n=12), (2) practice (53%, n=10), (3) identifying internal resources (47%, n=9), (4) self-soothing (47%, n=9), and (5) persistence (47%, n=9).

Implications

Based on these findings, *practitioners* working with SWGT should prioritize developing targeted interventions for both interpersonal skills (particularly group work and perspective-taking) and intrapersonal competencies (especially self-concept and practice habits). The high prevalence of concerns around self-concept (63%) and considering others (64.7%) suggests these areas warrant immediate attention in curriculum development and classroom support structures. Classroom practitioners can strengthen these interventions by systematically gathering ongoing feedback from students and families, leveraging their frequent interactions to better understand and address psychosocial needs. *Parents* can support these efforts at home by creating opportunities for their SWGT to work collaboratively with peers, practicing perspective-taking through family discussions, and helping build healthy self-concept through balanced praise and appropriate challenges. Parents should also maintain open communication with teachers about their children's psychosocial development and work to create consistent support strategies across home and school environments. Given the low response rate (13%), *administrators* should prioritize comprehensive psychosocial support by implementing systematic monitoring across all gifted classrooms and providing necessary professional development and resources to support teachers in this crucial work.

Psychosocial Concerns

continued from Page 23

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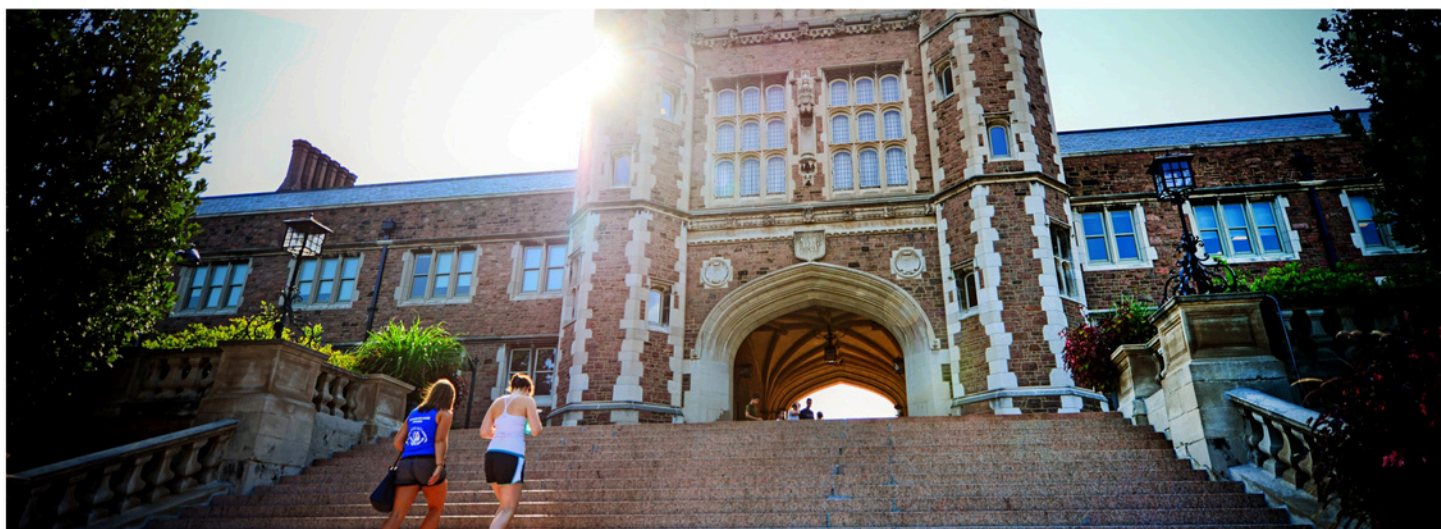




PROGRAMMING FOR STUDENTS

As we look ahead to the warmer months, it's the perfect time to explore enriching summer opportunities for your gifted students. In this special ad insert, we've gathered a selection of exciting summer programs designed to spark curiosity, foster creativity, and support academic growth. Whether your students are interested in STEM, the arts, or developing leadership skills, these programs offer a variety of experiences to keep them engaged and learning all summer long. Dive into the ads on the next few pages to discover opportunities that will inspire and challenge your students during the summer break!





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- Creative Immersion, June 15-28, 2025
- Research Development, July 6-19, 2025
- Environmental Studies, July 13-26, 2025

High School Summer Launch

- noncredit, residential program rising sophomores or juniors (graduating 2027 or 2028)
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2025

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Mary Potthoff, Director
Center for Gifted Education
mpotthof@drury.edu

DESE Gifted Education Update February 5, 2025

Christine Nobbe
Director of Gifted Education
Christine.Nobbe@desemo.gov



Updated Gifted Program Rule & *Gifted Education Program Guidelines* Effective 11/30

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 focuses 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* became effective on November 30, 2024. Please see the [Gifted Program Administrative Memo](#).

DESE 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

The 2023-24 gifted education reports and maps and the report cards were released in December 2024. Some interesting observations:

- There are more gifted programs in 2024 than the previous year.
- The maps on the [DESE Gifted Education page](#) are now available in the data dashboard ribbon on the [main data page](#), making it more visible.
- Both the report cards and gifted program reports provide information about gifted students. (Go to [DESE's Gifted Education](#) page and open the green Data tab.)
- Studying the school report cards within one district is very revealing.

If you see discrepancies in your district's reports, please let me know.

Gifted and Talented Tuesdays

The [Winter/Spring flier](#) is available on DESE's Gifted Education webpage. I am still looking for guest speakers for the third Tuesday at 3:30 focusing on gifted education classrooms and lessons.

Powerful Learning Conference

The 2025 conference was impressive! I would love to feature two breakout sessions in 2026 focusing on gifted learners. Over half of the ~1000 attendees are K-12 classroom teachers so a session on meeting the needs of gifted learners in all classrooms would be beneficial. Ideally, gifted educators would co-present with general education teachers who are successfully working with gifted kiddos. The dates are Feb. 1-3, 2026, and the call for proposals will open in March.

Superintendent Recommendation for an Additional Professional Subject-Area Certification

A new provision within Section 168.021, RSMo, provides an alternative option for educators who are currently certified and want to add an additional area of teacher certification. More information is available in [Administrative Memo OEQ-24-002](#).

Staying Connected – Small Schools

In November I visited three schools (one with <50 students) to better understand the unique needs of educators and students in small districts. I loved visiting and was so impressed with the educators, students, and activities. One of my takeaway questions is, how can virtual classes and experiences support small school districts? It seems like virtual classes, field trips, and speakers would be very beneficial.

Growing Gifted Education in 2025

The future depends on what we do in the present.
— Mahatma Gandhi

I look forward to learning and growing in 2025! Would you be interested in online or in-person summer workshops in June/August? [Let me know!](#)



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LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



Missouri State Capital Report

By Kyna Iman (GAM Governmental Affairs Consultant)

GAM Advocacy Platform

In the State of Missouri, “gifted children” means those who “exhibit precocious development of mental capacity and learning potential as determined by competent professional evaluation to the extent that continued educational growth and stimulation could best be served by an academic environment beyond that offered through a standard grade level curriculum.” RSMo. 162.675 GAM has actively supported the needs of high-ability and high-potential learners in Missouri since 1980. GAM provides teacher training, curriculum development, parent support, regional seminars and workshops, scholarships, student competitions, and awards. Further, GAM conducts an annual state conference for all Missouri stakeholders in gifted education. In addition, GAM employs a legislative consultant to advocate for gifted students at the state level and through the legislative process.

GAM Advocates For:

1. Legislation to support funding for gifted education in all Missouri Public Schools.
2. Protection and support for the state mandate to provide gifted services to identified gifted students in all Missouri Public Schools, through a state-approved gifted program.
3. Requirement for each school district to report annually to DESE regarding the programs or services being provided for gifted students within their district and the number of students being served.
4. A required undergraduate level course in gifted education to prepare future teachers to address a wide range of abilities and to facilitate their use of instructional strategies to maximize their students’ potential.
5. Professional development in differentiation to assure that all teachers are equipped to differentiate the curriculum for a wide range of learners, including students from diverse populations, with a focus on academic rigor.
6. Mandatory Professional Development hours for school personnel responsible for the coordination and administration of gifted programs and services in the areas of Nature and Needs of Gifted Learners and Curriculum and Instruction for Gifted Learners.

Legislative Update

continued from Page 30

7. Initiatives and opportunities which will benefit gifted students beyond high school, (i.e. Bright Flight, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Dual Credit).
8. The support of enrichment programs which go above and beyond school requirements including summer programs, higher education opportunities, Missouri Scholars Academy, Missouri Fine Arts Academy, as well as other programs which support gifted learners.
9. Support for the state-wide Advisory Council for the Gifted and Talented with members who have experience with gifted programs to advise the State Board of Education regarding applicable rules and regulations, as well as other issues that relate to programs for gifted and talented students.
10. Continued support for a full-time Director of Gifted Education position through the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

For further information concerning advocacy please contact:

Kyna Iman, GAM Legislative Consultant, kynaiman@earthlink.net

**Interested in learning more about the legislation GAM Is tracking?
Check out the list of bills [HERE](#).**





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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.

Advertising, sponsorships, and vendor opportunities are not the only ways to support gifted and advanced learners in Missouri. Learn, connect, and advocate by becoming a GAM member today! Or, visit our website to make a tax-deductible donation.

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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Fall 2025: Ads due Sept 1; published on or before Oct 1.

Winter 2025: Ads due Nov 1; published on or before Dec 1.



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



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The Missouri Scholars Academy: A Reflection

By Alessia Roten (MSA Class of 2024)

GAMbits
and Pieces

“Boomba.”

I near-whispered the nonsense word into the microphone on the stage of MU’s Jesse Hall.

“HEY!”

An instantaneous response from a deafening chorus composed of 300 of the most brilliant students in the state of Missouri, now anything but the near-strangers they once were. An eclectic group of rising juniors who had come to campus only a mere three weeks ago, gifted with skill, knowledge, and ability, were now getting ready to leave gifted with something infinitely more valuable; experiences, understanding, and so much more love for one another than we could have dreamed. “Boomba-hey”, the Academy’s signature nonsense call and response, is much more than a tradition; it is a promise of understanding, an assurance that you are not alone.



Last night at MSA. Photo by Ever Cole.

My name is Alessia Roten, and I had the lifetime honor of attending the Missouri Scholars Academy and the ultimate privilege of being given the opportunity to share my experiences and profound love for the program through a closing speech and this article. MSA is a three-week residential academy designed for 330 academically gifted students in Missouri about to enter their junior year of high school. Each June, the Academy takes place on the campus of the University of Missouri and is managed by the University of Missouri Honors College. For many of us Missouri Scholars, this is perhaps our first opportunity to explore ourselves and the world, finally given the chance to learn and discuss our deepest thoughts and feelings among peers and instructors who challenge us.

MSA Student Reflection *continued from Page 33*

We scholars have been a part of something truly bigger than we can fully comprehend. We have been a part of our majors, our primary course that lasted three hours each morning, where often we'd find ourselves having a discussion that got so heated and abstract that the whole room just started laughing about it, whether it took place in a chemistry lab or an art gallery downtown. We bared our hearts and shared parts of ourselves we were not aware existed in the afternoons during Cor:PSD, a time dedicated to the exploration of personal and social dynamics within smaller groups of us scholars, in which our most raw feelings and fears, our beliefs, our very hopes and dreams were all treated with just as much care as our academic endeavors. We've talked and debated intensely complex topics



Major "It's the End of The World as We Know It" class exploring CoMo. Photo by Brian Stuhlman.

over the most despicable, deplorable culinary creations in the history of humankind from the dining hall below the dorms in which we became a family. I've seen games of Scrabble and Taboo more heated than a fistfight; I've witnessed debates more heartfelt than a hug. I watched 300 incredible young individuals all become themselves more with every day that passed, and I saw them all grow, as I had, to care more for one another than should be possible in such a short time by any definition of physics.

Whether going head to head with chess masters, exploring nuclear reactors, reenacting a Victorian funeral procession, or line dancing after an afternoon debating a hundred different versions of the trolley problem, the things we learned and discovered and the bizarre, beautiful ways in which we did so completely transcended any experience I have ever had, and transformed the way I approach both academics and life itself. The process

MSA Student Reflection *continued from Page 34*

of finding and discovering how to find this sense of the miraculous in everything was indescribable and irreplaceable, yet even more so were the relationships that were built during this process. Before the Academy, I had never met anyone who heard me, who truly understood my thoughts, dreams, and hopes. Someone I could have a real conversation with, and know we were both having the same one. The Academy gave me what it miraculously and unfailingly gives every single Scholar each year. What has been cultivated and built here is both indescribable and irreplicable. Saying hello and goodbye to the Academy in less than one month was one of the most beautiful, gut-churning experiences I have ever had. The Academy became home, and it still is. It's a place where we can always revisit our memories to reflect on its lessons and love. Encouraged to explore things outside of our typical patterns and comforts, we learned to truly love the unknown, an interdisciplinary journey into so many facets of the human experience and gained a truly understanding community. MSA is a special time and place, where we are free of judgment, and free of the fear of it; where we are free of fear of the unknown, fear of failing, of falling. MSA gifts us with this experience, a space to love, play, learn and teach, to be entirely ourselves and to discover who that may be. They gift us the opportunity, the responsibility to utilize our own "gifts" in a way that matters. So that we can move forward, think forward, and love forward. So that we can forge our creativity, sow a new mentality, and mold a new reality.



Alessia Roten delivering speech at MSA Closing Ceremony. Photo by Ever Cole.

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The Missouri Advisory Council on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children: Updates and Progress

**GAMbits
and Pieces**

By Dr. Beth Winton (Chair, Advisory Council on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children)

The Advisory Council on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children has been hard at work advocating for and advancing the education of gifted students across Missouri. In the past year, the Council made significant strides in several key areas, from policy advocacy to providing valuable resources for educators and parents.

As the Chairperson, my name is out front but this not a one-person show. I am honored to work with this amazing group of educators and I cannot express enough gratitude for the work of all Council members that promotes and advances opportunities for Missouri's gifted students. The members of the Council are:

- Dr. Beth Winton (chair), Program Administrator for CPS Online, Columbia Public Schools
- Ms. Ginger Beaird, ECSE Teacher, Bernie R-XIII School District
- Dr. Lenae Lazzelle, Gifted Education Director, Springfield Public Schools
- Mr. Karl McKimmey, Gifted Teacher, Lebanon R-3 School District
- Dr. Dennis Rhodes, Director of Gifted Education, Rockwood School District
- Ms. Amanda Sauerwein, ELA teacher, Missouri Virtual Academy
- Ms. Carol Toney, Gifted Resource Teacher, North Kansas City Schools
- Dr. DeShonda Payton (alt.), Principal, Jennings School District
- Dr. Heather Van Otterloo (alt.), Gifted Education Teacher, Joplin Public Schools

Here's a brief update on the Council's activities this past year.

Ongoing Advocacy Efforts for Gifted Education

The Council has continued its strong advocacy for the needs of gifted students throughout the state. Recognizing that these students require unique support to reach their full potential, Council members have worked tirelessly to ensure that their educational needs remain at the forefront of the conversation for policymakers. Our advocacy has included active communication with state legislators, educational leaders, and individual meetings with school districts to promote enhanced programming for gifted education.

Updates and Progress

continued from Page 37

Presenting to the State Board of Education

On behalf of the Advisory Council, I recently had the privilege of presenting to the Missouri State Board of Education, with several Council members also in attendance. Here is the link to the [recording](#) of the meeting and the gifted education portion begins at minute 50:45. We were introduced as “the fun one” so we felt very welcome. During this presentation, the Council outlined key recommendations for improving gifted programming statewide, stressing the importance of providing more robust services for gifted learners, and encouraging the State Board of Education to consider these suggestions as they conduct discussions about future education policy. The Council's efforts at the state level are pivotal in making sure that gifted education remains a priority in Missouri schools.

Reducing Requirements to Earn Gifted Certification

One of the major initiatives from the Council this past year was advocating for and gaining approval of a reduction of the certification [requirements](#) for gifted educators. The Council, with the support of the Gifted Association of Missouri (GAM), gained approval to reduce the number of hours required to earn gifted certification from 23 down to 18, which will make it cheaper and easier for interested educators to enter the field and work with gifted students. This initiative was designed to address the growing need for more educators trained in gifted education and ensure that students are provided with the specialized support they need to thrive.

Publishing Guidance for Serving High School Gifted Students

Recognizing the unique challenges faced by high school gifted students, the Council has also published comprehensive [guidance](#) for school districts to better serve this group. This guidance includes best practices for differentiating instruction, offering advanced coursework, and supporting gifted students social and emotional needs as they prepare for postsecondary education or careers. By equipping districts with this valuable resource, the Council aims to enhance educational outcomes for gifted students throughout their high school years and beyond.

Updates and Progress

continued from Page 38

Guidance on Making Information Available for Parents

In addition to supporting educators and school districts, the Council has made it a priority to provide [resources](#) for districts to make information readily available for parents seeking information about gifted education. A newly published guide offers school districts clear and practical guidance on what information parents will want to access about gifted programming in Missouri. This will be a living document that will be updated as new information becomes available. This resource empowers parents to become active advocates for their children's education and ensures they have the tools to support their gifted child's development.

The Advisory Council on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children remains committed to advancing the educational experiences of gifted learners in Missouri. Additionally, it is a priority of the Council to collaborate with GAM to align the advocacy voices that support Missouri's gifted students and the teachers and parents who love them. To that end, I often testify in front of the House and Senate Education Committees in support of GAM's legislative priorities to show the shared commitment and collective support of the Council. Through advocacy, strategic guidance to school districts, teachers, and parents, and collaboration with state and local education officials, the Council is helping to ensure that gifted students receive the support they need to succeed.

Council meetings are open to the public and agendas and zoom links are published on the Council [website](#). Please feel free to contact any Council member if you have a concern that you think could be a topic for Council action. We look forward to continuing to represent the gifted students and the teachers of Missouri.

-Dr. Beth Winton, Chair, Advisory Council on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children



GAM District Regional Directors



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Region 1 is located in southeast Missouri and includes the following counties: Carter, Ripley, Ste. Genevieve, St. Francois, Perry, Madison, Wayne, Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Butler, Stoddard, Scott, Mississippi, New Madrid, Dunklin & Pemiscot.	Region 1 Director	Crystal Koenig
	Region 1 Assistant Director	Tara Pruett
Region 2 is the central/east region of the state, covering Audrain, Boone, Callaway, Camden, Cole, Cooper, Gasconade, Howard, Lincoln, Miller, Moniteau, Montgomery, Morgan, Osage, and Warren counties.	Region 2 Director	Brian Stuhlman
	Region 2 Assistant Director	Jody Thompson
Region 3 is located on the west side of Missouri and includes Platte, Clay, Jackson and Cass counties.	Region 3 Director	Jenna Nelson
	Region 3 Assistant Director	Jody Brison-Molina
Region 4 is located in northeast Missouri and includes the following counties: Putnam, Schuyler, Clark, Sullivan, Adair, Knox, Lewis, Linn, Macon, Shelby, Marion, Chariton, Randolph, Monroe, Ralls, Scotland, and Pike.	Region 4 Director	Emily Woodall
	Region 4 Assistant	Angie Cochran
Region 5 is located in the northwest corner of Missouri and includes the following counties: Atchison, Nodaway, Holt, Andrew, Buchanan, Clinton, Dekalb, Gentry, Worth, Harrison, Daviess, Caldwell, Mercer, Grundy, and Livingston.	Region 5 Director	Ashley Zeiler
	Region 5 Assistant Director	Sarah Mason
Region 6 is located in the middle of the southern region of Missouri and includes the following counties: Franklin, Washington, Crawford, Maries, Phelps, Pulaski, Texas, Dent, Iron, Reynolds, Shannon, Howell, and Oregon.	Region 6 Director	Michelle Bobo
	Region 6 Assistant Director	Christina Wallace
Region 7 is located in the southwest region of Missouri and includes the following counties: Vernon, Barton, Jasper, Newton, McDonald, Cedar, Dade, Lawrence, Barry, Stone, Taney, Ozark, Douglas, Christian, Wright, Webster, Greene, Polk, Dallas, and Laclede.	Region 7 Director	Heather VanOtterloo
	Region 7 Assistant Director	Christina Landburg
Region 8 is located in the eastern portion of Missouri and includes the following counties: St. Charles, St. Louis, and Jefferson.	Region 8 Co-Director	Jennifer Blank
	Region 8 Co-Director	Aisha Hasan
Region 9 includes the following counties: Bates, Benton, Carroll, Cass, Henry, Hickory, Johnson, Lafayette, Morgan, Pettis, Ray, St. Clair, Saline, and Vernon.	Region 9 Co-Director	Kristine Torres
	Region 9 Co-Director	Jodi Blumhorst

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
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SPRING: FEBRUARY 1, 2025

SUMMER: APRIL 1, 2025

FALL: SEPTEMBER 1, 2025

WINTER: NOVEMBER 1, 2025

**Questions? Email
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