

FALL 2020

The GAMbit

The Official Publication of the Gifted Association of Missouri



Meeting Challenges with Creativity

Saying that 2020 has been a year of immense challenge would be quite the understatement. For most of us, major aspects of our personal and work lives have been turned upside down. While difficulties are always tough, they can also force us to generate exciting ideas and apply a much higher degree of creativity when problem solving. Educators across the globe have adopted different methods, tried new ideas, and engaged students through novel ways.

Professional organizations are no different and we thank all of you who "attended" our virtual conference! In the midst of challenge let's let creativity be our silver lining, carry our best new ideas forward, and lead us to a brighter 2021!

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President's Update

Hello! My name is Meredith Wisniewski, and by the time you read this I will have begun my tenure as president of the Gifted Association of Missouri. I am honored to serve in this capacity -- especially during this unprecedented time in education.



How did I get here? I am in my tenth year at Phelps Center for Gifted Education in Springfield, Missouri. Prior to joining Phelps I was with the gifted program in Fulton Public Schools for three years after spending three years as an elementary school teacher. I have a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education, gifted certification grades K-12, and a Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Missouri. In addition I hold both a Master's degree in Educational Administration from Missouri State University and certification as a K-12 principal; in 2017, I was one of the administrators for the Phelps Center's summer program. 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. I have been a presenter at the NAGC conference, and I have been a GAM representative as an NAGC State Affiliate member. After serving as a district director and as the Membership Vice-President for GAM, I find myself taking on this new and exciting role.

It's quite the time to be taking on such a role, something I reflected on often as I wrote this letter -- a letter that came together in bits and pieces, while juggling the demands of an unconventional school year. Gifted education has always been implemented in a variety of ways across the state, but now the differences are even more

pronounced. Some of us have gone entirely virtual. Some of us are teaching a hybrid of seated and virtual classes.

Some of us are back to fully face to face instruction. Some of us have found our responsibilities shifted away from gifted towards other things to meet new needs. No matter our circumstances, none of us can really view this year as “business as usual”. Many of us would be thrilled to take a Zoom sabbatical, we’re tired of hearing about “the new normal”, and we would likely rather be socially distant from our screens instead of from friends, loved ones, colleagues, and students.

Through all of this, GAM strives to remain a constant advocate and resource for the needs of gifted teachers, students, and parents in our state. I have many ideas and goals for my time as president, and I briefly considered using this space to proudly share them.

However, I realize that right now instead of telling you what I think GAM should be I need to listen to what you need GAM to be. We have always aimed to advocate, collaborate, connect, inspire, and create; despite everything happening around us, those aims cannot and will not change. You can reach me at meredith.gam@outlook.com, and I am looking at other ways to connect for a GAM Q and A, perhaps over Facebook Live. Stay tuned for more information; I look forward to hearing from you!

Please know that GAM is here for you. Reach out on our website, connect with us on social media, or start a conversation with your district directors. Our doors, whether physical or virtual, are always open.

Sincerely,
Meredith Wisniewski

MISSOURI VIRTUAL CONFERENCE ON GIFTED EDUCATION



Over 100 participants gathered virtually on Saturday, October 24 to learn about and discuss gifted education topics from the safety and security of their own homes. The conference was changed to a digital format due to worries about Covid-19.

The day started with an exciting presentation from our keynote speaker, Colin Seale, with the title, "The Equity Case for Prioritizing Gifted Education at a Moment of Reckoning."

Throughout the session, the session attendees were able to interact with Colin and the other participants in the Zoom chat feature. Colin later presented a breakout session entitled "Low Floor, High Ceilings" as well as hosting a digital book signing for his book, *Think Like A Lawyer*.

Throughout the day, conference attendees were offered number of live sessions as well as recorded sessions from our presenters. One live webinar was presented by the Missouri Gifted Advisory Council and the council was able to share with the attendees highlights of their recent Council accomplishments. Attendees had the ability to use the webinar chat feature to ask questions of the Council.



The Conference attendees were also able to join our GAM Talks which were live meeting sessions in which attendees could meet in an informal way and with the help of a GAM board member discuss topics such as Social Emotional Learning, 2E Matters, Identification Tools, and Identification Processes.

The day ended with our first ever virtual Annual Meeting during which our new Executive Board was elected and our new Board of Directors were announced. Kyna Iman, GAM's Legislative Advocate, shared the Advocacy Agenda for 2021 and it was approved by the membership. Christine Nobbe ended the day as she shared the State of Gifted from DESE.

All pre-recorded sessions, the Gifted Advisory Council recorded presentation, and Colin Seale's recorded presentations will be available until December 31, 2020 on Sched.



DESE Update • 09-08-2020
Christine Nobbe
Director of Gifted Education
Christine.Nobbe@dese.mo.gov

I am writing this update from my office where I work on Tuesdays and Fridays; through September we continue to work two days a week at the office and three days at home. At this point, we are six months into the pandemic and the most difficult school year known to public education has just started. Between 1665 and 1667, Sir Isaac Newton studied at his home because of the Great Plague of London. It was during this time that he developed his theories on calculus, optics, and the law of gravitation reminding us that good things can come from difficult times. *During this pandemic, what can we create to positively impact gifted education and our communities?* I look forward to discussing ideas with you at the Fall GAM Conference and during *Gifted and Talented Tuesdays*.

Since my update on July 17, I have been busy with many projects:

- Assisted with the 2020 New Teacher Workshop
- Finished up the virtual summer workshops and office hours
- Conducted twice-a-week virtual back-to-school meetings during August to answer questions
- Developed guidance for identifying and serving gifted learners in a 100% virtual model (not on the website at this time)
- Worked with the Advisory Council on the Education of Gifted and Talented Students (the Council) to complete and publish the [Local Norms](#) white paper and update the [Gifted Education Program Guidelines](#).
- Worked with the Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted (CSDPG) on the Summer Share (our MO-SEL curriculum was a big hit! See <https://bit.ly/mo-gifted-sel>)
- *Developed the MO-TABS, a rating scale*
- *Created a one-page, two-sided handout on social-emotional learning*
- *Worked on MO-GLOs but got bogged down with too many choices*

To access links, see: <http://bit.ly/DESEupdateSept2020>

- Developed an article with several gifted education specialists to be published in the [Elementary Principals'](#) magazine
- Started a GAMbit article on the virtual [Missouri Scholars Academy](#)
- Attended as many free virtual workshops as I could on SEL, suicide prevention, social justice, gifted education, and pandemic solutions
- Worked with two DESE teams on SEL and on virtual meeting/conference planning
- Responded to emails and phone calls and meet with districts via Zoom
- Researched virtual contests/competitions and created a list which was shared via the [Gifted Education listserv](#)
- Updated the Council's website with the new [member list](#) and new documents (Welcome to Ms. Amanda Sauerwein, the new alternate member!)

Moving forward I am working on:

- *Finishing MO-TABS, the SEL handout, and MO-GLOs; these projects are italicized above because I could use your help on them! Please email me if you are interested in providing feedback:* ChristineNobbe@dese.mo.gov
- Helping to organize the virtual CSDPG conference
- Organizing the Gifted Contacts and reading all districts' Screen 25 where gifted identification is reported
- Writing guidance on cluster grouping
- Facilitating the [Council](#)'s virtual meetings and projects
- Hosting [Gifted and Talented Tuesdays](#) with special events each Tuesday during first semester (students are invited to the [Space Talks](#))

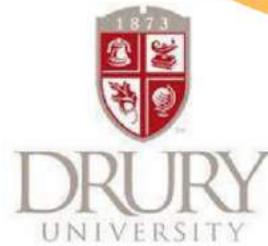
I am doing my best to respond to your needs and the needs of our students. If you have a need, please let me know.
-Christine



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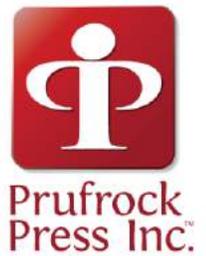
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GIFTED ASSOCIATION OF MISSOURI

2021 State Advocacy Agenda

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

FUNDING FOR GIFTED EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Support legislation that requires every school in Missouri provide state approved gifted education programs for students identified as “gifted” under section 162.675 and that all program services are provided by teachers with a valid certification in gifted education.

House Bill XX, sponsored by Rep. Aaron Griesheimer (R-Washington) and Senate Bill XX, sponsored by Senator Denny Hoskins (R-Warrensburg) have been filed to address GAM’s number one priority legislation for the 2021 session.

MISSOURI SCHOLARS ACADEMY & MISSOURI FINE ARTS ACADEMY

Support state funding for the Missouri Scholars Academy and Missouri Fine Arts Academy for June, 2022.

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

MISSOURI SCHOOL FOUNDATION FORMULA FUNDING

Support increased funding for the Missouri School Foundation Formula. Support \$3.9 billion appropriation in House Bill 2 for the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education.

OTHER GIFTED FACTS & FIGURES

- \$24,870,104 was appropriated for gifted education in FY2006. There were 295 school districts with state approved gifted programs. In FY2007, this amount was rolled into the new foundation formula. Without this line item providing earmarked funding for state approved gifted programs, those funds can be spent on other programs, and there are now only 211 school districts offering state approved gifted programs.

2021 GAM DAY AT THE CAPITOL IS TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, AT 11:00 AM

You can find your legislators by visiting the Missouri Senate website.
Legislative Look-Up: www.senate.mo.gov/lookup/leg_lookup.aspx
It will give you contact information and a webpage on your Legislators.

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



Certificate in STEM Education

January 12-April 27, 2021

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Teachers earn a certificate in STEM Education through a live, virtual learning experience to integrate STEM into classrooms.

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Register by December 31, 2020 | Total Program Cost = \$990

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For additional questions, contact:
Michelle Schoeck at mschoeck@maryville.edu

*6 University credits can be earned for an additional fee.



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2020 GAM Report

State Director of Gifted Education (Christine Nobbe)

Quarterly Updates

The updates I shared at the quarterly GAM Board meetings can be found in this Google folder: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1T5y0tGQ5BaaOTPNi2fYoUVeAaFwTeVcC?usp=sharing>. The updates provide additional details.

Compliance Monitoring for Gifted Education Programs:

State law (Section 163.031.6, RSMo) requires a withholding for districts who experience a significant drop in identified and served gifted students. The statute requires districts with a state approved gifted program to continue to serve at least 80% of the number of students served in the previous school year or receive a payment adjustment in their foundation formula equal to \$680 times the difference in the number of students served in the preceding year. There is a provision in the law that exempts districts with an average daily attendance of 350 students or less.

I conducted the desk audits by studying Core Data Screen 25 for all school systems, comparing the number of 2018-2019 Gifted Served students to the 2019-2020 Gifted Served students, looking to see if gifted programs have certified teachers, and checking minutes served. I discovered inaccurate data and worked with districts to update their Student Core and to update Screen 25. I used the October Student Core to compare the students served from year to year. In the end, three districts had a significant drop in the number of gifted students identified and served.

I continue to work to improve the data reporting and sent detailed information about Screen 25 in late July to the Gifted Education listserv, detailed information about the Student Core in September, and information about the Teacher Core in October. The Student Core is a challenge this year, due to the pandemic. I will look at both the October Student Core and the April Student Core this year as I complete the compliance monitoring. **It is important to continue to identify and serve ALL gifted learners in our public-school boundaries: in-person students, those who are in virtual programs or being homeschooled, and those who are attending private and parochial schools.**

If you are concerned that your district might see a drop of 20% or more in identified and served gifted students, please reach out to me as soon as possible.

Missouri Scholars and Missouri Fine Arts Academies:

The state legislature partially funded the Academies for 2020. The funding was not used because of the pandemic. Missouri Fine Arts Academy was cancelled. Missouri Scholars Academy hosted an online voluntary academy, in which resident assistants and teachers volunteered their time. Learn more about the virtual academy here: <https://moscholars.missouri.edu/current-scholars/>.

Advisory Council on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children:

The Advisory Council on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children continues to work on developing recommendations to enhance gifted education in Missouri. This past year the Council published several new documents:

- [Identifying and Serving Gifted Learners in a 100% Distanced Learning Model](#)
- [Providing Services for Missouri's Gifted Learners during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- [The Need for Ongoing and Sustained Professional Development for General Education Teachers and Gifted Education Specialists on Meeting the Needs of Gifted Learners](#)
- [Using Local Norms to Equitably Identify Gifted Learners](#)

The Council also helped revise the [Gifted Education Program Guidelines](#).

The Council met seven times since the 2019 GAM Report: October 22, 2020; July 16, 2020; June 4, 2020; April 22, 2020; April 10, 2020; February 26, 2020; and December 3, 2019. The meetings are currently being held virtually and the public is invited to listen in.

Visit the Council's website <https://dese.mo.gov/gifted-advisory-council> to download the documents mentioned above, read the biennial reports, ascertain the date of the next Council meeting, and to contact Council members.

Gifted Education Professional Development:

In the past, Missouri gifted educators had limited access to professional development beyond the GAM fall conference, spring district workshops, and the New Teachers Workshop. Since arriving at DESE on April 4, 2019, I have worked to provide additional professional development in Jefferson City, at RPDCs, in school districts, and at conferences. When the pandemic hit mid-March, I transitioned to online workshops and office hours. I offered formal summer workshops with assignments and virtual presentations and informal discussions around specific topics. For the fall, I instituted [Gifted and Talented Tuesdays](#), with a different event each Tuesday focused on different audiences. I will continue Gifted and Talented Tuesdays through this school year, so watch for an updated invite in early December.

Social Emotional Learning for Missouri's Gifted Students:

During the summer of 2020, gifted education specialists participated in a statewide Social Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum writing project led by representatives from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Gifted Association of Missouri, and Lindenwood University. Over twenty teachers from across the state worked together to create social emotional learning experiences for gifted students over the course of three weeks. These lessons are part of an online repository that are accessible to teachers throughout the state and beyond. Our hope is that the repository will continue to grow as other teachers become involved in the project.

Additionally, during this professional development, teachers received training on various components of SEL including class meetings, Zone of Regulation, and bibliotherapy. The PD consisted of nine hours of whole group professional development (via Zoom meetings); along with several hours of "off-site" work completed both independently and in collaboration with assigned SEL strand teams. All and all, each participant contributed at least two fully vetted lessons in one of the following strands: Self Awareness, Mindsets, Social Capacity, Life Skills,

and Emotional Well-being. Dr. Tracy Bednarick, Gifted Coordinator of Lindbergh Schools and Gifted Association of Missouri Region 8 Co-director, was the leader of this effort. The leadership team included Christine Nobbe, Director of Gifted Education at DESE; Hannah Noack-Ruebling, gifted education specialist and GAM Region 8 Co-director; Richelle Moore, Kirkwood gifted education specialist; and Dr. Mary Gismegian, Assistant Professor at Lindenwood University.

To learn more about the SEL Curriculum and to access the lessons go here:

<https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/qs-ge-Social-Emotional-Learning-for-Gifted.pdf> . To access a one page, two sided information page *Social Emotional Needs of Gifted Learners* go here: <https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/qs-ge-social-emotional-needs-of-gifted-learners.pdf> . The information sheet can be distributed to parents, teachers, and administrators. It is a companion piece to the *Gifted Learners* handout: <https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/qs-ge-Introduction-to-Gifted-Learners.pdf> .

Communication:

To facilitate communication between DESE Gifted Education and gifted education specialists, coordinators, and administrators, multiple strategies are being used, including:

- updates to the website;
- listserv messages (all are invited to subscribe to the [listserv](#));
- conference presentations;
- school visits with presentations to parents, teachers, and students;
- in-person workshops;
- virtual workshops;
- virtual office hours;
- email communications;
- phone calls; and
- two articles published in Missouri Elementary School Principals.

I am open to using additional strategies and welcome your suggestions.

The Pandemic:

The pandemic is impacting gifted education in Missouri. Many districts are struggling with identification because of a backlog from last spring and because many students are learning virtually. Sometimes gifted education is being pushed to the back burner as school systems deal with many pandemic-related issues but it is important to identify and support gifted learners so they make continuous academic progress and to develop their talents. Students need services provided by well-trained teachers, who challenge and support them, both academically and emotionally, in order to fully develop their gifts and talents. The needs of gifted students must still be met regardless of the format school may take. The myth that “gifted students will do fine on their own” is not supported by research. Therefore, it is important to identify and serve students during challenging circumstances.

Gifted education professionals are working hard to meet the needs of gifted learners and all of our teachers, coordinators, and administrators are commended for their efforts.

Submitted by *Christine Nobbe*, Director of Gifted Education

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Annually Scheduled Accelerated Courses – ALL ONLINE!

ED 550G – Introduction to Gifted and Talented (June 1–July 2, 2021)

ED 609G – Teaching Internship (March 3–May 5, 2021)

ED 650G – Identification of Gifted (July 6–August 6, 2021)

ED 651G – Curriculum for Gifted (August 23–December 17, 2021)

ED 652G – Meeting Affective Needs of Gifted Children (June 1–July 2, 2021)

ED 653G – Programming, Planning, and Development: Administration and Supervision of Gifted Programs (July 6–August 6, 2021)

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

In addition to these courses, DESE requires “Psychology of the Exceptional Child” for gifted certification, as well as a research course, and an internship if you have not met the teaching requirements. Most teachers completed the Psychology course and a research course during their initial teaching certification, which typically meets these requirements. Truman offers these courses if you need them. The internship is offered spring semesters in the second block.

Cost Courses are offered to Missouri K-12 teachers at a special rate of \$220 per credit hour.* That's a savings of almost \$500 over the normal Graduate rate!

*Online courses charge an additional \$30 fee to support technology costs.

For More Information

PHONE: 660-785-5384

EMAIL: institute@truman.edu

WEB: pd.truman.edu/gifted



Register now! Start at pd.truman.edu/gifted

Our Parent Network Saved Our Gifted Education Program

By Crystal Koenig

I had been teaching for 17 years and gifted was my dream teaching position. As the years progressed though it became increasingly clear that my administration did not understand the value of gifted education. I felt like an uphill battle, constantly attempting to convince teachers and administrators that gifted education was a service, saved students, and that our gifted kids needed to be with like-minded peers at least once a day.

When I was hired as a gifted teacher I knew I had K-8 all by myself for the entire district. I also knew it hadn't always been that way. There once were teachers for elementary, middle, and high school. It had dwindled to just K-8 and only one teacher. This was the first red flag of many to come.

The next red flag was the increasing amount of responsibilities added to my duties each year. I was the gifted education facilitator, an eMINTS trainer, NJHS advisor, yearbook sponsor, PLC leader, scholar bowl sponsor, professional development committee representative, technology committee leader, and new teacher mentor just to name a few. I was then being groomed to take over the position of a retiree as the professional development coordinator and new teacher coordinator. I felt like I was drowning and that gifted education was being put far on the back burner. I went to my administration and was told that it had to be this way. I went higher up and was told that this was just the way it was going to be. No one seemed to feel the panic I was experiencing

that gifted education wasn't a priority. I knew if something didn't change my gifted students were going to lose.

At that point I was offered a gifted position in another district and took it. The administration let me know that I had a month to reconsider. They also told me that if I left the gifted education program in our district would be dissolved. I called my students' parents and asked to see and speak with all the students and parents before I left. I told them goodbye, we all cried, and I let them know what I was told as well. One set of parents rallied all the parents in a few phone calls. Long story longer, the gifted program in my old district now has not one, but two amazing teachers! All because the parents fought long and hard through many phone calls, meetings, and complaints.

How do you rally the parents in a small district? Make sure your program is invaluable to your students and parents. Challenge them, be there for them, be strict yet loving, and help them step outside of their comfort zones. Help your students grow through executive dysfunction so that they see success. Guide those students who are underachieving to meet their potential through relationships, support, and goals. Keep the parents informed, send pictures of day to day challenges and successes (I have social media experts in my classes who are in charge of taking pictures of our activities and students and then we post them on our social media classroom pages). Send home their self-evaluations letting them know you are there to help the students reach their goals and the parents are your partners in this endeavor. Keep all stakeholders informed about gifted education, what it is, what it isn't, common myths, and misconceptions.

Encourage parents to attend field trips with you so they see your relationship with their child. Build a school family!

Lastly, here are some other ways to help involve parents that came up during the GAM Talks session at our 2020 Conference:

- Have articles and books available which deal with common gifted issues at P/T conferences

- Call or email home with positive reports and/or pictures even for the most challenging students

- Host webinars for Social /Emotional books/issues

- Hold a Language Arts Department fair

- Hold a Science Fair and Science Olympiad

- Host a Harry Potter Night

- Have parents fill out a form about their jobs and expertise and then host a Career Kaleidoscope where they present their job and what they do

- Host Friday night family gifted nights



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MISSOURI CERTIFICATION The necessary gifted course work to prepare for Missouri gifted education certification – available online.

All courses listed meet requirements for Missouri Gifted Certification.

Teachers seeking Missouri Gifted Certification may enroll online as post-baccalaureate students without making an application to a degree program.

Courses may be taken in any order beginning in any semester.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Nancy Gerardy
Gifted Education Program Coordinator
Special Education Department
GerardyN@missouri.edu
573-268-7766

SPRING SEMESTER 2021

- Research with Exceptional Children (SPC_ED 8350)
- Nature and Needs of Gifted and Talented Students (SPC_ED 8380)
- Assessment and Evaluation in Gifted Education (SPC_ED 8405)
- Differentiating Instruction: Reaching Gifted, Typical and Struggling Learners (SPC_ED 8406)
- Practicum: Gifted Education (SPC_ED 8946)

SUMMER SEMESTER 2021

- Readings in Gifted Education (SPC_ED 8085, master's program students only)
- Research with Exceptional Children (SPC_ED 8350)
- Curriculum Methods for Gifted and Talented Students (SPC_ED 8391)
- Differentiating Instruction: Reaching Gifted, Typical and Struggling Learners (SPC_ED 8406)
- Administration and Supervision of Gifted Programs (SPC_ED 8410)

FALL SEMESTER 2021

- Curriculum Methods for Gifted and Talented Students (SPC_ED 8391)
- Assessment and Evaluation in Gifted Education (SPC_ED 8405)
- Differentiating Instruction: Reaching Gifted, Typical and Struggling Learners (SPC_ED 8406)
- Practicum: Gifted Education (SPC_ED 8946)

SchoolsNEXT Design Competition Winners

St. Clair Jr. High – Jennifer Hawkins

St. Clair Jr. High School's seventh-grade gifted class recently competed in the national jury for the SchoolsNEXT Design Competition. The national competition was held in September virtually, and four teams were recognized. St. Clair, representing the Midwest Great Lakes Region, received the Award of Commendation for 2020! Team members were Myah Beeson, Ali Clark, Mattea Casey, and Lilly Verrett.

In this competition, student teams are challenged to plan and design sustainable and resilient learning spaces that encourage collaboration, innovation, and critical thinking. They are required to work in teams to create eco-friendly solutions to meet the needs of students and address the economy and society of the future.

Because the school district recently passed Prop. STC Safe and Secure, the team chose to create a proposal renovating an existing space into a new gifted center. Their plan includes a MakerSpace, construction area, rooftop garden, performance stage, conversation area, conference room, and kitchenette.

Their team mentor, Stephen Raskin from FGM ARCHITECTS, is also the school's architect for updating facilities. He assisted the SchoolsNEXT team with all aspects of the project. Haley Kell, also from FGM Architects, taught the team about sustainable materials for interior design.

"This was a valuable learning experience," said their teacher and team manager, Jennifer Hawkins. "The students created a real-life project that is valuable to them, and we hope some of their ideas will become reality."

To find out more about this competition and to view the winning submissions, visit www.a4le.org/.

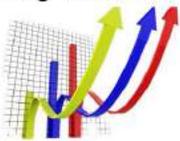


HELP WANTED

MAAE is **seeking educator partner teams** (at least one fine arts and one non-arts teacher) to work with an arts integration coach in a pilot program. Participants will design lessons using Missouri Learning Standards in fine arts and non-arts areas and



Missouri Alliance
for Arts Education



item descriptors from MAP tests with desired outcomes of improved student performance on statewide achievement tests. Help spread the word! Tell your colleagues and friends! To apply, or for more information – email director@moaae.org.



MAIN EVENTS

Join us for our FREE monthly webinar sessions of this vibrant professional learning community. **Get connected** with other arts integration practitioners and **get inspired!** Each monthly session features a different presenter to share best practices. **To register** – email director@moaae.org

Every School • Every Child • Every Day
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GAM End of Session Report 2020

By Kyna Iman

During 2020 Legislative Session, the Gifted Association of Missouri (GAM) advocated for passage of House Bill 1317, sponsored by Rep. Chrissy Sommer, and Senate Bill 645, sponsored by Senator Denny Hoskins. House Bill 1317 and Senate Bill 645 would require all school districts in Missouri to establish and provide a state-approved gifted program if 3% or more of the students are determined to be gifted. Districts with average daily attendance of 350 or fewer students are not required to have a teacher certificated to teach gifted education, but any teacher without a gifted-teaching certificate must participate in six hours per year of professional development regarding gifted services.

Although the legislation overwhelmingly passed the House of Representatives, and had a hearing in the Senate, due to COVID-19, the legislature had to postpone action throughout March and April and time ran out before the legislation could advance to final passage in the Senate.

GAM has actively supported the needs of high-ability and high-potential learners in Missouri since 1980. We provide teacher training, curriculum development, parent support, regional seminars and workshops, scholarships, student competitions, and awards.

The current definition of gifted, which is located in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, is: Students, children, or youth who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services and activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities.

GAM continues to educate legislators to elevate gifted education in our state to the highly-respected and strongly-supported position gifted education enjoys in our neighboring states, e.g. Arkansas, Iowa, Kentucky. Missouri's brightest students – creative, intelligent, persistent, and successful problem-solvers are key players in our state's economic future. We must challenge them appropriately.

Please contact your State Representative and State Senator during the Interim to encourage them to support educational measures for Missouri's exceptionally-able and high-potential students.

HOW YOU CAN HELP ADVOCATE: Please thank your State Representative and your State Senator for voting to support gifted education. GAM continues to work to educate the legislative leaders of the state on the importance of providing gifted education in all Missouri schools.

Invite your Legislators to your classroom and show them the wonderful educational opportunities you are providing Missouri's best and brightest students.

Go to <https://www.senate.mo.gov/LegisLookup/Default.aspx> for contact information on your Legislators.

If you have questions, please contact Kyna Iman at kynaiman@earthlink.net



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Missouri Scholars Academy Wows 2020 Scholars Virtually

By Christine Nobbe
DESE Director of Gifted Education
October 20, 2020

The Missouri Scholars Academy 2020 “Current Scholars” webpage opens with this announcement:

Welcome to the first ever virtual, pandemic version of the Missouri Scholars Academy! While we aren't hosting an online version of the MSA Academy per se, we are pleased to offer you some virtual content and experiences this summer. Through the month of June, MSA will email activity announcements and update this page with new content. All content is FREE thanks to the faculty and RAs who are volunteering their time and expertise this summer.
#MSAforever

Nothing is required, come to what you can, go at your own pace.

<https://moscholars.missouri.edu/current-scholars/>

Of course, Missouri Scholars Academy (MSA) faculty, RAs, and students were disappointed that the 36th Academy was not held in-person. However, directors Dr. Rachel Harper and Dr. Steve Keller are pleased that 17 faculty members, 13 RAs, two coordinators, and 240 students participated in the month-long, virtual, pandemic version.

Iconic MSA elements were retained in the virtual MSA, including

- Academy colors (seafoam and charcoal),
- move in (via Minecraft),
- the opening convocation program with all Scholars and their high schools listed (which I always scrutinize looking for students I know),
- Boomba-Hey,
- Problem of the Day,
- Big Group (via Zoom),
- a street dance (also via Zoom),
- academic rigor, and
- houses (student groups) facilitated by RAs.

Other elements were new and designed for an online environment.

The new elements included

- a book club,
- MSA Creates (with daily challenges),
- Question of the Day (Is a hotdog a sandwich?) and most importantly,
- the use of Discord as a communication tool to “talk and hang out.”

MSA 2020 was not a traditional Academy, but it wowed!

Dr. Steve Keller said, “The faculty and staff did a fabulous job! Students wanted to participate, but everything was completely voluntary. Even though the Academy was virtual, the 2020 Scholars are an official part of the MSA community. We are hoping

to have them in person at a future event.”

How did a virtual academy come about?

At the height of the pandemic shutdown on April 11, 2020, the MSA Faculty and RAs met virtually. It was announced that the 2020 Academy would not be held on campus at the University of Missouri – Columbia. People responded with, “MSA is important to us,” “we love this program so much,” and “we have to do something for the 2020 scholars.” This meeting led to a **volunteer** group of RAs and faculty setting up the virtual program. Faculty member Dani Eschweiler said, “Rachel and Steve [MSA directors] spent a lot of time behind the scenes. Faculty donated time to their lessons. The RAs came up with a lot of activities, and I spent hours setting up Discord and then replying to Scholars when they summoned me.”

The faculty volunteered their time to create videos covering specific academic content and facilitated follow-up Zoom meetings to discuss the content. Faculty member Frank Corley shared that his videos and Zoom meetings were well attended. He said, “I felt good about mine. I was nervous that the Scholars wouldn’t show up or participate, but they did. They needed intellectual peers and teachers.” He went on, “The Scholars were engaged! I wasn’t

talking about easy stuff, and they stayed with me!”

What challenging content kept the Scholars engaged?

Frank’s first video was “Math Imitates Art I: Representing 3D Space in 2D” with the essential question: Historically, how did the artistic representation of space evolve in two-dimensional visual art? The video had 134 YouTube views. Frank’s second recorded lesson was “Math Imitates Art II” with the essential question: “How do artists represent four dimensions in a two-dimensional artwork?”

Frank also facilitated two Zoom discussions. The first, “To Infinity and Beyond!,” focused on the Infinite (Virtual) Residence Hall using a video from a previous Academy. The Scholars questioned the sizes of infinity and explored possibilities. The second, “Annotating Einstein,” asked Scholars to read “Geometry and Experience.” Though only a few pages long, Einstein’s 1921 Lecture “Geometry and Experience” is a fascinating blend of philosophy, mathematics, and physics. In the online discussions, Frank and the Scholars dissected the paper; followed some of the paths Einstein outlined; and learned some relativity, epistemology, and non-Euclidean geometry.

The online learning received accolades from scholars, including this post on Discord: "[The discussions] were really interesting and I really enjoyed all of the classes! It definitely wasn't the same as being in-person, but all the instructors were so engaging and fun! I just wanted to say thank you guys so much! I know how you guys weren't paid but y'all tried to make this a great camp and it was! We appreciate all the time you guys put into us."

What led to a successful virtual academy?

Dani Eschweiler shared why MSA 2020 was so successful. First, she enthusiastically explained Discord, an app with messaging, video, voice chat, and video call features. Channels (or topics) allow the community to stay organized. Dani stated, "Discord was a good way for the Scholars to get to know each other; a weird benefit of the platform was that the Scholars didn't see each other, so they relaxed."

A Scholar wrote, "I love the Discord and plan to keep using it. It was a great way to make friends that you normally wouldn't have talked to and you couldn't make any first assumptions based on looks or appearance. Unfortunately, it's not the same as meeting in-person, but I've made so many friends in here and it's a great way to stay in touch with all of them."

Another reason for success: daily opportunities to engage and learn. The problem of the day, question of the day, and daily "March Madness in June" brackets engrossed the Scholars. These activities were all conducted on Discord. Academic video and discussion groups happened daily, as well. Dani said, "the daily stuff kept everyone into it."

A Scholar wrote, "Even if the depth of the learning available wasn't quite as far as it could have been in person, the opportunity to jump around between more subjects than we might've been able to otherwise somewhat balances that out. ... I also just want to highlight that problem of the day, question of the day, book club, etc. while not really 'classes' were all great ways of using Discord for instruction and also helped give it more of the feel of the camp, if that makes sense. If there were to be another online academy, I feel like you could potentially even expand more on the using Discord for instruction, there are lots of possibilities with that."

At the beginning of the Academy, Dani set up several Discord channels for discussion. Scholars earned the right to set up their own channels and in August they had created 30 channels for discussion. The most used channel is called "Venting and Feelings" where scholars communicate in-depth about the

things that are bothering them. Dani said, “They trust each other.” Other channels encouraged in-depth political debates, discussions on social justice, and game nights. The Scholars developed rules for engagement including, “no bad words.” She said, “If these discussions are what the future will be like, the future will be good.”

What can we learn from the Virtual MSA?

First of all, we worry that adolescents cannot build relationships during distanced learning, but the MSA experience shows that they can connect virtually. Dani feels that MSA worked because of continued contact and the common gifted experiences these students have, no matter where they live and go to school. This leads us to the question, *how can we, as educators, provide ways for students to connect virtually and in-person on a continued and regular basis?*

Secondly, MSA demonstrated that “flipped” lessons, lessons in which students watch a video or read an article before meeting to discuss the content works well with gifted learners. Flipped lessons are a powerful way to use time wisely and focus on discussion and collaboration. Asynchronously, the students gather the background information needed through a video-taped lesson, professional video, or reading.

Synchronously, the students collaborate in a discussion, debate, or activity. This encourages us to consider, *how can I use the flipped classroom technique with gifted learners?*

Finally, the online platform for most of the discussion, Discord, was a space for the scholars to communicate without judgement. The text-chatting allowed for more eloquence and clarity, without worry about personal appearance or stressing about presenting in front of a group. Since it is important to learn various formats of communication, *how can gifted educators provide safe places for students to practice?*

As the Pandemic continues, our 2020 Scholars have a positive experience to remember and life-long friends for support. As gifted education specialists, MSA 2020 provides insights into techniques to connect with gifted adolescents.



*MSA Faculty Clockwise: Dr. Rachel Harper, Dr. Steve Keller, Dani Eschweiler, and Frank Corley
Images from MSA's social media pages*

GAM Board Members

Meredith Wisniewski - President

I am in my tenth year at Phelps Center for Gifted Education in Springfield, Missouri. Prior to joining Phelps I was with the gifted program in Fulton Public Schools for three years after spending three years as an elementary school teacher. I have a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education, gifted certification grades K-12, and a Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Missouri. In addition I hold both a Master's degree in Educational Administration from Missouri State University and certification as a K-12 principal; in 2017, I was one of the administrators for the Phelps Center's summer program. 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. I have been a presenter at the NAGC conference, and I have been a GAM representative as an NAGC State Affiliate member. After serving as a district director and as the Membership Vice-President for GAM, I find myself taking on this new and exciting role. In my free time my husband Adam and I enjoy cooking, riding our bicycles, running, listening to music, and hanging out with our cat Rosa.

Tracy Bednarick - Executive Vice President

Hello, from Saint Louis! My name is Tracy Bednarick and I'm excited to take on the role of Vice President for GAM; I previously served as a co-director for District 8 for two years. During that time, we held one mini-conference for teachers and parents of gifted students, began a monthly gifted speaker series, and led a statewide social emotional learning for gifted students curriculum writing initiative. I hold a BA in English and Elementary Education with a minor in Creative Writing and General Science. My Master's in Biology Education and my Doctorate is in Teacher Leadership. I will finish my second Master's in Gifted

Education this December. I taught 6th grade in Michigan for fourteen years, worked at a Science Curriculum Coordinator and Individual Accelerated Learning Coordinator for Saint Louis Public Schools for five years, and the Gifted Coordinator for Hazelwood Schools for one year. I currently serve as the Gifted Program Coordinator at Lindbergh Schools, where I oversee the gifted enrichment program (LEAP) and program for exceptionally gifted students (PEGS) at Lindbergh Schools. In my free time, I enjoy hiking, baking, and tending to my backyard chickens.

Ashli Eaves - Conference VP

My name is Ashli Eaves and I have been an active member of the GAM Board for 8 years. This is my third consecutive term being nominated and elected to serve as the Conference VP. I have 12 years in education, 8 of those being in gifted at the Capstone Department in Camdenton, MO (Lake of the Ozarks). During my time as an educator I furthered my education and received my M.S. in Administration in 2012 and my M.S. in Gifted, Talented and Creative in 2017. This school year I have decided to take a step back from the education world, but the field of gifted is still near and dear to my heart. I want to continue to advocate for and educate about this population of students, which is why I agreed to dedicate the next two years to planning Missouri's only statewide conference for gifted education.

On a personal note, this year my family moved to Columbia, MO and we are loving it. I have been married 9 years to my husband Sean and have two boys, Bennett, 8 and Briggs, 2. There have been lots of changes for our family in 2020, including a big move, new jobs for myself as well as my husband, and of course COVID and virtual learning. We continue to find opportunities to stay kind to ourselves and serve others in our new community. I am a member of the "Red Shoe Society" which advocates and promotes opportunities for the Ronald McDonald House in Columbia. I am also a member of the

Chamber of Commerce and an active member of their Women's Network Division assisting with planning special events. I am also a member of MOPS and MOMS Next in Columbia. If you are ever in MIZZOU town, I'd love to connect and have coffee or lunch and network with you! Call me or email me at ashli.eaves@nm.com.

Cindy Turner - GAM Membership VP

I am Cindy Turner, GAM membership vice president. This is my 17th year of teaching, I taught 9 years in 1st, 2nd and 5th grade in a title one school, then I got the opportunity to teach gifted students in intermediate and middle school. I helped to develop our gifted center in the North Kansas City School district. My passion for gifted comes from my own two children as they are both identified as gifted. My son is a 2E and is a senior and Missouri S&T university going into mechanical engineering. My multipotential gifted daughter is a sophomore at Denver University majoring in leadership and international business. My husband was a misidentified gifted person who is an autodidact and mad scientist, haha. I have a B.S. in Rehabilitation Psychology from UCM and a B.S. in Elementary Education from Park University, a Master's in technology in Education from Lesley University, Gifted Certification from M.U. and my Ed. Spec. in Gifted Talented director from Arkansas University. I have been a GAM district director for many years and then took a break and came back to be on the board as membership VP for the last two years. I have met the most amazing educators and people with GAM. They fill my bucket and help me hone my craft.

Shannon Fuller - Finance VP

My name is Shannon Fuller, and gifted education is my passion. I am your Finance Vice President for the Gifted Association of Missouri and the 3rd/4th PEGS teacher for the North Kansas City School District in Kansas City. PEGS, Program of Exceptionally Gifted Students, is a full-time program for grades 3 - 6. This is my 3rd year in

this role. Before this, I facilitated gifted students in pull-out programs for 6 years and taught in the regular classroom for 5 years before that.

On a personal note, I have two wonderful children who are academically gifted in different ways as well as a supportive, loving husband who also supports my passions. My oldest child is a sophomore in college studying Graphic Arts, and my youngest is a freshman in high school. Our two dogs encourage a healthy lifestyle by demanding walks and our cat rules the house. We also support the arts in our community. I am currently serving as the board president of our local children's summer musical theater program. In my house, we have a running joke that someone is almost always in college. I am the guiltiest, but my husband is starting to catch up. I have a Bachelors in International Affairs from Kennesaw State University, a Bachelors in Elementary Education from Missouri State University, a Masters in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Missouri - Kansas City, a certificate in Gifted Education from University of Missouri - Columbia, and a Specialist in Education for Director of Gifted Programs with Arkansas State University. I love learning and hope to continue on with my doctorate once both my children are finished with college and my husband finishes his MBA.

Megan Pinney - Secretary

Megan Pinney is a gifted education teacher at Phelps Center for Gifted Education in the Springfield Public School District. She has served as the district 7 director for the past two years and is excited to serve in the role of secretary for the executive board. Megan holds a Bachelor's degree in early childhood education, a Master's degree in gifted education, and is currently earning her Doctorate in educational administration. She is passionate about learning and developing as a teacher to better serve her students and colleagues. In her free time, Megan enjoys playing board games, participating in trivia nights, reading, watching films, and spending time with her niece and nephew.



The GAMbit would love to share your ideas!
Please submit articles to editor Alex Pagnani at
pagnani@ucmo.edu

Next Due Date: January 15, 2021

Thank you and happy holidays!