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A Letter from the President

By Dr. Tracy Bednarick-Humes

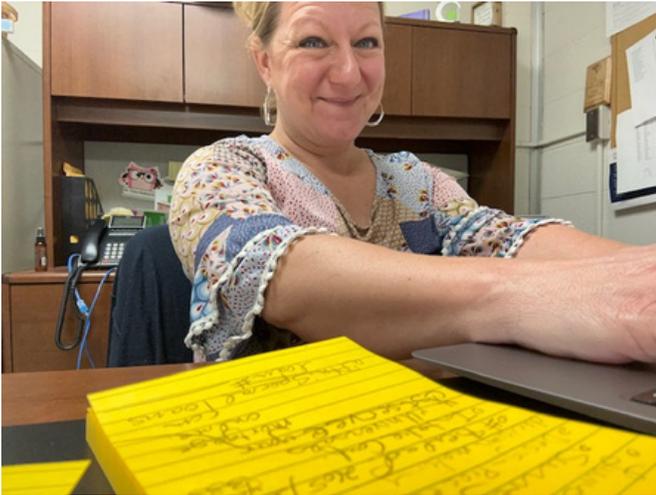
**Some Words from the GAM Executive President
(with a Little 21st Century Help)**

**Nurturing Creativity:
Empowering Gifted Learners with ChatGPT**

By now I would imagine everyone is familiar with ChatGPT and other formats of AI available to the general public. It certainly is a brave new world! This past year, I was covering a class for one of our gifted middle school teachers and had a hard time believing that it wasn't a robot who wrote a student's essay. Thankfully, the student was able to prove me wrong, but just as easily I could have been right. In fact, out of curiosity and because I've always been fascinated by technology, I decided to ask ChatGPT to write an article about the benefit of using this technology with gifted students using the voice of a teacher. This text, as generated, is outlined on pages 2 and 3, along with some final thoughts generated by me and only me.

President's Letter

continued from Page 1



Dr. Tracy Bednarick-Humes

As an educator, I am constantly exploring innovative ways to ignite the creative spark within my gifted students. It is my firm belief that creativity is the cornerstone of success in today's rapidly changing world. It is a skill that empowers individuals to think critically, solve complex problems, and push the boundaries of knowledge. In this digital age, we have an extraordinary tool at our disposal: ChatGPT, an advanced language model. By harnessing the power of ChatGPT, gifted learners can take their creativity to new heights, exploring ideas, expanding their knowledge, and engaging in meaningful conversations.

One of the remarkable aspects of ChatGPT is its ability to engage in dynamic and interactive conversations. Gifted learners can use this tool as a virtual brainstorming partner, exchanging ideas and perspectives on various topics. Whether it's a discussion about literature, scientific concepts, or social issues, ChatGPT can provide valuable insights and inspire new lines of thinking. Students can ask questions, explore different viewpoints, and challenge their own assumptions. This interactive process stimulates their creativity, encourages curiosity, and expands their intellectual horizons.

Moreover, ChatGPT serves as an endless source of information and inspiration. Gifted learners often have insatiable curiosity and an innate thirst for knowledge. They can leverage ChatGPT to delve deeper into their areas of interest, exploring complex subjects and accessing a vast repository of information. By engaging in conversations with ChatGPT, students can refine their research skills, discover new resources, and gain a more comprehensive understanding of their chosen topics. This wealth of knowledge acts as fuel for their creative endeavors, allowing them to generate fresh ideas and unique perspectives.

In addition to information retrieval, ChatGPT can act as a sounding board for gifted learners' creative projects. Whether it's writing a story, composing music, or designing a digital artwork, students can bounce their ideas off ChatGPT to receive feedback and suggestions. The model's ability to understand and generate text enables it to provide valuable insights, propose alternative approaches, and offer creative solutions. This interactive process not only enhances the quality of the final product but also fosters critical thinking and encourages students to think outside the box.

Another benefit of using ChatGPT for gifted learners is the opportunity to engage in collaborative creativity. Students can work together, sharing their ideas and co-creating with ChatGPT as a virtual collaborator. This collaborative process not only enhances the creative output but also develops important skills such as communication, teamwork, and negotiation. By harnessing the power of ChatGPT, gifted learners can experience the joy of collective creativity, as their ideas merge, evolve, and transform into something greater than the sum of its parts.

President's Letter

continued from Page 2

It is important to note that while ChatGPT can be a valuable tool for fostering creativity, it should be used in conjunction with other educational resources and guidance from educators. As teachers, we play a crucial role in guiding our gifted students' learning experiences, ensuring they understand the limitations and ethical considerations of using AI technologies. We must empower them to become responsible users of these tools, encouraging critical thinking, digital literacy, and ethical decision-making.

In conclusion, ChatGPT presents a unique opportunity for gifted learners to unleash their creativity and expand their intellectual horizons. By engaging in dynamic conversations, accessing a vast repository of knowledge, receiving feedback, and collaborating with ChatGPT, students can explore new ideas, think critically, and push the boundaries of their creativity. As educators, let us embrace the potential of AI technologies like ChatGPT and guide our gifted learners on a journey of discovery, innovation, and self-expression. Together, we can unlock their creative potential and prepare them for a future where imagination and originality are more important than ever.

Artificial intelligence was able to produce that article in less than a minute. I'm a good writer, but there is no way I could have written that in less than an hour, especially considering that some research would be involved. I think ChatGPT or other forms of AI will not replace writing for those who love the creative adventure of making words come alive on paper, but it could be a tool for those who struggle to write, have time to write, or simply do not like to write.



As teachers, I think the new challenge will be how can we encourage intellectual growth when students have easy access to a tool that can do much of the work for them? Could we use this tool to go deeper? To be more creative? To have time for more complex interests? I think, as gifted educators, we already have a headstart in that we have been teaching creativity and analysis from the start. While the ChatGPT article gives some great general ideas regarding the benefits of ChatGPT, it doesn't feature my voice and doesn't go into the deeper "how" of making ChatGPT work for student learning. That's where the human comes in. In order to make this my own, I have to impart my voice to the article and I have to give specific examples of what I would do in the classroom. Unfortunately, I'm not in the classroom any longer, so I'm curious to hear how you are using or plan to use ChatGPT to encourage deeper learning in your classroom.

Please consider sharing your thoughts by tweeting @GAMgifted #teachingwithChatGPT.

2023 IN-PERSON
Gifted Association of Missouri
CONFERENCE



FRIDAY
**Keynote
Speaker**

DR. JENA
RANDOLPH



SATURDAY
**Keynote
Speaker**

EMILY
**KIRCHER-
MORRIS**

OCTOBER
**6th and 7th
2023**

**THE
GIFTED NETWORK**

JOIN US AT **TRUMAN STATE UNIVERSITY**

REGISTRATION ONLINE AT
<http://www.mogam.org/>

Mark Your Calendar

Upcoming GAM Events

- September 16: GAM Board Meeting, 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., University of Missouri, Columbia, MO
- October 6 & 7, 2023: Annual GAM Conference, Truman State University, Kirksville, MO
- January 20, 2024: GAM Board Meeting, 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., Virtual
- February 21, 2024: GAM Day at the Capitol, Jefferson City, MO

Attending the Annual Conference in October?

GAM has reserved a block of rooms at multiple hotels in Kirksville, Missouri, to fit a variety of budgets. The Baymont by Wyndham is the preferred hotel partner.

Preferred Hotel: Baymont by Wyndham
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Kirksville, MO 63501

- Free Breakfast, Parking, and WiFi
- Indoor Pool
- Nearby to shopping, restaurants, and entertainment

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block rate of \$82 per night.**

Other hotel partners:

Hampton Inn \$169

Holiday Inn \$119

Days Inn \$79

Remember to ask for the GAM rate!





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- A program designed for the working professional

MASTER OF ARTS IN GIFTED EDUCATION

Complete a 30 hour degree program and earn a Master's degree in gifted education.

GIFTED CERTIFICATION

Also available is the option to take certification courses to earn an endorsement from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

FALL 2023

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 2024

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

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

Learn more at:
gifted.truman.edu or



Register for the GAM Annual Conference: The Gifted Network

By Amanda Sauerwein, GAM Annual Conference Chair

The conference committee would like to invite our gifted education community to this year's 2023 Annual Conference on Friday, October 6th and Saturday, October 7th at Truman State University. Our theme this year is "The Gifted Network". It's been 4 years since our last in-person conference, and we want everyone here! Join us for networking, our awards banquet, keynote speakers, and over 50 break-out sessions, including sessions specifically useful for parents of gifted students. To view the schedule, navigate to <https://gam2023conference.sched.com/>.

Two keynote speakers were carefully selected for this year's conference:

- Dr. Jena Randolph, Assistant Research Professor and Training and Education Division Director with the University of Missouri's [Thompson Center for Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders](#), is an outstanding academic whose research and practice is improving lives of neurodivergent individuals in our communities through educator advocacy and training, such as notable TEAM and STRIVE programs.

- Emily Kircher-Morris, who identifies as neurodivergent herself, is a teacher, counselor, author, and podcaster. She is the author of the recently published book, "Raising Twice-Exceptional Children: A Handbook for Parents of Neurodivergent Gifted Kids," and "Teaching Twice-Exceptional Learners in Today's Classroom." Check out Kircher-Morris's [The Neurodiversity Podcast](#) and [Neurodiversity University!](#)

Registration is now open! Please scan the QR code to navigate into the event registration on Eventbrite. We are also actively seeking [Sponsors and Vendors](#). Reach out to me, Amanda Sauerwein, 2023 Annual Conference Coordinator, if you have any questions at asauerwein@k12.com or 573-308-8320.





TOP-RANKED GIFTED EDUCATION PROGRAM AT MIZZOU.

100% ONLINE – MISSOURI GIFTED CERTIFICATION
COURSEWORK + EARN YOUR MASTER'S IN GIFTED EDUCATION
University of Missouri-Columbia's (Mizzou) College of Education and Human
Development offers an exciting option for teachers looking to maximize the
rewards of working with gifted students – entirely online.



Build your capacity for care through course work that dives into subjects like curriculum methods, assessment and evaluation and the needs of gifted students.

When you're ready to take the step to advance in your career, the Mizzou gifted education master's program offers flexible, affordable and convenient online courses that will take your talents in gifted education to a new level.



Grow the demand for your skillset and your potential for earning with an advanced degree and further your success in the field of gifted education. In two to three years, achieve a broadened range of career possibilities.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Jena K. Randolph, Ph.D.

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



In just 30 credit hours, establish yourself, earn your worth and enrich the learning and teaching experience for gifted students in elementary, middle or high school classrooms.

LEARN MORE online.missouri.edu/GAMbit



DESE Gifted Education Update July 1, 2023

Christine Nobbe
Director of Gifted Education
Christine.Nobbe@dese.mo.gov



Gifted Education Competencies for Certification

The Council recommended that we look at the gifted education certification requirements. A small committee including representatives from universities with gifted programs met in June. One result of the discussion is to create gifted education competencies. Other Missouri certificate areas have competencies but gifted education does not. Instead, gifted education lists five required courses. [NAGC](#) and the [National Evaluation Series](#) have published teacher competencies for gifted educators. The next meeting is in mid-July. I will continue to report on this and **I invite you to share your ideas with me.**

Powerful Learning Conference

The Call for Proposals for #MOPWR2024 on January 29-30, 2024 is open and due on September 20 by 5:00 PM. The theme is *Innovating and Educating*. Attendees are educators and administrators from all over the state. **Please consider submitting a proposal about meeting the needs of gifted learners in every classroom.** <https://dese.mo.gov/quality-schools/powerful-learning-conference>

Professional Learning

The June summer workshops were very successful! (I did have some technology issues one afternoon, but otherwise smooth sailing!) **There is still time to make plans for the August Gifted Education Summer 2023 Workshops!** The in-person Gifted Education Lesson Exchange is an excellent way to obtain new unit/activity ideas. We already have several lessons in a shared folder and we'll add more in August. The Small & Mighty workshops are

virtual but still a good way to network. Workshop information can be found in an Eventbrite collection: <https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/gifted-education-summer-2023-workshops-1740869>

Call for Speakers: I am looking for speakers for Gifted and Talented Tuesday – the second Tuesday at 9:00 AM and the third Tuesday at 3:30 PM. I would love people to present on ways in which they are using the Portrait of a Gifted Learner and MO-GLOs. Also, lessons/activities/mini-units are very popular!

Desk Audits and Data

Please study your gifted program data and determine if the current identification process is working to identify students. If not, please make updates or write an Alternate Identification Plan.

On August 15th, your district's data guru will briefly describe the identification process on Screen 25 of Core Data. Do you need to meet with that person before they submit? Also, the official gifted education contact is submitted on Screen 3.

I will begin analyzing information submitted through the Gifted Program Application after July 15, the due date. Has someone in your district submitted the [WuFoo form](#)? If not, please do so!

MSA and MFAA

I visited [MSA](#) and [MFAA](#) in June. What a delight! Both programs are running smoothly with scholars and artists having fun and learning. We have \$850,000 in state funds for the academies in 2024 so they will be free. **Begin preparing to submit applications as soon as school starts!!** If you haven't submitted applications and need support please reach out to me.

Gifted Advisory Council

The [Council](#) meets in July. They plan to update the State Board of Education in October and plan to present at the GAM Conference.

-Christine

GIFTED AND TALENTED TUESDAYS



ZOOM EVENTS FOR STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND COORDINATORS/ADMINISTRATORS

Tuesdays beginning September 12, 2023



You are invited to join Missouri's gifted education community for discussion and inspiration every Tuesday, September 12 to December 12, 2023. Log in 15 minutes early to network.

First Tuesdays, 11:00 – 11:30 with Q/A until noon – Space Exploration Talks for Gifted Learners

- October 3, An Update: Moon, Mars, and More
- November 7, Americans in Space (and on the Moon!)
- December 5, Holidays in Space

Second Tuesdays, 9:00 – 10:00, Coordinating MO Gifted Education Programs for Gifted Education Specialists, Coordinators, Directors, Counselors, Principals, and Administrators

- September 12, Top Trends in MO Gifted Education, discussion with Christine
- October 10, No G/T Tuesday, GAM Conference on Oct. 6-7
- November 14, guest speakers, Dr. Tressa Wright and Debbie Roby, Update on the Naglieri General Ability Tests
- December 12, TBD

Third Tuesdays, 3:30-4:30, For Gifted Education Specialists and Coordinators/Directors of Gifted Programs

- September 19, TBD
- October 17, guest speaker Dr. Denis Dumas, [MOTES](#), Measurement of Original Thinking in Elementary Students
- November 21, No G/T Tuesday, Thanksgiving Week!

Final Tuesday of the Month, 3:30 – 4:30, Book Study for the G/T Community, *Building a Wider, More Diverse Pipeline of Advanced Learners*, report from the National Working Group on Advanced Education, Fordham Institute

<https://fordhaminstitute.org/national/research/building-wider-more-diverse-pipeline-advanced-learners>

- September 26, Summary of Recommendations
- October 24, The Case for Advanced Education
- October 31, Happy Halloween! No G/T Tuesday
- November 28, Recommended District/Charter Policies and Practices

LEARN FROM YESTERDAY, LIVE FOR TODAY, HOPE FOR TOMORROW.
THE IMPORTANT THING IS NOT TO STOP QUESTIONING.

-ALBERT EINSTEIN (FIRST PART IS ATTRIBUTED AND SECOND PART IS FROM LIFE MAGAZINE MAY 2, 1955)

ZOOM LINK: [HTTPS://WWW.ZOOMGOV.COM/J/16190848473](https://www.zoomgov.com/j/16190848473)
LISTSERVE UPDATES: <https://lists.mo.gov/mailman/listinfo/gifted-ed>

VIRTUAL GIFTED EDUCATION MODULE



INTRODUCTION

Developed by the Advisory Council on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the purpose of this module is to provide current research and best practices in the field of gifted education to administrators responsible for a school system's gifted education program.

DIRECTIONS

1. From a desktop or laptop, go to the VLP introduction page: <https://dese.mo.gov/virtual-learning-platform-vlp>
2. To the right of the infographic, look for the DESE Applications Sign-in or Guest Access link.

Virtual Learning Platform (VLP)



The **Virtual Learning Platform (VLP)** is an online portal that provides access to free professional learning modules and supporting materials to all Missouri public schools and their teachers. The system is available to teachers and school administrators through the **DESE Application Sign-in (DAS)** system and can be accessed at any time and used as a reference for users once the courses are complete. If you do not have a DESE web apps account and would like to view the VLP, please use our **Guest Access** if .

3. If you have a DESE Applications Sign-in (most Missouri educators do), select that option. On the DESE Applications Sign-in page, fill in your user name and password in the bottom right of the screen. Click on Sign in.
4. You will land on an Application Menu page. Look on the bottom right under Secure Access and click on Virtual Learning Platform.
5. Now, select a pillar. The Gifted Education module is in the Effective Teaching and Learning Pillar.
6. Once you are on the Effective Teaching and Learning Pillar page, you will see several options. Open the Academic tab.
7. Now open the Targeted tab.

8. Click on the link to Enroll or Continue the Introduction to Gifted Education (v2) course.

Pillar(s): Effective Teaching and Learning -

Effective Teaching and Learning

- ^ Academic 
- ▼ Universal
- ^ Targeted
 - ▼ Introduction to Gifted Education (v2)  
- ▼ Behavioral 
- ▼ Distance Learning 
- ▼ Science of Reading 
- ▼ Social Emotional Learning Academy 

9. Use the blue navigation bar on the far left to navigate from the Introduction to the Pre- Knowledge to the Module Overview, and etc.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
MODULE LESSON PLAN

- Introduction
- **Pre-Knowledge**
- ▶ Module Overview
- ▼ PART 1: The Gifted Learner
 - Who is the Gifted Learner
 - Why Is Gifted Education Important?
 - Myths About Gifted Education
 - Gifted Learners, High Achievers, and Creative Thinkers
 - Accommodating Gifted Students in the Public School System
 - Taking Steps Forward
- ▶ PART 2: Social-Emotional Needs of Gifted Learners
- ▶ PART 3: Programming Options
- ▶ PART 4: Identification
- ▶ PART 5: Advanced Identification
- Post-Knowledge
- Final Steps

10. Enjoy learning at your own pace!



Certificate in STEM Education

Two Opportunities available!

In-person: June 5-16, 2023 (M-F)
8:30-4:00 p.m.

Virtual: January - April, 2024
Weekly classes 5:00-9:30 p.m.

Teachers earn a certificate in STEM Education through hands-on learning experiences to integrate STEM into classrooms. There is a tremendous national and global need for increased education integrating science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) to bolster the pipeline of talented individuals ready for 21st century careers. Now PK-12 teachers, librarians, media specialists, technology trainers, principals, instructional coaches, and others interested in meeting state and national standards while engaging students in STEM can participate in this innovative program. Learn to integrate STEM into the classroom with research-based best practices led by expert educators in the field.

Includes:

- Creativity
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- Problem Solving
- Makerspace
- Novel Engineering
- Project Based Learning
- Robotics
- Coding

*6 University credits can be earned for an additional fee

Register by December 15th or May 15th.

Total Program Cost = \$990

For additional questions, contact:

Michelle Schoeck at mschoeck@maryville.edu



Register Now!



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314.529.9483
maryville.edu

MANY CONNECTIONS. ONE U.



Legislative Update

News from Jefferson City

by Kyna Iman

The Missouri General Assembly adjourned on May 12. The legislature appropriated \$850,000.00 to fully fund the Missouri Fine Arts Academy and the Missouri Scholars Academy for June, 2024. The Governor signed the budget into law on June 30, prior to the beginning of the new fiscal year. The Governor's comments were:

Governor Parson understands that for the next generations of Missourians to achieve and maintain their American Dream, they must have the necessary education and skills to meet the demands of the future. The FY24 budget prioritizes investments in both education and workforce development systems to provide Missourians with the tools they need to succeed:

- \$3.6 billion to again fully fund the K-12 Foundation Formula for the fifth year in a row;
- \$288.7 million for capital improvement projects at public higher education institutions;
- \$233 million to fully fund school transportation needs for the second year in a row;
- \$70.8 million core funding increase for state higher education institutions;
- \$60 million to invest in semiconductor production research, development, and skills training;
- \$38 million for the fourth year of MoExcels projects and employer-driven workforce training investments;
- \$32 million for the Career Ladder program to reward educators who go above and beyond normal duties;
- Full funding for the Teacher Baseline Salary Grant Program which increases baseline K-12 educator pay to \$38,000 per year (participating schools will no longer have a grant match requirement); and
- \$3.5 million for Apprenticeship Missouri and Youth Apprenticeships.

SCHOOL RETIREMENT PROVISIONS

Governor Parson signed several new school retirement provisions into law by signing both CCS/SB 20 (Mike Bernskoetter) and HCS/SS/SB 75 (Rusty Black).

The following school retirement changes will become law on August 28, 2023:

- 1) restores the 2.55% benefit factor for 32 or more years of PSRS service credit for persons retiring on or after the effective date.
- 2) increases the earnings limit for PSRS retirees working part time in PEERS positions to 133% of the Social Security earnings limit (currently amounting to \$28,249) for the next five years,

Legislative Update *continued from Page 14*

and then 100% of the earnings limit (currently \$21,240) thereafter. In practice, this provision will be available for the coming school year, since retirees will not exceed the existing \$15,000 earnings limit before the higher limit takes effect on August 28, 2023.

3) extends the critical shortage employment option from two years to four years and increases the allowed number of critical shortage teaching positions in a district to the greater of five or one percent of the total number of teaching and non-certified staff positions in the district. PSRS staff will be collaborating with employers to create a process where current critical shortage staff will be able to use the extended authorization for next school year if needed.

4) preserves the PSRS-eligible status for speech implementers employed before August 1, 2022, who are employed on or after August 28, 2023, as a speech-language pathology assistant.

5) provides a same-sex domestic partner pop-up provision for retirees with similar documentation requirements to the divorce pop-up provision in current law.

REQUIREMENTS FOR FINGERPRINT BACKGROUND CHECKS

Governor Parson signed new provisions into law regarding school employee background checks by signing all three bills enacted with those changes: SB 186 (Justin Brown), SB 28 (Justin Brown), and SB 40 (Holly Thompson Rehder). This provision eliminates the current law that schools and other employers using the Rap Back program for notifications of law violations must require all employees to undergo an additional fingerprint background check every six years. This helpful change will remove a costly and unneeded burden on school employees.

SB 40 also requires school districts to conduct criminal background checks on adult students enrolling in courses taught at public schools.

Thank you for the opportunity to represent GAM at the State Capitol! Mark your calendars for GAM Day at the Capitol 2024 on Wednesday, February 21.

Please let me know if you have any questions at kynaiman@earthlink.net.

Kyna



STEM PLAYFUL LEARNING WORKSHOP

August 1, 2023

Attention all educators! Are you looking for innovative ways to engage your students in STEM learning? Join us for the Maryville STEM Playful Learning Workshop! This exciting event will explore new and interactive methods for teaching science, technology, engineering, and math to students of all ages. Led by experienced educators and industry experts, this workshop will provide you with practical tips and tools to make STEM learning fun and engaging for your students. Don't miss this opportunity to enhance your teaching skills and inspire your students to become the next generation of STEM leaders. Register now for the Maryville STEM Playful Learning Workshop and start transforming your classroom today!

Date: August 1, 2023

Time: 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Location: Maryville University Campus

Cost: \$25 Includes a light breakfast, lunch, and attendance prizes for ALL!



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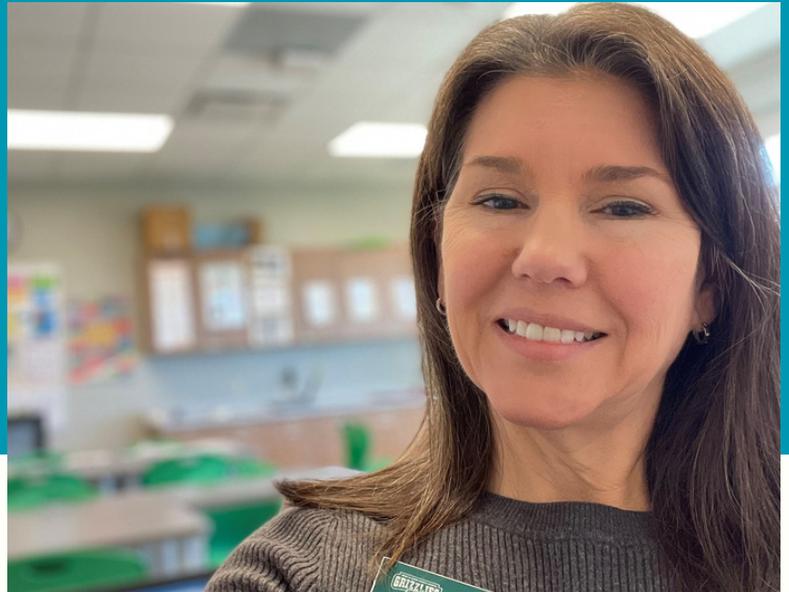
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Grading Philosophies and Motivation

by Beth Joelle Winton, PhD, NBCT

Chair, Missouri Advisory Council on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children

Coordinator of Secondary Gifted Programs, Columbia Public Schools

Gifted Teacher, John Warner Middle School grades 6-8

Hello, GAMbit readers. I have been in gifted education for my entire professional career; 26 years teaching gifted students and 5 years at the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. I am currently the Chairperson of the Missouri Advisory Council on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children. As a practicing teacher, grading is an integral part of the business and it can either promote or deteriorate motivation. I currently apply this grading philosophy in my 6-8 grade gifted classes as well as in the graduate level certification courses I teach in gifted education at Mizzou. It is important that every teacher can articulate their educational philosophy on grading and that their class policies/practices are aligned (NAGC Programming Standard 4.1.4). Gifted students and their parents will inquire of the policies and you're dead in the water if they sense inconsistencies. I hope to encourage teachers to implement policies that promote real student motivation and learning, so I share this hoping that others will find it useful in their practice. So here goes...

I believe:

1. You get out of life what you put in. If you have to be in that class, because it's required or because you've chosen to be there, don't you want to get the most out of it?
2. My job, as the teacher, is to create meaningful work that promotes real learning, appropriate for each student's instructional level - not busywork or work that isn't teaching the student something new.

Grading

continued from Page 18

3. Quality and timely feedback is what promotes student learning and motivation, not grades. Teachers shouldn't have to grade anything; students should want to learn as much as they can and the given feedback should be helpful toward that end.
4. Grades and grading policies can be arbitrary, capricious, and/or do not measure student learning.
5. If the focus is on student learning, which it should be, then it matters only that students can demonstrate mastery of the content. It should not matter when that acquisition occurs nor how many chances a student needs to make such a demonstration.
6. Reliable feedback should only measure one construct at a time; content acquisition, for example; and not be commingled with things like effort, attitude, or work ethic.
7. Standards for content (knowledge) are as important as standards for other important skills (process) such as initiative, independence, and effort. Both should be evaluated and they should be evaluated separately. One final grade or any grade average cannot account for everything.
8. Procrastination hinders the learning process. Waiting until the last minute diminishes the quality of work; students know it and the teacher does, too.

My grading policy is as follows:

The posted deadlines are a guide to keep students moving forward in a timely fashion with the class content. There is no penalty for late work. Everyone learns more if we are all discussing the same topics at the same time and students are encouraged to use the deadlines to help them set short-term goals and make time management decisions. Students know that if they let themselves get too far behind the posted deadlines that they won't learn as much.

I grade projects for what I think is important like content, structure, grammar, spelling, and punctuation and students will have as many opportunities to make corrections and resubmit as they need for full credit.

By not having a point penalty for late work, I am able to emphasize that learning the content and/or skills are the focus and kids are ultimately solely responsible for getting the work done because there's no longer external incentives like a pre-set deadline or a grade reduction. Students are responsible for doing the work because it's meaningful and not because the teacher said so or mom will be mad or anything else external. When students "miss" deadlines, this policy allows me to have a meaningful conversation with them about their choices and skills and not about points or grades or "what's not fair." Additionally, this policy allows students the autonomy to show me that they can make good choices and manage their own time. I simply can get out of their way and not unnecessarily micromanage their life.

Grading

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For people who tell me that fixed deadlines and grade penalties teach kids responsibility, I say responsibility is important and should be evaluated separately from knowledge acquisition. I use a proficiency scale for the 5 key skills of initiative, independence, perseverance, responsibility, and effort to assess students on these important constructs separately from content acquisition.

Gifted kids can acquire content quickly and demonstrate mastery of a learning target and not put in much effort or show much initiative. I have a proficiency scale for teamwork when it is appropriate, as well. Gifted students might get all the questions answered correctly and struggle being a good team member or effectively communicating with team members. These are all important constructs which can and should be assessed. I also have students self-assess on these constructs.

Ultimately, there is a final deadline at the end of every grading period/semester as I must have my grades submitted at some point and there is always a final-drop-dead due date after which missing work turns into a zero. I will literally take any work from any student whenever they submit it for full credit. If the work was truly meaningful, I only care that they learn it... I do not care when.

I believe these policies have helped me establish and maintain relationships with my students, reinforced that I am here to help them learn, and did not simultaneously undermine their motivation. I believe strongly that motivation breeds engagement and learning and I do not want any policy to undermine that, directly or indirectly. Smart kids do the math. There's a point in each semester where kids calculate that it doesn't matter how much work they do they cannot raise their grade enough. This is one way the grading policies incentivize quitting.

When issues arise, we talk about the student's choices. By drilling down on the motivation behind the choice, and possibly executive function skills that might need to be developed, this provides a meaningful conversation while removing the grade pressure that makes kids decide it's just not worth doing the work. I hope this philosophy helps you as much as it has helped me.



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New Teacher Workshop Brought New Gifted Teachers Together From Across the State

by Jennifer Condren

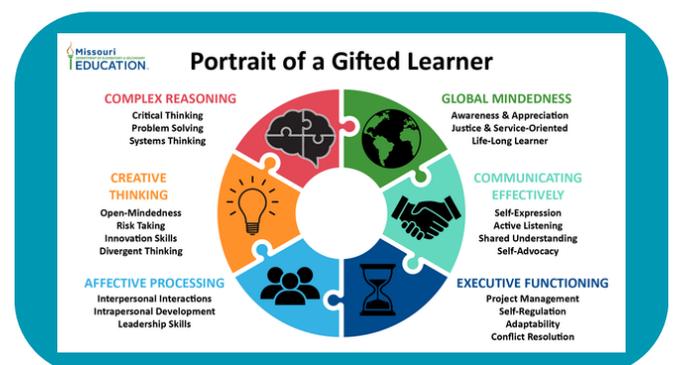
Thirty-one teachers who are new to gifted attended the 2023 New Teacher Workshop on July 24 and 25 at Lindenwood University in St. Charles, Missouri. "The workshop continues to grow and improve each year. New teachers are sharing their positive experiences with their colleagues, and the attendance number shows that," said Melissa Torres, Chair for the New Teacher Workshop.

Keynote Speaker Dr. Kathryn Fishman-Weaver, Executive Director of the Mizzou Academy and Associate Teaching Professor for the University of Missouri's College of Education and Human Development, shared her expertise on neurodiverse brains. Dr. Fishman-Weaver is also the author of six books, including *Brain-Based Learning with Gifted Students*.

In addition to Dr. Fishman-Weaver gifted educators from GAM volunteered their time, energy, and talents by presenting more than 15 sessions on a wide variety of topics, including Portrait of a Gifted Learner, Parts of a Gifted Day, Social/Emotional Learning for the Gifted, and Equity in Gifted Programming. The workshop also included numerous hands-on modules, such as Creativity Rotation Model Stations and Game Rotation Model Stations, as well as curriculum that focuses on the needs of the gifted.

Workshop evaluations captured the following feedback from attendees:

- 100% stated that they would recommend the workshop to other new gifted educators.
- 100% felt that the workshop was worth their time and investment.
- "The advocacy, certification, beginning of the year activities, and SEL sessions were fabulous!!"
- "Dr. Kathryn Fishman-Weaver's sessions and all the curriculum sessions were amazing."
- "Everything was valuable."
- "I have lots of lessons and resources to take back to my classroom."



New Teacher Workshop *continued from Page 22*

Dr. Jill Hutcheson, Associate Dean, Lindenwood University, shared her perspective on the success of the New Teacher Workshop. "The College of Education and Human Services at Lindenwood University was very proud to host the 2023 New Teacher Workshop. It was a natural partnership because the college offers both a Master of Arts in Gifted and 'certification only.' Both programs align with the standards for gifted certification in the State of Missouri," she said.



Above: Attendees work in groups during the Social/Emotional Learning Breakout session. Right: Attendees experiment with building challenges during the Creativity Rotation Model Stations session.



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GAM Bios

Getting to Know the Board

Brian Stuhlman
Coordinator of Middle School Programs
Mizzou Academy
Region 2 Co-Director

Brian Stuhlman is the Coordinator of Middle School Programs and the Coordinator of the Mizzou International Experience at Mizzou Academy with a summer career exploration experience for high school students. The Mizzou Global Scholars curriculum has a current enrollment in Brazil of about 1,000 students; the Core Middle School Curriculum serves middle school students globally. He also has worked for 20 years with the Missouri Scholars Academy; he currently teaches and coordinates programming. He has been a teacher for over 20 years in a variety of locations and situations. He started teaching at Fayette High School in Fayette, MO, and then moved overseas for a four-year stint at Pechersk School International in Kiev, Ukraine. In the school there, he taught in the IB program and got to travel to many places in Europe and Africa, and he met his wife, Maryna. They moved back to the states in 2006 to take jobs in Warrenton, MO, and then moved to Columbia, MO, where he took a job for 12 years at Columbia Independent School teaching English and drama. In addition to his coordinator roles, Brian also teaches a required course for the College of Education and Human Development for Mizzou. In his spare time he likes to enter sweepstakes, watch cartoons with his kids, go for walks in his neighborhood, and travel when he can—and he loves to meet people and to read.

GAM BIOS

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Meredith Wisniewski

Gifted Educator, 3-5

Phelps Center for Gifted Education, Springfield Public Schools

Legislative/Advocacy Chair, District 7

Hello! My name is Meredith Wisniewski, and I am thrilled to be back on the GAM Board. I am in my 12th year at Phelps Center for Gifted Education in Springfield, Missouri. Prior to joining Phelps I was with the gifted program for Fulton Public Schools for three years after spending three years as an elementary school teacher. A former recipient of the Bob Roach New Teacher of Gifted Scholarship from the Gifted Association of Missouri (GAM), I have spent the last several years on the leadership team for GAM's New Teacher Workshop. After serving as a district director and as both the Membership Vice-President, Executive Vice-President, and President for GAM, I am now the Legislative and Advocacy Chair. In my free time I love spending time with my husband and son listening to music, cycling, and cooking. I can't wait to continue the amazing work GAM has done on behalf of gifted education in our state.



The Gifted Association of Missouri Congratulates Laura Frees on her Regional Teacher of the Year Award!

Laura Frees, a gifted teacher from the Harrisonville/Cass R-IX School District, has been named a 2024 Missouri Regional Teacher of the Year. Regional Teachers of the Year are eligible to move forward in the Missouri Teacher of the Year selection process. Laura shared a little bit about herself with the GAMbit:

I am fortunate to have all the third through eighth grade gifted students in the Harrisonville/Cass R-IX district. We are coming up on my 28th year of teaching! I spent the first sixteen years of my career teaching middle and high school science in Missouri and Kansas. I serve on several committees at the district and building level. I am:

- building liaison to the Harrisonville Public Schools Foundation, which has generously awarded me three teacher grants over the years.
- chair of the Harrisonville Middle School Morale Committee, so I get to plan our fun celebrations!
- on the BIST Vision Team, helping to support teachers and learners with behavior intervention strategies.
- the choreographer for our HMS musicals every other year, working closely with our theater and choir teachers and the student cast and crew.

Through EF Educational Tours, I have chaperoned and led six educational tours abroad with students and families. I organize a yearly enrichment Saturday connecting students with community volunteers. Mentoring several new science teachers in my district as well as those seeking gifted certification has been rewarding. I helped pilot standards-based instruction in my building as a team leader several years ago. My hard-working students participate in Kansas City's Battle of the Brains, Science Olympiad, Model United Nations, Invention Convention, and have twice won the Heartland Utilities for Energy Efficiency video contest.

In my free time, I love to read and talk about books. I do most of the landscaping and decorating of our home and am at the beck and call of our two elderly cats. I enjoy serving on Harrisonville's Park Board. My husband and I volunteer with KU Cancer Center's patient research advocacy group, PIVOT. We also love to travel and are heading to Iceland at the end of July to celebrate our anniversary. Our two sons are even more adventurous. Between them, they are visiting twelve other countries this summer, so we are constantly watching for pictures and updates! When they are in the United States, we love to hang out with them.

speakers needed.

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