SPRING 2026

The GAMbit

An official publication of the Gifted Association of Missouri

IN THIS ISSUE

A Letter from the President

by Heather Tomicich

Dear GAM Community,

As we move through this winter, we are proud to celebrate Gifted Education Awareness Week in Missouri, a time to highlight the importance of recognizing and nurturing the unique talents and potential of gifted learners across our state. This week serves as an important reminder of the impact strong gifted programs have on students, families, schools, and communities.

President's Letter

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Advocacy remains at the heart of our work. As educators, parents, and supporters, we must continue to champion gifted education throughout Missouri by sharing our successes, communicating our needs, and ensuring that gifted students have access to meaningful, equitable opportunities to grow at all levels. Your voice and commitment make a difference at the local and state levels.

As the school year begins to draw to a close, we encourage you to finish strong—continue building and strengthening relationships with gifted students and their families. These connections are essential to supporting not only academic growth, but also the social and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Looking ahead, summer provides valuable opportunities for professional growth and renewal. Whether it's enrolling in a gifted education course, collaborating with fellow gifted educators, or attending professional learning events, continued learning strengthens our practice. We especially encourage new and "new to gifted" teachers alike to consider attending the New Teachers Workshop in Kirksville, Missouri, this July, an excellent opportunity to connect, learn, and grow within our gifted education community.

Thank you for your dedication, advocacy, and passion for gifted education. Together, we will continue to support and inspire Missouri's gifted learners—this season and beyond.

Warm regards,
Heather Tomicich
Executive President

Member Updates

Thank you for continuing to support GAM with your membership fees. This is the main source of revenue for GAM, that supports our legislative advocate and secretary. Both are essential for advocating for our gifted students and teachers. Now that membership is included in conference fees most memberships are expiring in October. This is a great way to remember when to renew your membership if you didn't attend the conference. Keep supporting this amazing organization!

Connect with GAM!

Message from the Editor

Welcome to the spring issue of GAMbit!

This issue centers on a critical and unavoidable reality: the evolution of **Gifted Education in the Digital Age**. Whether you're navigating AI in your classroom, rethinking how we teach problem-solving, or simply trying to help gifted learners thrive in an increasingly connected world, this issue has something for you.

We're also thrilled to welcome our new featured writer, Kate Place, to the GAMbit family. Kate brings incredible energy and expertise from the KC area, and we couldn't be more excited to have her voice in these pages.

Inside, you'll find Brian Housand's timely reflections on process, judgment, and wonder in the age of AI; Brian Reed's exploration of computational thinking and its connection to Missouri's Gifted Learner Outcomes; and a student perspective on the very real blessings and curses of the digital world. Our GAMbits and Pieces section rounds things out with insights on gifted and music education, plus important updates from the Gifted Advisory Council of Missouri. And as always, don't miss our legislative and DESE updates to stay current on what's happening for gifted education across the state.

Dig in. There's a lot to explore!

Dr. Katherine Rottjakob Bryda, GAMbit Chair

Helpful Links:

- Using Artificial Intelligence to Transform Curriculum for Gifted Students and Professional Development for Teachers (NAGC Blog Post)
- The Complexity, Autonomy, Authenticity, and Support (CAAS) Framework for Gifted Students' Needs in Technology Education: A Systematic Literature Review (Roeper Review Open Access Article)
- The Role of AI in Gifted Education Today: Benefits & Boundaries (Blog Post)

GAMbit Call For 2026 Articles!

Whether you are a parent, educator, administrator, or play another role in gifted education, GAM would love to hear from YOU! Potential article topics could be parent involvement, teacher tips, best practices in gifted education, and so much more!

ARTICLE REQUIREMENTS

- 500 words or less
- Related to Gifted and Talented Education
- Times New Roman, Size 12 Font
- Double Spaced
- Submitted via Word or Google Docs
- Includes 3-4 photos of author and/or related to topic

2026 DUE DATES

SUMMER: APRIL 1, 2026

FALL: AUGUST 1, 2026

WINTER: NOVEMBER 1, 2026

If interested in writing an article, please fill out our interest form LINK HERE.

Questions? Email gambitpublication@gmail.com

GAMbit 2026 Featured Writer

Kate Place

We are thrilled to have Kate Place as our 2026 GAMbit Featured Writer!

Kate Place, Ed.S. serves as the K-12 Principal of Gifted Programs in North Kansas City Schools. She was previously an elementary school principal and is currently finishing her gifted certification through Truman State University. Kate is passionate about gifted education and empowering students. In NKC Schools, she coordinates programming for New Administrators and serves on the district's Guiding Coalition for Belonging.

Have someone you feel is an exceptional leader who is making significant contributions to gifted education in Missouri? Nominate them for our 2027 featured writer at the Google Form by clicking here.

Becoming a Multidimensional Teacher

GAMbit Featured Writer

By Kate Place

My gifted high schooler was reflecting on school when he paused and matter-of-factly said, “The best teachers are multidimensional.” His remark captured what I hope to be as an educator. He explained that these classrooms feel more like being in a book or part of a movie. These teachers might seem like rockstars, but we can all become multidimensional and nowhere is the need for this depth and sophistication more prevalent than in gifted education.

Whether your learners have a bicycle brain that requires pedaling at a minimum speed to prevent falling over or they seem to be abstract reasoners who see the world in endless patterns (Byrdseed), their gifted brains literally fire up for learning. Their neural connections are forming with every observation and detail, and it’s our role to shape these pathways for greater efficiency, motivation, and sheer enjoyment. Becoming a multidimensional teacher isn’t magic; it involves intentional behaviors and mindset tweaks:

Fuel your mind with literacy.

Stay engaged in current events; explore the world through diverse text; and consume media that imparts research and inspires wonder. Experience learning through literature and keep a journal of ideas and questions.

Observe the world and share your connections.

The world will be alive and interconnected for students when we model our awe for small moments and incredible discoveries. Be intentional about observing patterns in nature, inspiring art, people who make a difference, and experiences that evoke your senses. Weave the world into your classroom and invite students to do the same.

DIY and fail forward.

Whether you’re beginning a *Life on Mars* unit, transplanting succulents in botany, or creating portfolios of the gifted journey, be the teacher who does the work alongside (or slightly ahead) of your students. Don’t be afraid to try the unfamiliar and make mistakes. Firsthand learning allows you to notice and name your aha moments and pinpoint pitfalls and possibilities. You can experience the emotional roller coaster that gifted students ride and use strategies for building social-emotional skills, like self-awareness, empathy, and resiliency. The time you invest in DIY experiences builds expertise and credibility and helps you create a menu of rich lessons.

Multidimensional Teacher

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Be a storyteller.

Stories are like glue binding lessons together in memorable packages. In Brene' Brown's Strong Ground (2025), she offers the power of metaphors, analogies, and stories. She shares, "They are neurologically powerful, because they engage our brains in ways that literal or abstract information does not. A good story or metaphor activates multiple sensory, emotional, and cognitive systems at one time." Tell the stories in your classroom that matter and will cement lessons into learning.

Be a team player, even if you don't have a team (yet).

We are only as good as the people we surround ourselves with and teaching is far too challenging to do alone. Teaching partnerships help us develop and vet ideas, challenge the status quo, and solve critical problems. If you're a teacher on an island, create a team. Consider book studies, sharing professional development, unit swaps, or taking advantage of organizations like GAM and NAGC and social media networks. Learning with others grows our capacity and builds confidence.

Becoming multidimensional teachers, we create dynamic experiences with curious angles and rich perspective. Our classrooms are places in which all students learn something new in every subject, every day.

References

Brown, B. (2025). *Strong ground: The lessons of daring leadership, the tenacity of paradox, and the wisdom of the human spirit*. Random House.

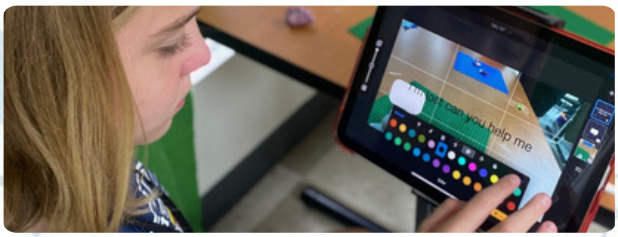
"Three images to explain gifted." (n.d). *Byrdseed.* Retrieved *from* https://www.healthnews.com/article123 .

PROGRAMMING FOR STUDENTS

MARYVILLE UNIVERSITY | CENTER FOR ACCESS AND ACHIEVEMENT

SUMMER 2026 STEM PROGRAMS

- Science & Robotics - Ages 4-12
- Teen Tech - Grades 6-8
- Coding Camp - Grades 8-12



July 13-17 & July 20-24, 2026
Location: Maryville University Campus

MARYVILLE.EDU/STEM

2026

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WINTERSCAPE February 28, 2026

SUMMER PALS & SUMMER QUEST July 6 – 17, 2026
Grades PK – 5th, 8:30 am – 11:30 am

SUMMERSCAPE July 12 – 19, 2026
Grades 6th – 8th classes and residential

DRURY LEADERSHIP ACADEMY July 12 – 19, 2026
Grades 9th –12th classes and residential

Registration & details at: **www.drury.edu/gifteddeducation**

Hoping to see you in 2026! Financial need scholarships available. Please contact me with any questions.

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

The Product Isn't the Point: Designing for Process, Judgment, and Wonder in the Age of AI

By: Brian Housand, Ph.D. (brianhousand.com; University of North Carolina Wilmington)

You are a gifted educator, juggling fast thinkers, deep feelers, early finishers, and systems that are rarely built for any of them. You watch students who argue well, learn fast, and get bored even faster discover AI tools that can generate polished products in seconds. Essays. Summaries. Code. Artwork. Boom. Done. Meanwhile, you are still expected to assess rigor, justify grades, and prove that real learning happened for gifted minds. AI did not create this tension. It just turned the volume way up.

If you are looking for the answer, I have bad news. There isn't one. Anyone who claims to have AI figured out either has not spent enough time with gifted kids or is selling something. You do not need to overhaul everything. You do not need to ban AI or let it run the room. What helps is making a few intentional design shifts that re-center thinking, judgment, and curiosity. These are not silver bullets. They are simply better places to start.

Make Thinking Visible

Make the thinking visible and stop pretending the product tells the whole story. Require drafts, annotations, decision logs, and reflections. Ask students what they accepted, rejected, or rewrote from AI and why. Use prompts like "What changed your mind?" or "What did you notice once you slowed down?" This is not busywork. This is where judgment lives.

Treat AI Like a Peer

Treat AI like a confident but unreliable peer. Gifted students are drawn to confidence, and AI oozes swagger. So, let's build routines where students challenge AI with intent and purpose. Explore multiple perspectives by comparing outputs across tools. Ask students to locate assumptions, missing justifications, or oversimplifications. Let them argue with the algorithm. Watching a gifted kid dismantle a smug AI response is satisfying and educational.

The Product Isn't the Point

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Build Norms, Not Policies

Stop rewriting policies and start building norms. You do not need a 42 page AI handbook. You do need shared language. Be explicit about what counts as support versus substitution. Normalize disclosure. Talk openly about authorship and ownership. Revisit expectations after major assignments. Gifted learners respect clarity when expectations are framed as professional standards.

Stretch Ideas, Not Struggle

Use AI to stretch ideas, not replace struggle. AI is excellent at brainstorming, modeling alternatives, and pushing what-if questions further. Require human input first. Sketch before prompting. Set constraints. Then use AI to extend thinking, not avoid it. Struggle is still the work. AI helps students stay in it longer.

Design Rabbit Holes on Purpose

Gifted learners crave depth, not more of the same tasks. Use AI to generate multiple lenses or competing models, then require students to chase one deeply. Pair exploration with follow-through like writing, building, debating, or designing. Curiosity without closure is entertainment. Curiosity with follow-through is learning.

Here are some guiding principles. Stay human. Stay curious. Stay honest. You are not behind. You are adapting in real time. Learn alongside your students. Say when you are unsure. Let them teach you something. The algorithm can generate options. You help gifted learners develop judgment, identity, and wonder. That is the work. That has always been the work.

Dr. Brian Housand believes learning should always be an adventure. As Coordinator of the Academically or Intellectually Gifted Program at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, he helps educators challenge gifted learners both intellectually and emotionally. A frequent speaker at national and international conferences, Brian explores creativity, gifted education, and the power of play. His latest book, SEED: *Silverquicken Episodes for Enrichment and Diagnosis*, blends immersive storytelling with puzzle-based learning designed to instigate cognitive and affective growth. A longtime classroom teacher, gifted specialist, and professor, he also co-authored *Using the Schoolwide Enrichment Model* with Technology and wrote *Fighting Fake News!*. When not teaching or presenting, Brian proudly embraces his geeky passions for Star Wars, Disney, Taylor Swift, video games, and fonts. Find him at brianhousand.com or on social media @brianhousand

2025-26 Gifted Association of Missouri Upcoming Virtual Speaker Series

THURSDAY! April 16–Hippos Teeth Have Awful Odors (Neuroanatomy Mnemonics for Understanding the Emotional Needs of Gifted Learners) with Dr. Kathryn Fishman-Weaver ("Dr. KFW")

A wholehearted, story-rich session on supporting the social-emotional development of gifted learners. Building on her research and school-based practice, Dr. KFW uses memorable mnemonics and stories to teach about neuroanatomy and its connection to emotions, relationships, and learning. Participants will leave with a deeper understanding of brain-based learning and practical tools to help gifted learners navigate challenges with confidence, purpose, and even laughter.
Session Objectives: (1) Examine brain-based research on the emotional needs of gifted learners, (2) Apply practical strategies to support social-emotional development, (3) Leverage story, gratitude, and humor to foster connection and resilience.

Register HERE

FREE PD!

Congratulations to our STEM grant recipients!

- Creating an Inclusive Playground for all children
- Inventing with Makey Makey: Hands- On STEM for All
- Creative Engineering with Strawbees
- Invent & Inspire: Unleashing STEAM Genius with xTool M1 Ultra
- Skyward Bound: Exploring the Science of Flight
- Breaking Barriers, Not Prints: Enhancing 3D Printing in the Gifted Classroom
- Coding to the Future: Using Robotics in our Classroom

Decoding Computational Thinking

By: Brian Reed (Coordinator of Innovation and Learning, Rockwood School District)

For some people, certain words can instantly trigger mental unrest or even a physical reaction. If I mentioned “Excel spreadsheet” or “Spinning Wheel of Death,” some of you probably grimaced or mentally checked out. But what if a term commonly associated with dread could instead spark clarity and confidence?

Take a moment to reflect on how you feel when you read the phrase Computational Thinking (CT). What comes to mind? Befuddlement? Maybe even a stress response? Chances are, your reaction isn’t overwhelmingly positive. As an International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Educator (and Trainer), I’ve seen the CT standard consistently provoke confusion and anxiety, and even felt it myself while pursuing certification. Among all the ISTE Standards for Students, this one created my biggest mental barrier. I couldn’t get past the word computational at first. It sounded mechanical, almost inhuman. How could thinking be anything but human?

As I wrestled with the standard and its descriptors, I had a breakthrough. CT wasn’t about thinking like a computer in a technical sense, but rather how it approaches problems: logically and systematically, step by step. I didn’t need advanced math or genius-level logic. I needed to break the CT standard into manageable pieces, which, ironically, is computational thinking. That realization unlocked my understanding of how all the ISTE Standards connect. It felt like a Matrix moment: where others saw complexity, I suddenly saw clarity and relationships… how breaking tasks into steps or testing ideas naturally aligned with the standard.

That shift in understanding didn’t stay personal for long. My ISTE certification placed me in a unique position within my district, and when a group of gifted education teachers began rewriting their curriculum around the ISTE Standards, I was asked to help. Unsurprisingly, they shared the same visceral reaction to computational thinking that I once had. While their struggle was productive, discussions around CT became so taxing that we temporarily set the standard aside.

Computational Thinking

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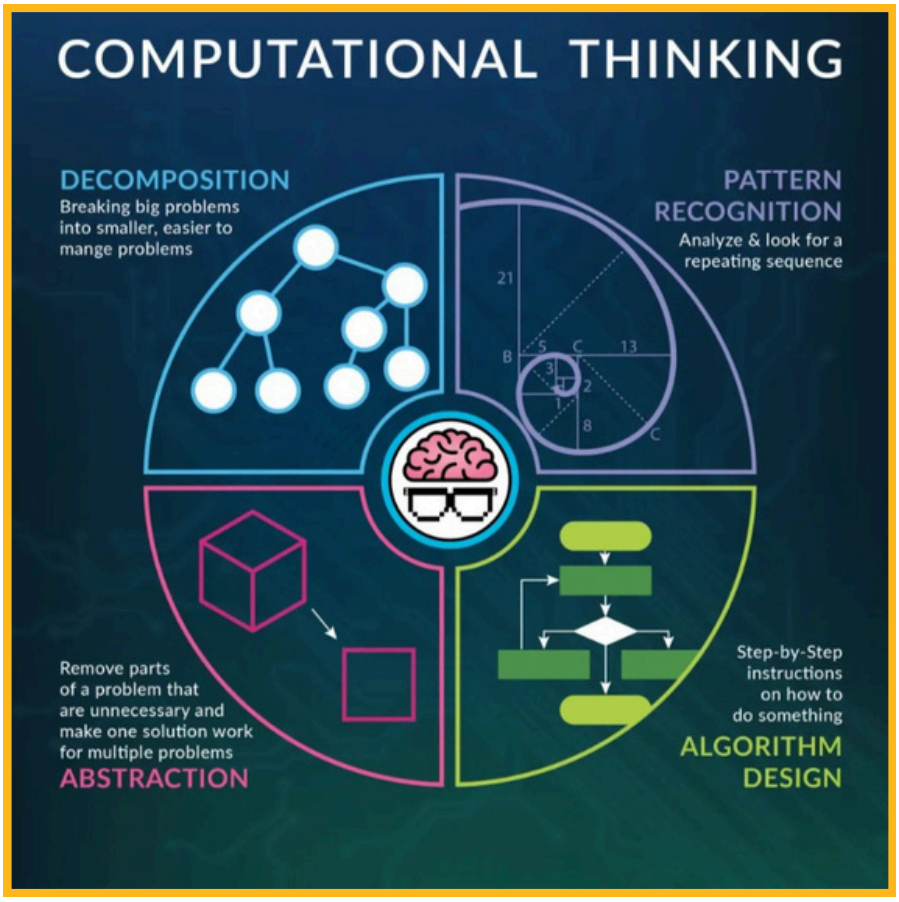
The next time we met, we solely focused on computational thinking. I reframed it by reintroducing CT as four familiar problem-solving moves and how iteration, testing, debugging, reflection, and logical reasoning are the driving skills students need for success:

- **Decomposition:** breaking large problems into smaller, manageable parts
- **Pattern Recognition:** identifying similarities or repeating sequences
- **Abstraction:** focusing on what matters most while filtering out unnecessary details
- **Algorithm Design:** creating clear, step-by-step instructions

This approach made all the difference. The Gifted Ed teachers reached their own "aha" moments and even began using this model to teach their own students how to tackle problem-solving.



Computational Thinking

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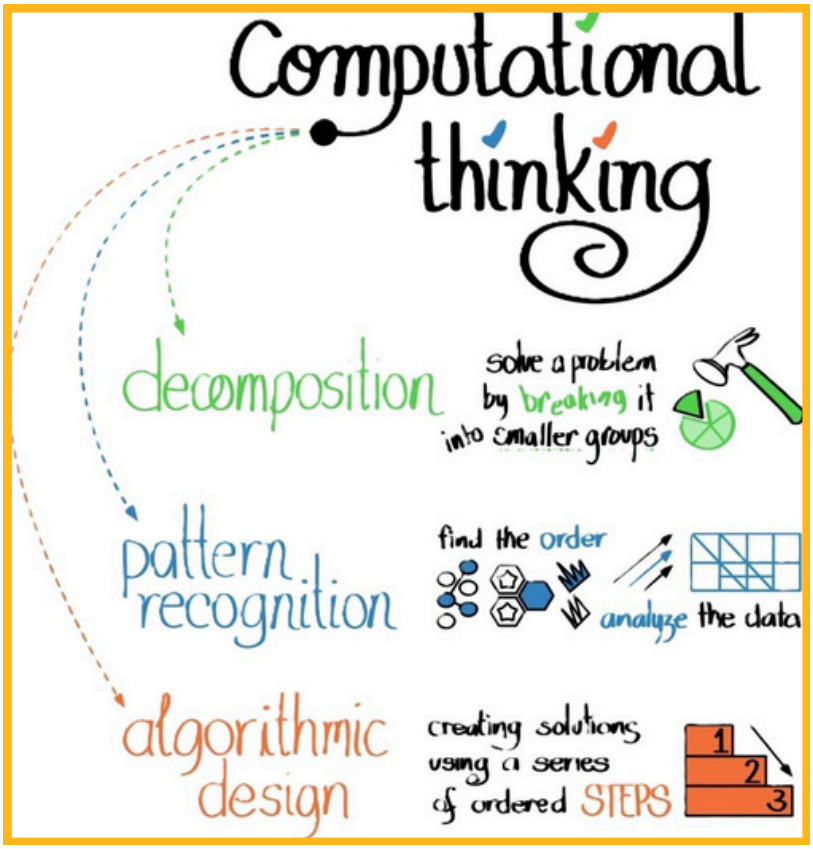

Albert Einstein once said, “If you can’t explain it simply, you don’t understand it well enough.” That truth shaped my journey and, ultimately, that of my colleagues. And it reinforces my belief that Computational Thinking, at its core, is about empowering learners to make sense of complexity, solve problems thoughtfully, and confidently demonstrate understanding. When taught clearly and humanely, CT becomes less about systems and more about helping learners trust their own ability to solve meaningful problems.

Brian Reed currently serves as the Coordinator of Innovation and Learning for the Rockwood School District (near St. Louis, MO). He celebrates 27+ years in education; former roles include Spanish teacher, Instructional Technology Specialist, and STEM Coordinator. Brian is also an ISTE Certified Educator and Trainer, and is passionate about ensuring that students and teachers authentically leverage technology to enhance teaching and learning experiences.

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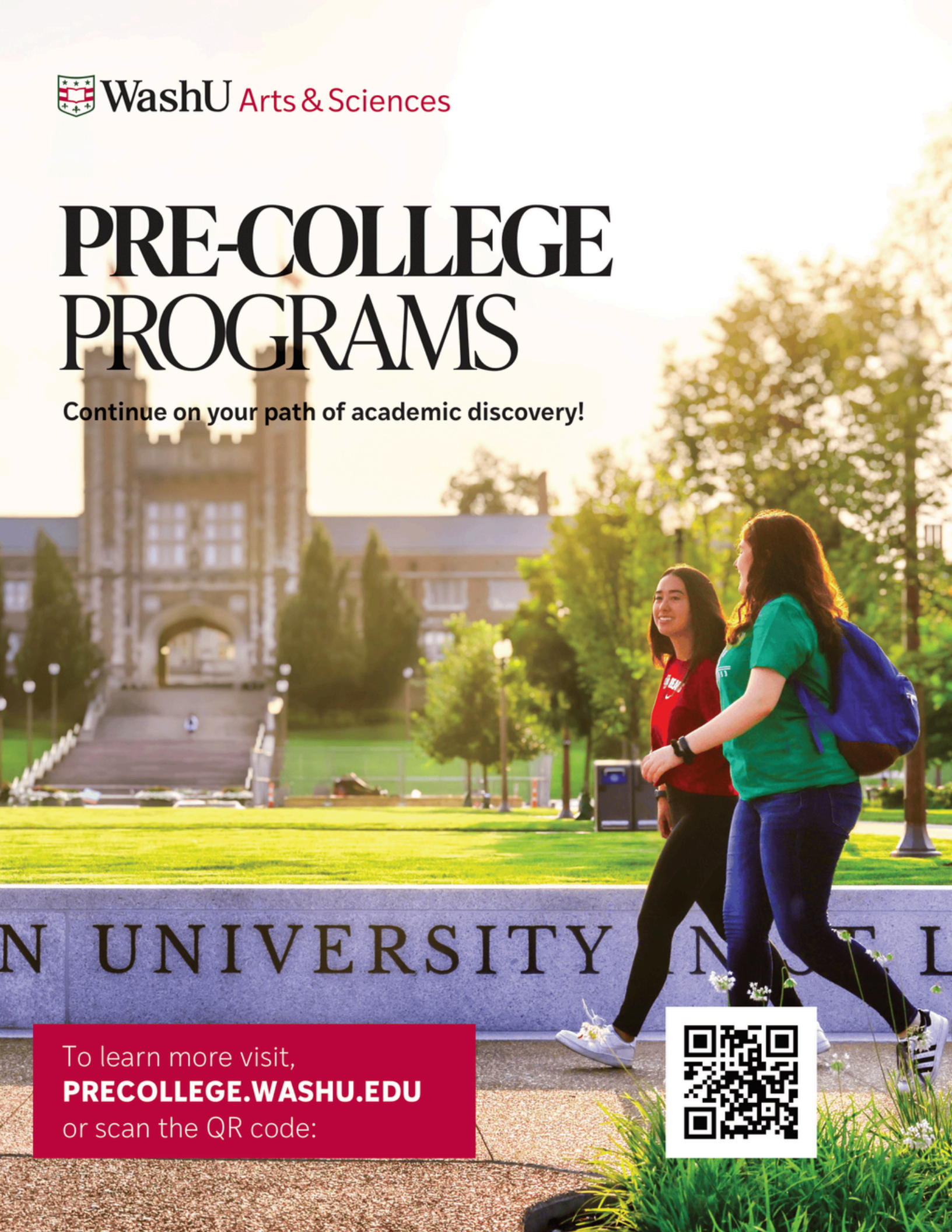

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The Double-Edged Sword of Technology for Gifted Education

By: Lucy Mikow (Rockwood School District, High School Student)

The advancement of technology has made so many things possible for our current generation. Not to mention the generations before us. Technology has really been growing exponentially over the past 400-600 years. 1440: Printing Press. 1608: Telescope. 1765: Steam Engine. 1804: Modern Railways. The list goes on. Less than 200 years ago, Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone. Think about your iPhone 15. How much more can it do?

Yes, these innovations and inventions have made our lives easier and provided us with tools to do things like cure polio or fly in a plane. But, as it turns out, these innovations prove to be just as much a curse as it is a blessing. The recent advancements in easily accessible technology marketed for kids have taken America by storm with the rise of children with a high digital consumption referred to as "iPad Kids."

"BUT, AS IT TURNS OUT, THESE INNOVATIONS PROVE TO BE JUST AS MUCH A CURSE AS IT IS A BLESSING."

Gifted children make up about 7% of American students. The standard childhood for children in the USA is becoming more and more digitized, which leaves us wondering how this will impact the gifted population of youth. The Nation Institute of Health published that the excessive use of screens during childhood negatively affects the development of speech, social skills, and overall brain activity. Oak Crest Academy writes that large amounts of screen time can potentially lead to "decreased academic performance…problems with interpersonal relationships…[and] can even lead to an increase in negative behaviors like over-aggressiveness."

Double-Edged Sword

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Gifted children are already far more likely to have more emotional intensity than their peers, which can be worsened by screen time. For a mind that is already processing information rapidly, the overstimulation that can come with most digital programs has major negative effects. Not to mention the impacts of social media. At my school, Lafayette High School, and much of the Rockwood district, information like schedules and lunch shifts is found exclusively on Instagram. Schools in general have made having social media non-negotiable. This is encouraging students to participate in an app that is designed specifically to be addicting, especially for minors.

However, there are also some incredibly beneficial upsides to the digital world for gifted children. There are benefits like self expression and exploration, keeping track of time and organizing, as well as digital communities where people all across the world can relate to one another. Two out of three gifted students have experienced bullying, and this kind of online connection can help these children feel less alone in the world, which should never be understated.

Innovation is rarely a net bad, and it isn't in this case either. There are so many wonderful things that come out of these kinds of technology. Gifted kids are a unique and important population who will be our next generation of innovators, but there are two sides to this bitcoin. They can maximize their potential by using technology as a tool. However, it is important that they don't let the tool use them.

Lucy Mikow is a gifted freshman at Lafayette High School. She is engrossed in her pursuits in journalism while enjoying her work with Model U.N.

Mizzou Online

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Mizzou Online and the College of Education & Human Development offer exciting options for teachers looking to maximize the rewards of working with gifted students at all grade levels.

Choose from one of these online programs:

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This 30-credit-hour program includes all the coursework you'll need to meet Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) requirements for gifted education while increasing your earning potential. Finish in as few as two years.

→ GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN GIFTED EDUCATION

Complete the 18-credit-hour gifted education coursework and practicum needed for certification from the state. This program is meant for current educators seeking certification in gifted education. Finish in two years or less.

Both programs put Mizzou's renowned faculty and resources at your fingertips. Regardless of your choice, Mizzou's online gifted education options are affordable, practical steps to furthering your career.

- Connect to a diverse professional network of dedicated educators like you and increase your earning potential while working full time.
- Hone research-based skills in differentiated instruction and gifted pedagogy.
- Transform your classroom, bolster student success and broaden your impact on learning that lasts a lifetime.

Missouri schools know the quality of Mizzou's graduates. Take one of these options and make a difference in the lives of Missouri's gifted students. Advance your career and nourish a love for learning — in you and your students.

For more information, contact:

Jena K. Randolph, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor and Special Education Online Program Director, Department of Special Education
RandolphJ@missouri.edu

Contact us today:
MIZZOU.US/GAMBIT

DESE Gifted Education Update
January 26, 2026

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

Core Data/MOSIS Public Reports

Are you keeping up with Missouri gifted education data? Do you need data for an upcoming school board meeting? New Gifted Education Reports were released in early December. The reports can be found by going to the green Data tab on the DESE Gifted Education page. They include:

1. District/Charter Gifted Education Report
2. Report Card (search for gifted)
3. Gifted Education Availability and Student Participation Maps
4. District Annual Secretary of the Board Report (lists all expenditures)

MO School Funding Modernization Task Force

The Task Force, established by Governor Kehoe's Executive Order 25-14, is developing recommendations to modernize K-12 school funding. A final report will be submitted to the Governor by December 1, 2026.

Please visit the task force webpage for more information, including upcoming meeting dates, agendas, presentation slides, recordings of meetings, a list of members, and **an email address to contact the task force**. Slide shows and recordings are available on the task force webpage under the "Meeting Timeline." (Click on the green bars to expand each section.)

MO-GLOs Assessment Toolbox

Toolbox to Assess the Missouri Gifted Learner Outcomes and Document Gifted Learner Growth

Goals of Project

1. Engage Missouri's gifted education community to enhance gifted programs, improve teaching and learning, and document student growth on the Missouri Gifted Learner Outcomes (MO-GLOs)
2. Collect model examples of assessment tools being used in gifted programs
3. Develop new tools to assess the MO-GLOs
4. Create a "Toolbox to Assess the Missouri Gifted Learner Outcomes and Document Gifted Learner Growth" or "MO-GLOs Assessment Toolbox"

Opportunities

- February – April – Learn more at Gifted and Talented Tuesday events
- March – May 2026 – Work virtually on components of the project with various stakeholders contributing to the work
- June 2026 – One-day workshops to work on the toolbox on June 9, 10, 11 in Jefferson City and on June 16, 17, 18 in St. Louis County (Rockwood); volunteer participants are responsible for personal travel expenses and may attend one, two, or all three days of meetings from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- July 20 - 21, 2026 – Meet at the New Teacher Workshop at Truman State to finalize components

Complete this form to indicate your interest in participating in the project.

Please Join the Gifted-Ed Listserv!

Stay up to date by subscribing to the Gifted-Ed listserv and inviting your colleagues to subscribe.

Different Kinds of Good Days

Sunshine is delicious, rain is refreshing, wind braces us up, snow is exhilarating; there is really no such thing as bad weather, only different kinds of good weather.
- John Ruskin, English polymath

I am writing this on a cold snowy day. My little dog, Oscar, agrees with the quote. He went out to eat snow and then came in to warm up and snooze in the sunshine. I reflected that working with gifted learners is a lot like weather – no such thing as a bad day, just different kinds of good days.

-Christine

Christine Nobbe | Winter-Spring 2026 | DESE Gifted Education

GIFTED AND TALENTED TUESDAYS

ZOOM EVENTS FOR STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND COORDINATORS/ADMINISTRATORS

Tuesdays beginning February 10, 2026

You are invited to join Missouri's gifted education community for discussion and inspiration on Tuesdays, February 10 to April 28, 2026. Log in 15 minutes early to network.

Please note: G/T Tuesday runs February – April

First Tuesdays, 10:00 – 10:30 with Q/A until 11:00 – Space Exploration Talks for Gifted Learners

- March 3, Women in Spaceflight
- April 7, Alien Worlds: Exoplanets & the Search for Life

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

- February 10, Gifted Rating Scale 2 presentation by guest speaker Justin Jarovi
- **March 10, this presentation will be at 3:30 p.m.** guest speakers Dr. Rudy Hernandez and Lauren Jackson, "When People Change Their Minds: Teaching Evolving Historical Perspectives"
- April 14, Progress/Feedback on MO-GLOs Assessment Toolbox

Contact: Christine.Nobbe@dese.mo.gov

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

- February 17, Toolbox to Assess the Missouri Gifted Learner Outcomes and Document Gifted Learner Growth
- March 17, guest speaker Jennifer Wilson, Talent Identification Program - Kentucky
- April 21, guest speaker TBA

Final Tuesdays of the Month, 3:30 – 4:30, "Book" Study for the G/T Community, 2022-23 State of the States in Gifted Education (please download the report prior to the meeting date)

- February 24, Introduction & Executive Summary
- March 24, Section IV: Programs & Services
- March 31, Section V: Personnel & Training
- April 28, Section X: Themes & Future Directions

WRITE IT ON YOUR HEART THAT EVERY DAY IS THE BEST DAY IN THE YEAR.

-RALPH WALDO EMERSON, FROM *COLLECTED POEMS AND TRANSLATIONS*

LISTSERV UPDATES: https://lists.mo.gov/mailman/listinfo/gifted-ed ZOOM LINK: https://www.zoomgov.com/j/16190848473?pwd=CS5bgHRnJLYuyWMrWzGAhw6CrQr5AF.1&omn=1619938764

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Missouri State Capital Report

By Kyna Iman (GAM Governmental Affairs Consultant)

January 7, kicked off the new legislative session for the Missouri General Assembly. The Gifted Association of Missouri asked Rep. Brenda Shields, (R-St. Joseph) and Senator Maggie Nurrenbern, (D-Kansas City) to file legislation to require schools to do universal screening to identify gifted students.

In 2022, GAM successfully advocated for legislation that requires schools to provide a gifted program if a certain percentage of students are determined to be gifted. That legislation did not address the actual determination process or require that school districts screen for gifted students. This bill will ensure that more gifted students are identified.

Currently, there may be over 20,000 gifted students that are not being served in schools in Missouri and those students suffer from not having resources provided to them. Often, gifted students are misdiagnosed and end up creating problems in a classroom. Schools that have a universal screening in place are more adept at the identification of gifted pupils, and the number of students in their gifted programs is a better reflection of the gifted population for the school.

Universal screening should be comprehensive but not eliminative, having a variety of guidelines and methods that a student can be screened provides a larger net. Having well developed criteria and guidelines for the screening, testings, identification, and teaching of gifted students is essential.

You can access a copy of the full bill text here: HOUSE BILL NO. 1757
Screenshots of the full bill can also be found on the next three pages.

MO State Capital Report

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SECOND REGULAR SESSION

HOUSE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR

HOUSE BILL NO. 1757

103RD GENERAL ASSEMBLY

5274H.02C JOSEPH ENGLER, Chief Clerk

AN ACT

To repeal section 162.720, RSMo, and to enact in lieu thereof one new section relating to testing of gifted students.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the state of Missouri, as follows:

Section A. Section 162.720, RSMo, is repealed and one new section enacted in lieu thereof, to be known as section 162.720, to read as follows:

162.720. 1. (1) This subdivision shall apply to all school years ending before July 1, 2024. Where a sufficient number of children are identified as gifted and their development requires programs or services beyond the level of those ordinarily provided in regular public school programs, districts may establish special programs for such gifted children.

(2) For school year 2024-25 and all subsequent school years, if three percent or more of students enrolled in a school district are identified as gifted and their development requires programs or services beyond the level of those ordinarily provided in regular public school programs, the district shall establish a state-approved gifted program for gifted children.

2. For school year 2024-25 and all subsequent school years, any teacher providing gifted services to students in districts with an average daily attendance of more than three hundred fifty students shall be certificated in gifted education. In districts with an average daily attendance of three hundred fifty students or fewer, any teacher providing gifted services shall not be required to be certificated to teach gifted education but such teacher shall annually participate in at least six clock hours of professional development focused on gifted services. The school district shall pay for such professional development focused on gifted services.

3. The state board of education shall determine standards for such gifted programs and gifted services. Approval of gifted programs shall be made by the state department of

EXPLANATION — Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[~~thus~~]** in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted from the law. Matter in **bold-face** type in the above bill is proposed language.

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elementary and secondary education based upon project applications submitted at a time and in a form determined by the department of elementary and secondary education.

4. **(1) For the 2027-28 school year and all subsequent school years, each school district shall provide universal screenings for all students at least once before the beginning of grade three for the purpose of screening for gifted students. Such screenings shall:**

(a) Provide a body of current, valid, and reliable evidence from a minimum of two areas including, but not limited to:

a. General mental ability testing;

b. Academic achievement;

c. Creativity;

d. Reasoning;

e. Problem solving;

f. Parent, teacher, student, or self-referrals; and

g. Other evidence of gifts and talents; and

(b) Be reviewed by a minimum of three staff members trained in gifted education, administration, or assessment, or a combination of such areas for a referral for formal gifted assessment.

(2) No district shall identify a child as gifted based **solely** on the child's participation in an advanced placement course or international baccalaureate course.

(3) Districts shall identify a child as gifted only if the child meets the definition of gifted children as provided in section 162.675.

(4) A child's failure to meet criteria on a single screening or assessment tool shall not prevent further data collection or consideration for gifted identification of such child.

5. **[**~~Any district with a gifted education program approved under subsection 3 of this section~~**] For the 2026-27 school year and all subsequent school years, each school district** shall have a policy, approved by the board of education of the district, that establishes a process**:**

(1) For the universal screening of students for gifted program selection;

(2) For providing annual notification to parents and guardians of such screening process;

(3) For identifying students for the gifted program and notifying parents and guardians of the criteria the district uses for the identification of students for the gifted program, provided that such criteria shall be guided by recommendations from the advisory council on the education of gifted and talented children established under section 161.249 and the standards established by the state board of education; and

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(4) That outlines the procedures and conditions under which parents or guardians may request a review of the decision that their child did not qualify to receive services through the district's gifted education program.

6. School districts and school district employees shall be immune from liability for any and all acts or omissions relating to the decision that a child did not qualify to receive services through the district's gifted education program.

7. The department of elementary and secondary education may promulgate all necessary rules and regulations for the implementation and administration of this section. Any rule or portion of a rule, as that term is defined in section 536.010, that is created under the authority delegated in this section shall become effective only if it complies with and is subject to all of the provisions of chapter 536 and, if applicable, section 536.028. This section and chapter 536 are nonseverable and if any of the powers vested with the general assembly pursuant to chapter 536 to review, to delay the effective date, or to disapprove and annul a rule are subsequently held unconstitutional, then the grant of rulemaking authority and any rule proposed or adopted after August 28, 2022, shall be invalid and void.

✓

PLEASE CONTACT YOUR STATE REPRESENTATIVE AND STATE SENATOR AND RESPECTFULLY REQUEST THEIR SUPPORT FOR HOUSE BILL 1757.

Keep up the good fight!

Kyna Iman
GAM Governmental Consultant


MISSOURI
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Integrating Gifted and Music

GAMbits and Pieces

By Rachel Johnson (Center for Creative Learning, Rockwood School District)

Here at the Center for Creative Learners (CCL) in the Rockwood School District, we offer two music classes for students in first through fifth grade. My course is new this year, as a 16-year elementary music teacher with a master's in Gifted Education. It consists of a wide range of music topics. Our 2nd-graders will be touring the world around them, and in 5th grade, they will create instruments from recycled materials. The 3rd-grade classes learn Tinikling from the Philippines with PVC pipes, creating their own routines. Alongside 4th grade, learning how to be music critics with jazz musicians and to create a clever way to show their knowledge to their peers. The first-grade classes begin in the second semester. Students will dive into captivating stories through creative adaptations of musical pieces, such as *The Carnival of the Animals*. They are learning to compose music inspired by storylines, characters, visualizations, and diverse musical styles.

A creative way to connect music and giftedness is to create an innovative S.T.E.A.M. project for 5th-grade students. They create their own musical instruments from recycled materials. This project encourages them to explore the connections between music, science, and sound. To begin the project, I reached out to the CCL community: staff, families, and businesses, to get donations to create a good upcycle for our students. I also partnered with the St. Louis Sheldon Art Gallery for their S.O.L.I.D. Program (Science of Learning Instrument Design). Their artist came to our school and did a presentation on how sound is produced. They also provided an interactive video for students to learn about sound experiments virtually. Students learn the S.T.E.A.M. engineering process. Learning how inventors create their inventions in real life will give them valuable experience if they want to create a model outside of music. The Landfill Harmonic Orchestra, examples from Nicolas Bras, and prior students' creations all help CCL students develop their vision of the kind of instrument they would like to create. Students also have access to other CCL students' instruments and how they are played in the music Google Classroom for inspiration.

Integrating Gifted and Music

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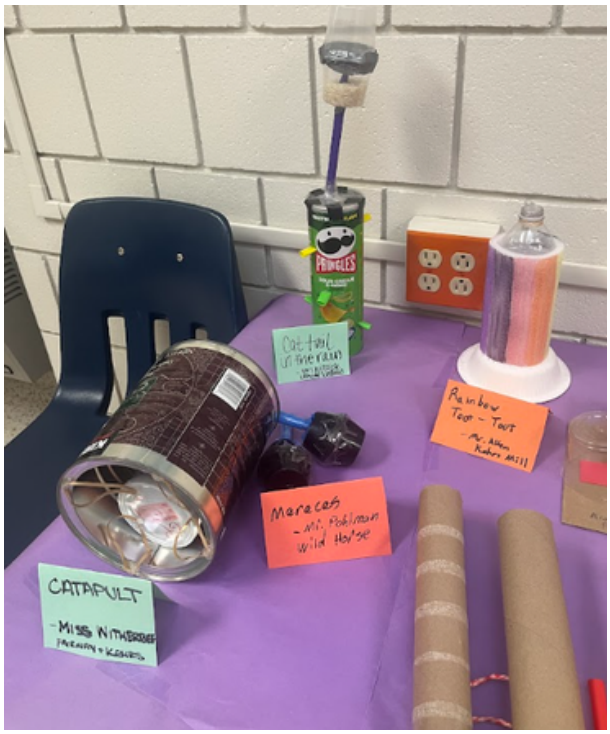

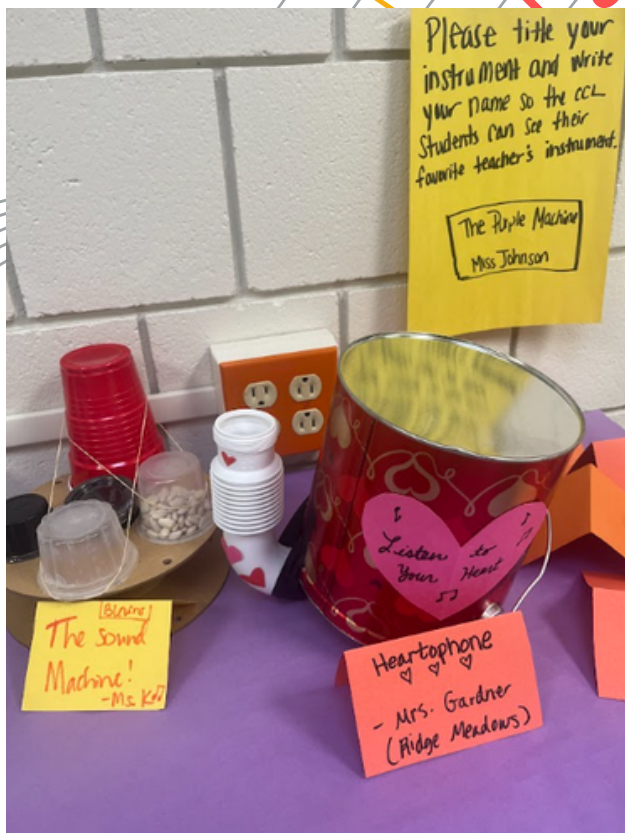

Instruments created by Rockwood School District music teachers during a recent music professional development at the Center for Creative Learning.

Integrating Gifted and Music

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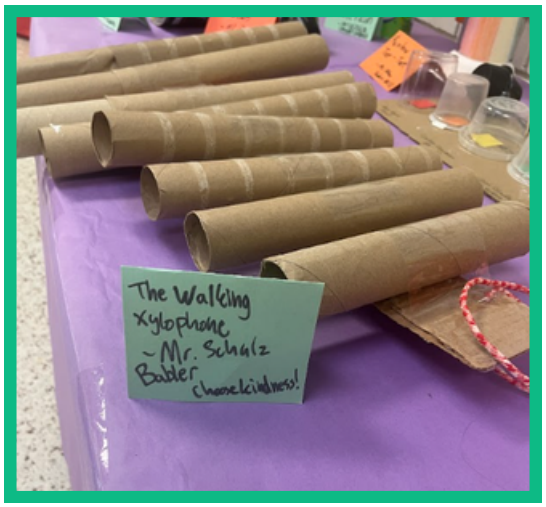

Instruments created by Rockwood School District music teachers during a recent music professional development at the Center for Creative Learning.

5th graders have several weeks to work independently or with partners to build their instruments. They have resources from the upcycle and tools that the school has provided, such as a Chomp saw, to help them build. After students have tested their instruments, they will name their instrument and have the option to donate it to the Sheldon Art Gallery or take it home to show their family. I have written a short article for the CCL newsletter to showcase the students' innovative creations to the community. Students and families are excited about this 5th-grade project at CCL. In January, I presented this project to all the elementary music teachers. They created their own instruments, and I showcased them at my school so my students could see their favorite teachers' innovative instruments.

Rachel Johnson is a music educator for gifted students at the Center for Creative Learning in the Rockwood School District. She has a Masters in Gifted Education K-12 and her undergraduate degree in Music Education K-12 strings, band, and vocal. Rachel has been an educator for 16 years.

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ED 652 G – Affective Needs of Gifted*
ED 653 G – Programming and Administration of Gifted (1st or 2nd, 5-weeks)

* Offered first 5-week session
** Offered second 5-week session

FALL 2026

ED 550 G – Intro to Gifted*
ED 604 G – Professional Learning: Gifted Policy, Practice, & Research**
ED 605 G – Psychology of Exceptional Children^
ED 619 G – Gifted Internship^
ED 633 G – Research in Gifted Education^
ED 651 G – Curriculum for Gifted (1st 8-week session or full semester)

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** Offered second 8-week session
^ Full semester

SPRING 2027

ED 550 G – Introduction to Gifted and Talented*
ED 605 G – Psychology of Exceptional Children^
ED 619 G – Gifted Internship^
ED 626 G – Creativity*
ED 633 G – Research in Gifted Education^
ED 652 G – Affective Needs of Gifted**

* Offered first 8-week session
** Offered second 8-week session
^ Full semester

Learn more at: **gifted.truman.edu** or

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Update of Missouri Advisory Council Activities

GAMbits and Pieces

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

Hello GAM members! I hope you had a relaxing winter break and have returned ready to broaden young minds for the spring semester. Here is another update on the activities of the Advisory Council on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children (the Council). Since its inception in 2013, the Council remains committed to increasing equitable, high-quality opportunities for Missouri's gifted learners. Gifted students have unique academic, social, and emotional needs that require intentional identification, appropriate instructional supports, and sustained advocacy to ensure they are challenged, supported, and able to reach their full potential.

During the past year, the Council focused its work on two major action items through dedicated subcommittees. One subcommittee developed a report on effective ways to document individual student growth, recognizing that traditional measures alone often fail to capture the progress of gifted learners. This document is currently available on our website. A second subcommittee produced a report on the ethical incorporation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education, with an emphasis on how AI can be used responsibly to expand learning opportunities, personalize instruction, and support gifted students while maintaining student privacy and equity. This document will be available on the website soon.

Additionally, state-wide advocacy remains a central priority of the Council's work. Representing the Council, and in collaboration with GAM, I testified in support of two bills currently filed in the Missouri legislature: one requiring a defensible screening process for gifted identification in all districts and another proposing a gifted education funding weight equal to that provided for English Learners. These efforts reflect the Council's ongoing commitment to equitable identification and adequate resources for gifted services statewide.

Furthermore, the Council is currently drafting a comprehensive report to the Missouri State Board of Education. This forthcoming report will include a historical review of gifted education in Missouri, an update on the status of previous Council recommendations, and several new recommendations aimed at strengthening identification practices, services,

MO Advisory Council

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and accountability for gifted learners. We will request time on the State Board agenda in the fall to present the report. The State Board members have consistently been welcoming and supportive of the Council presentations and actions on behalf of Missouri's gifted students.

The Council appreciates the continued collaboration and support of educators, families, policymakers, and advocates across the state, especially the close working relationship we have with the GAM board/members. Together, we will work to ensure that Missouri's gifted and talented students are recognized, supported, and provided with the opportunities they need to thrive.

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ATTENTION ADVERTISERS:

Interested in 2026 GAMbit advertising? Complete the Google Form LINK HERE to let us know!

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The GAMbit is the official publication of the Gifted Association of Missouri. It is distributed quarterly via email to a targeted list of members and influencers in gifted education. It is also posted to mogam.org for all to read.

Advertising Opportunity: GAM is excited to continue GAMbit's annual special insert for summer camps/ programs in the Spring 2026 GAMbit issue! If your organization has a summer camp or program, GAM can help you spread the news by advertising in this special insert.

GAM hosts two main events each year. Sponsorships are available at the Platinum, Gold, Silver, and Friend Levels for the New Teacher Workshop and the Annual Conference on Gifted Education.

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

Members of the Gifted Association of Missouri are teachers, parents, administrators, or anyone who wants to support advanced learning in Missouri. Help us advocate for gifted and advanced learners by placing your advertisement or sponsorship today!

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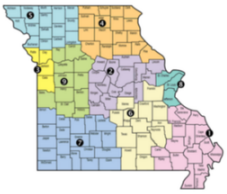
GAM District Regional Directors



CLICK NAME TO EMAIL!

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