

# The GAMbit

*An official publication of the Gifted Association of Missouri*

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## A Letter from the President

*by Dr. Tracy Bednarick-Humes*

### **On a Wing and Prayer**

Coming out of last fall's Annual Gifted Conference we were abuzz with how good it was to be attending a gifted education conference again in person—learning from experts, bouncing ideas off peers, and making new connections. Each year, we take a leap of faith when it comes to scheduling our next conference. Will we find a location? Can we afford our keynote speaker? How much will food prices go up this year? Yet, we know how vital these conferences are to our profession and the quality gifted education students in Missouri experience, so it's imperative that we continue to support the annual conference.

# President's Letter

*continued from Page 1*

This year, University of Missouri–Columbia has graciously offered to host our annual conference and the dates we've been offered are Monday, October 7th and Tuesday, October 8th, 2024. So, our LEAP OF FAITH has happened and now we must come together to make this an amazing event! Before we even start advertising the conference, we need your help in many ways. If you're interested in helping plan the conference, please contact our conference vice president, Amanda Sauerwein ([asauerwein@k12.com](mailto:asauerwein@k12.com)).



In the past our annual conference has been the major source of funding for our gifted advocacy, teacher support, and other support services for gifted education, but with rising costs, we are often just breaking even, leaving the rest of our budget quite tight. Mizzou will provide a location to us at no cost, but all other costs come out of our budget. In order to continue to provide a quality event, we need to look into other sources of funding. If you have a passion for grant writing, fundraising, or even contacting local businesses as a means of support, we'd love to hear from you. Feel free to reach out to me directly at [tracy.bednarick@gmail.com](mailto:tracy.bednarick@gmail.com) if interested.

Lastly, the Call for Proposals will come out soon. Please be thinking of ideas for sessions and reaching out to colleagues about presenting. If you have an idea for a session, but don't know who could present it, please reach out to Amanda or me, so we can brainstorm options and reach out to possible presenters. Additionally, we'd love to hear your keynote speaker suggestions!

Thank you for being part of this journey as we work together to support gifted education and gifted families in Missouri. We hope to see you in person in October in Columbia, MO!



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## NEWS FROM ACROSS THE STATE

### St. Clair Jr. High Wins Regional Future City Competition

Middle school students from St. Clair Junior High in St. Clair took home first place at the 2023-24 Missouri Future City Competition on January 20 at Missouri Science & Technology in Rolla. The St. Clair students will represent Missouri at the national competition in Washington, DC.



### 2024 New Teacher Workshop Set for July 15 - 16 in North Kansas City

The Gifted Association of Missouri's 2024 New Teacher Workshop for teachers new to gifted will take place Monday, July 15 and Tuesday, July 16, at the Northland Innovation Center, home to the S.A.G.E. gifted program in North Kansas City Schools. A block of hotel rooms has been reserved at the Fairfield Inn & Suites Kansas City North/Gladstone for \$139 a night. Call 816-866-9693 to reserve a room before June 14. Registration information will be posted on [mogam.org](http://mogam.org) in the near future.

### University of Missouri - Columbia Will Host GAM's 2024 Annual Conference

Mark your calendar to attend the Gifted Association of Missouri's Annual Conference at Mizzou, October 7-8, 2024. The conference will bring gifted teachers, administrators, and parents together from across the state to network, learn, and support gifted education. Hotel and registration information will be announced soon.

# Gifted Students and Educators Celebrate Gifted Education in Jefferson City

*GAM Day at the Capitol* is a celebration of support and advocacy for gifted education in Missouri. Dr. Tracy Bednarick-Humes (GAM President), Meredith Wisniewski (GAM Advocacy Chair), Kyna Iman (Legislative Advocate), Beth Winton (Gifted Advisory Council President), and Christine Nobbe (Director of Gifted Education, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) joined gifted students and educators from across the state on Wednesday, February 21, 2024 for this event. Representatives Brenda Shields and Ed Lewis shared their support for gifted education with the crowd, and Dr. Margie Vandeven (Missouri Commissioner of Education) spoke about the importance of gifted education in meeting the needs of all students. Below is the speech Dr. Bednarick-Humes shared with attendees to commemorate the day:

*Teachers, students, honored legislators and friends,  
Welcome to the Gifted Association of Missouri's GAM Day at the Capitol, where today we gather in unity and celebration to champion the cause of gifted education. As the President of the Gifted Association of Missouri, it is my distinct honor to extend a warm welcome to each and every one of you who has joined us here today in support of our gifted students and their unique needs. I stand before you with a heart filled with gratitude as we acknowledge the steadfast commitment of our legislature to the cause of gifted education.*



# Capitol Speech

*continued from Page 4*

*Your unwavering support for the gifted education mandate speaks volumes about your dedication to nurturing the talents and potential of every student in our great state of Missouri, not forgetting those who need additional enrichment and acceleration beyond what can feasibly be offered in a general education classroom.*

*I am also deeply thankful for the full funding provided during the 2023 sessions for the Missouri Scholars Academy and the Missouri Fine Arts Academy. These valuable programs serve as beacons of excellence, providing gifted students with the resources and opportunities they need to thrive and excel while exploring advanced fields of interest. Your investment in these academies not only enriches the lives of individual students but also strengthens the fabric of our communities and our state as a whole.*

*Moreover, I applaud our legislators for recognizing that gifted students require more than just learning enrichment. They need comprehensive support that addresses their unique academic and social-emotional needs. By acknowledging this reality, you have demonstrated a profound understanding of the challenges faced by gifted students and the crucial role that support systems play in their success.*

*It is imperative that we continue to champion the cause of gifted education, for the impact of our efforts extends far beyond the walls of our classrooms. Gifted students are not merely scholars; they are future leaders, innovators, and trailblazers who possess the potential to shape the course of our society and lead us towards a brighter tomorrow. By investing in their education and providing them with the support they need, we empower them to realize their full potential and become active, contributing members of their communities here in Missouri and beyond.*

*As we stand together today, let us reaffirm our commitment to ensuring that every gifted student in Missouri receives the support and resources they need to thrive. Let us continue to advocate tirelessly on their behalf, for their success is not only a testament to their individual talents but also a reflection of our collective commitment to excellence and equity in education.*

*In closing, I extend my deepest gratitude to each and every one of you for your unwavering dedication to the cause of gifted education. Together, let us forge ahead with courage and conviction, knowing that the future of our gifted students—and indeed, the future of our state—is in our hands. Thank you.*



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### FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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

Assistant Professor, Department of Special Education  
Online Program Director  
RandolphJ@missouri.edu  
573-884-1911



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# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



## Missouri State Capitol Report

By Kyna Iman

The House Budget Committee is meeting to discuss and review budget recommendations from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Funding for the Missouri Scholars’ Academy and the Missouri Fine Arts Academy are in House Bill 2.

The Gifted Association of Missouri requests your advocacy efforts to ensure full funding for both these academies. When the legislature fully funds the academies, then students do not have to pay tuition to attend these summer programs.

The Missouri Scholars Academy is a three-week program at the University of Missouri – Columbia, for 300 students gifted in science and math.

The Missouri Fine Arts Academy is a two-week program at Missouri State University, for 100 students, gifted in the fine arts.

Please contact your State Representative to urge his/her support for \$1 million to fund MSA & MFAA for June, 2025. You can look up your legislator here: [Senator Missouri Senate](#) | [Missouri Senate \(mo.gov\)](#)

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

## 2024 MO House and Senate Bills

BILL	SPONSOR/S	DESCRIPTION
<a href="#">SB 1022</a>	<a href="#">May</a>	Modifies the definition of weighted average daily attendance used to calculate state aid for school districts
<a href="#">SB 1005</a>	<a href="#">Eigel</a>	Authorizes the Governor to transfer the powers, duties, personnel, and property of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to other state agencies
<a href="#">SB 918</a>	<a href="#">Hoskins</a>	Establishes provisions relating to public school curriculum and instruction
<a href="#">SB 1208</a>	<a href="#">Koenig</a>	Provides that the State Board of Education shall cause its annual report to be published on the website of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
<a href="#">SB 1164</a>	<a href="#">Black</a>	Establishes the Education Stabilization Fund

# 2024 MO Bills

*continued from Page 5*

BILL	SPONSOR/S	DESCRIPTION
<a href="#"><u>SB 1051</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Trent</u></a>	Allows the enrollment of nonresident students in public school districts
<a href="#"><u>SB 1366</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Trent</u></a>	Establishes accountability measures for all public elementary and secondary schools
<a href="#"><u>HB 1486</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Shields, Brenda</u></a>	Changes provisions governing early childhood education programs
<a href="#"><u>HB 1851</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Brown, Paula</u></a>	Changes provisions governing the statewide assessment system for public schools
<a href="#"><u>HB 1989</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Pollitt, Brad</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Michael Davis</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Cheri Toalson-Reisch</u></a>	Establishes transfer procedures to nonresident districts for students in public schools
<a href="#"><u>HB 2184</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Haffner, Mike</u></a>	Modifies provisions governing school performance measures
<a href="#"><u>SB 1378</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Arthur</u></a>	Modifies the definition of "weighted average daily attendance" as used in the education funding formula
<a href="#"><u>HB 1911</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Richey, Doug</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Chris Dinkins</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Josh Hurlbert</u></a>	Establishes the "Missouri Parental Choice Tax Credit Act" relating to a tax credit for certain educational expenses
<a href="#"><u>HB 2313</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Brown, Donnie</u></a>	Establishes the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
<a href="#"><u>SB 957</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Bean</u></a>	Establishes the Education Stabilization Fund

# 2024 MO Bills

*continued from Page 8*

BILL	SPONSOR/S	DESCRIPTION
<a href="#"><u>SB 1014</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Arthur</u></a>	Establishes provisions relating to the compensation of public school teachers
<a href="#"><u>SB 967</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Roberts</u></a>	Modifies the calculation of weighted average daily attendance used to calculate state aid for school districts
<a href="#"><u>SB 955</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Eslinger</u></a>	Establishes provisions relating to teacher recruitment and retention and creates the "Teacher Baseline Salary Grant Program" and the "Teacher Recruitment and Retention State Scholarship Program"
<a href="#"><u>SB 1006</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Eigel</u></a>	Modifies provisions relating to charter schools and the assessment of public elementary and secondary schools
<a href="#"><u>SB 1080</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Arthur</u></a>	Modifies terms used in the elementary and secondary school funding formula
<a href="#"><u>SB 1013</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Arthur</u></a>	Establishes the Teacher Recruitment and Retention State Scholarship Program
<a href="#"><u>SB 1203</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Coleman</u></a>	Establishes provisions relating to transparency of school staff training, instructional, and curricular materials
<a href="#"><u>SB 1181</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Koenig</u></a>	Establishes provisions relating to discussion of certain concepts in public schools
<a href="#"><u>SB 1163</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Black</u></a>	Establishes provisions relating to teacher recruitment and retention and creates the "Teacher Baseline Salary Grant Program" and the "Teacher Recruitment and Retention State Scholarship Program"
<a href="#"><u>SB 1286</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Bernskoetter</u></a>	Modifies provisions relating to time and salary limitations on working after retirement for members of the Public School Retirement System and the Public Education Employee Retirement System
<a href="#"><u>SB 1290</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Carter</u></a>	Establishes the "Classical Education Grant Program" for the purpose of assisting school districts with providing programs in classical education

# 2024 MO Bills

*continued from Page 9*

BILL	SPONSOR/S	DESCRIPTION
<a href="#"><u>HB 2537</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Steinhoff, Kathy</u></a>	Changes provisions governing the "Missouri Career Development and Teacher Excellence Plan"
<a href="#"><u>HB 1578</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Nurrenbern, Maggie</u></a>	Requires in-state public educational institutions to grant undergraduate course credit for students who score 4 or higher on international baccalaureate examinations
<a href="#"><u>HB 2051</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Strickler, Kemp</u></a>	Requires in-state public educational institutions to grant undergraduate course credit for students who score 4 or higher on international baccalaureate examinations
<a href="#"><u>HB 2415</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Brown, Chris</u></a>	Requires in-state public educational institutions to grant undergraduate course credit for students who score 4 or higher on international baccalaureate examinations
<a href="#"><u>HB 2494</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Quade, Crystal</u></a>	Modifies the calculations of state aid for school districts
<a href="#"><u>SB 728</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Koenig</u></a>	Creates provisions relating to public elementary and secondary school students
<a href="#"><u>SB 819</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Ben Brown (26)</u></a>	Creates, modifies, and repeals provisions relating to participation of certain students in nontraditional educational settings
<a href="#"><u>SB 867</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Brattin</u></a>	Authorizes a tax credit for certain educational expenses
<a href="#"><u>SB 814</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Carter</u></a>	Creates the Education Freedom Act and modifies provisions relating to the assessment of public elementary and secondary schools
<a href="#"><u>SB 902</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Schroer</u></a>	Creates and modifies provisions relating to elementary and secondary education
<a href="#"><u>HB 2471</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Buchheit-Courtway, Cyndi</u></a>	Modifies provisions governing mental health efforts in public schools

# 2024 MO Bills

*continued from Page 10*

BILL	SPONSOR/S	DESCRIPTION
<a href="#"><u>HB 2472</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Ealy, Anthony</u></a>	Modifies provisions governing calculations for state aid to public schools
<a href="#"><u>HB 1447</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Lewis, Ed</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Ingrid Burnett</u></a>	Modifies provisions governing teacher recruitment and retention
<a href="#"><u>HB 1786</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Pollitt, Brad</u></a>	Enacts additional teacher subject area certification for content knowledge or specialty areas
<a href="#"><u>HB 1648</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Black, John</u></a>	Creates incentive programs for public employees
<a href="#"><u>SB 729</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Koenig</u></a>	Authorizes a tax credit for certain educational expenses
<a href="#"><u>SB 770</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Brattin</u></a>	Establishes provisions regarding elementary and secondary education
<a href="#"><u>SB 877</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Beck</u></a>	Modifies the retirement allowance multiplier for certain members of the Public School Retirement System of Missouri
<a href="#"><u>HB 2335</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Nurrenbern, Maggie</u></a>	Establishes the Teacher Recruitment and Retention State Scholarship Program
<a href="#"><u>HB 2343</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Fogle, Betsy</u></a>	Requires school districts to excuse students with mental or behavioral health concerns from attendance at school
<a href="#"><u>SB 784</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Beck</u></a>	Establishes provisions relating to the minimum school term
<a href="#"><u>HB 1405</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Billington, Hardy</u></a>	Enacts provisions relating to the use of identifying pronouns by school employees and independent contractors

# 2024 MO Bills

*continued from Page 11*

BILL	SPONSOR/S	DESCRIPTION
<a href="#"><u>HB 1417</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Sauls, Robert</u></a>	Modifies provisions governing the minimum school term
<a href="#"><u>HB 1432</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Haley, Willard</u></a>	Adds a condition under which a certificate of license to teach will be granted
<a href="#"><u>HB 1505</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Bangert, Gretchen</u></a>	Establishes the "Missouri Teachers Classroom Supply Assistance Program"
<a href="#"><u>HB 1715</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Byrnes, Tricia</u></a>	Establishes antibullying requirements for school districts
<a href="#"><u>HB 1722</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Crossley, Aaron</u></a>	Modifies provisions relating to school employee retirement systems
<a href="#"><u>HB 1739</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Richey, Doug</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Josh Hurlbert</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Brian Seitz</u></a>	Enacts provisions governing public elementary and secondary school students
<a href="#"><u>HB 1758</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Pollitt, Brad</u></a>	Establishes the Education Stabilization Fund
<a href="#"><u>HB 1810</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Riggs, Louis</u></a>	Establishes a fund for matching school district expenditures of reserve moneys to increase teacher salaries
<a href="#"><u>HB 1890</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Hein, Stephanie</u></a>	Establishes minimum teacher's salaries and provides grant moneys to assist school districts with increasing teacher salaries
<a href="#"><u>HB 1905</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Hurlbert, Josh</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Tim Taylor</u></a>	Establishes provisions relating to the participation of elementary and secondary school students in nontraditional educational settings
<a href="#"><u>HB 1922</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Morse, Herman</u></a>	Requires any legislation originating in the House that adds a new requirement for public schools to include provisions that reduce an existing requirement for public schools

# 2024 MO Bills

*continued from Page 12*

BILL	SPONSOR/S	DESCRIPTION
<a href="#">HB 1972</a>	<a href="#">Riley, Alex</a> <a href="#">Sherri Gallick</a>	Establishes the" STEM Career Awareness Activity Program"
<a href="#">HB 2092</a>	<a href="#">Lewis, Ed</a>	Modifies provisions governing scholarships available for teacher recruitment and retention purposes
<a href="#">HB 2252</a>	<a href="#">Johnson, Michael</a>	Requires school districts to excuse students with mental or behavioral health concerns from attendance at school
<a href="#">HB 1757</a>	<a href="#">Pollitt, Brad</a>	Establishes transfer procedures to nonresident districts for students in public schools

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# GAM SPEAKER SERIES



*March*

03/11/2024

PHOEBE POHLMAN--PERFECTIONISM IN GIFTED STUDENTS

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Many gifted learners experience unhealthy perfectionistic tendencies that affect their social and emotional health. Join gifted and talented instructor, Phoebe Pohlman, as she explains the six dimensions of perfectionism according to Dr. Randy Frost and discusses strategies students may use to turn unhealthy perfectionistic tendencies to healthy perfectionistic tendencies. Much of the presentation will be based on the social-emotional curriculum Pohlman created and implemented with gifted middle school students during a pilot study program of perfectionism in gifted students.

*April*

04/15/2024

JESSICA HARRIS AND KATHERINE ROTTJAKOB--MEETING THE PSYCHOSOCIAL NEEDS OF GIFTED LEARNERS THROUGH SUMMER PROGRAMMING

[REGISTER HERE](#)

This session will explore the unique psychosocial needs of gifted learners and how summer programming can be used to meet those needs. Topics will include: (1) The social and emotional challenges faced by gifted learners (2) Activities and experiences that can help gifted learners explore their interests and talents (3) The importance of providing gifted learners with opportunities for challenge and growth (4) Using the Schoolwide Enrichment Model as a framework for considering learning opportunities.

# DESE Gifted Education Update February 1, 2024

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



## Powerful Learning Conference

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The [Powerful Learning Conference](#) was a huge success! Save the date for February 2-4, 2025!

## Missouri Scholars and Missouri Fine Arts Academies

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I am writing this on February 1 and [MSA](#) nominations are due in 24 hours. The selection committee meets on February 16. [MFAA](#) had a record number of applications this year. Thank you for getting the word out!

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

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The Council presented to the State Board of Education on October 17<sup>th</sup>. Links to the report and the recording can be found on the Council's [webpage](#) – scroll down to the green tab titled “Reports to the State Board of Education” and open it for more information.

The Council worked with GAM on K-12 Gifted Education Certification updates requiring an amendment to state regulations. The rulemaking is in process and there will be an opportunity for public comments. Please [link to this document](#) for more details. Also, the Praxis gifted education exit exam is now available. Beginning September 1, 2024, a passing score on the Praxis exam will be required for gifted certification. (Praxis code 5358) The Praxis is not a substitute for coursework.

The Council met on January 17<sup>th</sup> and they decided to focus on two areas in 2024: a statement encouraging all districts to identify and serve students and resources for parents. They also approved two documents to support districts on high school services and identification.

## Gifted Rule, Desk Audits, and Data

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I am excited that updated public data is available! The Availability and Student Participation maps on [DESE's](#)

[Gifted Education page](#) have been updated for the 2022-23 school year (public data is always a year behind). Scroll down to the **green** Data tab and open it to study the State and District/Charter Gifted Education Reports. These reports load slowly because they are pulling from several data tables. The Data tab includes links to the Report Card and financial reports; all include gifted education data.

I started the desk audits and am working with districts who reported a decrease in the number of students served. Often these are data glitches.

Because of SB 681, the gifted education rule and *Gifted Education Program Guidelines* needed an update. The [amendment](#) is focused on the fact that in schools with ADA of 350 or less, the teacher providing services is not required to hold K-12 gifted certification. If you click on the link to the amendment and scroll down, you will find a copy of the updated *Guidelines*, effective on July 1, 2024 if approved by the State Board of Education in March.

## Gifted and Talented Tuesdays 2024

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I am offering [Gifted and Talented Tuesday](#) events from January 9 to May 14. I will need to cancel the February 6<sup>th</sup> Space Talk because of jury duty. I do not record the sessions but do ask the guest presenters for information to share. Watch the listserv for more information!

## A Whirlwind of Fall Conferences

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To prepare education professionals for the changes in the gifted education state statute, I presented at 12 fall conferences! The handouts that I shared can be found in the [Quick Links](#). The Portrait of a Gifted Learner stickers were a big hit! **If you are using the Portrait and/or the MO-GLOs, I would love to hear from you to collect information, stories, and examples for future conferences.**

## New Year – New Beginnings

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*New year is the glittering light to brighten the dream-lined pathway of future.* — Munia Khan

I look forward to building the future of gifted education in Missouri with you!

*-Christine*



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## SUMMER 2024

**ED 550 G** — Introduction to Gifted and Talented\*

**ED 605 G** — Psychology of Exceptional Children (1st or 2nd, 5-weeks)

**ED 626 G** — Creativity\*

**ED 650 G** — Identification of Gifted\*\*

**ED 652 G** — Affective Needs of Gifted\*

**ED 653 G** — Programming and Administration of Gifted\*\*

\* Offered first 5-week session

\*\* Offered second 5-week session

## FALL 2024

**ED 550 G** — Intro to Gifted & Talented\* **ED 604 G** — Professional Learning:  
Gifted Policy, Practice, & Research\*\*

**ED 605 G** — Psychology of Exceptional Children^

**ED 619 G** — Gifted Internship^

**ED 632 G** — Research: Applied Education Psychology^

**ED 651 G** — Curriculum for Gifted (1st or 2nd, 8-weeks)

## SPRING 2025

**ED 550 G** — Introduction to Gifted and Talented\*

**ED 605 G** — Psychology of Exceptional Children^

**ED 619 G** — Gifted Internship^

**ED 632 G** — Research: Applied Education Psychology^

\* Offered first 8-week session

\*\* Offered second 8-week session

^ Full semester

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



# 10 Thinking Points for Leaders Serving Rural Gifted Learners

By Jessica Harris

*Jessica Harris has served as an educator and leader within gifted programs for nearly 20 years in Virginia. Her research and interest areas include promoting access and opportunity for students who are traditionally underserved in advanced settings.*

Students with gifts and talents are an underdeveloped population in rural settings lacking critical resources for talent development, compounding disadvantages in enrichment access and leaving high potential students behind global competitors (Subotnik et al, 2011; Stambaugh & Stambaugh, 2021; Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012). This paper challenges rural education leaders to shift from a deficit view to adopting policies and practices across ten key areas, like identification and social-emotional supports, that strengthen outcomes for gifted learners.



## **Context-relevant identification systems**

Context-specific identification systems guided by community values and early, unbiased universal screening best serve rural gifted students with uneven testing profiles (Stambaugh & Stambaugh, 2021).



## **Talent development**

“Place-based” talent development creates a path for rural students instead of a path out, valuing and creating opportunities for domain achievement within the community rather than outside it (Howley et al., 2015, p.35). Talent development models should emphasize early enrichment exposure and ‘talent-scouting.’



## **Appropriately challenging curriculum**

Unchallenged gifted students have reduced motivation and competence (Cross et al., 2018); rural schools must provide equitable access to appropriately challenging curriculum revealing student potential (Olszewski-Kubilius & Thomson, 2015) through scaffolding developmentally appropriate content (McLeod, 2023).

# Serving Rural Gifted Learners *continued from Page 17*

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## **Acceleration**

Acceleration is a positive approach for student outcomes and resource allocation of districts (Howley et al., 2009). Plans must systematically determine developmental readiness, provide psychosocial student support, and train personnel on accelerative measures (Cross et al., 2015; Rogers, 2015).



## **Professional learning**

Teacher preparation programs overlook high achievers (Subotnik et al., 2011). Professional learning opportunities must equip staff to support appropriate challenges, psychosocial development, and learning needs.



## **Frontloading**

Frontloading challenges the traditional mentality of “identify, then serve” to “opportunity, then assess” (Olszewski-Kubilius & Thompson, 2015), and can close excellence gaps among rural gifted students (Plucker & Harris, 2015).



## **Supplemental programs**

Rural schools should capitalize on and create more supplemental programming, which exposes gifted students to unavailable offerings and intellectual peers (Olszewski-Kubilius et al., 2015), but must consider common barriers like transportation when promoting (Cross & Cross, 2017a).

# Serving Rural Gifted Learners *continued from Page 19*

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## **Psychosocial coaching**

Essential psychosocial skills training for managing anxiety, setbacks, and “differentness,” should be taught by those in students’ ecosystems to support talent development trajectories (APA, 2017; Coleman et al., 2015; Subotnik et al., 2011).



## **Mentorship**

Mentors who recognize the unique context of the rural setting can support advising, problem-solving, and situation-specific goal setting, supporting students in developing confidence, self-esteem, and greater passion (Olszewski-Kubilius et al., 2015; VanTassel-Baska & Hubbard, 2015).



## **Community and Family Partnerships**

Schools must not undervalue community and family partnerships. Parent advocacy groups form these safe spaces to understand needs, break barriers, and advocate for change to support psychosocial and academic development among high-potential students (Alexander et al., 2022; Orta & Gutiérrez, 2022).

Though requiring considerable investment, the societal benefits of nurturing rural talent trajectories toward eminence should not be underestimated (Subotnik et al., 2011). Rural schools can adopt adaptability when working within limited resources to better serve gifted learners. Reimagining gifted programming for rural realities could unleash overlooked potential, enhancing individual and community prosperity.

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# NAGC CONFERENCE SPOTLIGHT



## Under the Sea of Possibilities: Diving Into Gifted Program Evaluation

By Katherine Rottjakob

This past fall, I was able to attend the 2023 National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) Conference at Disney. Through multiple conference sessions, I gathered valuable insights on evaluating and enhancing gifted education programs. A few key themes emerged from these sessions:

### **Theme 1: Aligning Tools to Program Goals**

Presenters emphasized the need to ensure assessments, surveys, and other data collection tools directly align with specific gifted program goals and the student outcomes they aim to achieve. For example, if a goal is improving equity in identification, then disaggregated observational data, referrals, nominations, and other metrics should be examined.

### **Theme 2: Structured Comparative Data**

When creating surveys to compare perceptions among different stakeholders (e.g. teachers, parents, students), using parallel structure and questions allows for more equivalent comparisons between groups. This facilitates identifying gaps and areas of disconnect.



# Gifted Program Evaluation

*continued from Page 21*

## Theme 3: Feasibility of Internal Reviews

Conducting an annual internal review keeps gifted programs accountable, while rotating the focus each year makes the process sustainable. For example, looking at identification one year and curriculum the next prevents educators from feeling overwhelmed and allows a deeper analysis. Findings should be shared publicly to maintain transparency.

## Theme 4: Alignment to Standards

Several sessions touched on aligning to state or national standards for gifted education, such as [NAGC's 2019 Gifted PreK-Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards](#). This provides structured criteria for internal and external reviews. Some states offer incentive awards to districts meeting gifted education standards, further motivating continuous improvement.

By focusing gifted program evaluation on aligning tools to goals, structuring comparative data, conducting feasible internal reviews, and benchmarking against standards, districts can promote continuous improvement of their gifted programming through objective yet actionable self-assessment.

## Program Evaluation Recommended Resources:

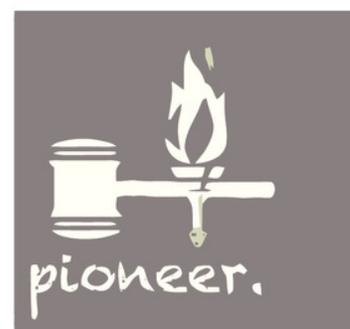
- Eckert, R. D. & Robins, J. H. (Eds.). (2017). *Designing services and programs for high-ability Learners* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- National Association for Gifted Children. (2019). *Self-assess your P-12 practice or program using the NAGC gifted programming standards* (2nd ed.). Author.
- Neumeister, K. S., & Burney, V. H. (2019). *Gifted program evaluation: A handbook for administrators and coordinators* (2nd ed.). Prufrock Press.
- Renzulli, S. J., Gubbins, E. J., Mcmillen, S. K., Eckert, D. R. & Little, A. C. Johnsen, S. (Eds.). (2009). *Systems & models for developing programs for the gifted & talented* (2nd ed.). Waco, TX: Prufrock.



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



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## NAGC Spotlight

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# When Wishes Come True: Differentiated Instruction for Diverse Learners

By Kathy Poole

A wish came true when I had the opportunity to attend the NAGC Conference in Orlando. A highlight was NAGC's celebration of its 70th year of supporting gifted learners, professionals, and their families. Among the many presentations, differentiated instruction (DI) was in the spotlight, which makes sense, given that high-achieving and gifted learners spend most of their time in a mixed-ability classroom. There was both good news and bad news.

**What is the good news about DI?** There are simple strategies teachers can implement with minimal preparation time.

Joyce Van Tassel-Bask, Catherine Little, and Tamra Stambaugh shared their favorites. Use *that* and *and* in any subject task to easily promote complexity and creativity. An example from their presentation: Replace "Create a model that shows how a food web works" with "Create a model *that* shows what would happen if one element of the food web were eliminated *and* how that elimination impacts the system over time."

Concept maps and analysis wheels are effective for all grade levels. Use these to support learners in *thinking like experts* and for pre- and post-assessments. Students can show their depth of understanding of new learning, including how components relate. These strategies remove the ceiling from an assessment. Advice from these leaders, "Pitch instruction high and scaffold." Resources for these strategies can be found at the end of this article.



# Differentiated Instruction

*continued from Page 24*

**What is the bad news?** In *Research to Practice Lightning Talks: The Latest Research that Practitioners Need to Know*, leaders selected their top ten published research studies. Matt Makel presented *Differentiated Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms: A Systematic Review* (Ziernwalk et al., 2022).

Ziernwalk et al. (2022) found teachers and students perceived differentiation as valuable, and DI positively impacts academic achievement and motivational-affective characteristics. Tools to facilitate DI include: professional staff development, leadership support, and resources.

This study sounds like good news, but there is more. The evidence of the impact of DI could be of better quality, per the study, and most importantly, teachers did not typically use DI. Interestingly, 86% of administrators reported DI does exist for high-achieving students. The study identified DI barriers: misconceptions about the need for DI for high-ability and gifted learners and lack of time, resources, knowledge, and training.

**Can wishes come true?** Ziernwalk et al. (2022) described DI as a “promising approach for the promotion of high-achieving students in mixed-ability classrooms.” Although there is no magic wand for implementing DI, our wish for DI can come true for gifted learners by considering the barriers identified in the study for future planning. We can also begin with one simple low-to-no preparation strategy. So, instead of using a teaching strategy that challenges most students, create a lesson using a strategy that challenges all students and has built-in scaffolding and complexity.

## Resources

- Mofield, E. L., (2023). *Vertical differentiation for gifted, advanced, and high-potential students*. Routledge.
- Stambaugh, T. (2018) In Olszewski-Kubilius, P., Subotnik, R., Worrell, F. (Eds.), *Talent development as a framework for gifted education: Implications for best practices and applications in schools* (pp. 95-127). Routledge.
- Ziernwald, L., Hillmayr, D., & Holzberger, D. (2022). Promoting High-Achieving Students Through Differentiated Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms—A Systematic Review. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 33(4), 504-573.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1932202X221112931>

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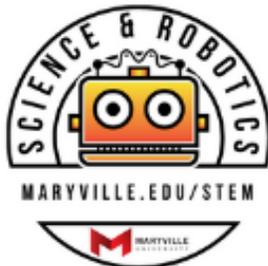


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