

The GAMbit

An official publication of the Gifted Association of Missouri

IN THIS ISSUE

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

**THE FORMULA FOR
MULTIDIMENSIONAL
LEARNING**

**BEYOND THE CLASSROOM:
ADMINISTRATIVE INSIGHTS**

**GAM STEM GRANT
RECIPIENTS**

**THE GIFTED ONBOARDING
FRAMEWORK: A MEANINGFUL
WAY TO SUPPORT GIFTED
LEARNERS AND THEIR FAMILIES**

**THE NEXT CHALLENGE IN GIFTED
EDUCATION: FINDING YOUR
BALANCE**

**TOP TEN THINGS I'VE LEARNED
AS A GIFTED ADMINISTRATOR
AFTER A DECADE OF ADVENTURE!**

DESE UPDATE

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

GAMBITS AND PIECES

**DIFFERENTIATING ACADEMIC
COMPETITIONS**

**GROWING UP GIFTED: HOW MY
EXPERIENCE AS A GIFTED
LEARNER INSPIRED ME TO
PURSUE A CAREER IN EDUCATION**



A Letter from the President

by Heather Tomicich

Dear Members of the Gifted Association of Missouri,

As we come to the close of another school year, I want to take a moment to reflect on the incredible work each of you has done in supporting and advocating for gifted students across our state. Your dedication, creativity, and commitment have made a meaningful impact in the lives of so many learners, and that work does not go unnoticed.

President's Letter

continued from Page 1

This time of year brings both a sense of accomplishment and, often, exhaustion. You have poured your energy into meeting the diverse academic and social-emotional needs of gifted students—challenging them to think critically, encouraging their creativity, and helping them grow into confident, capable individuals. Thank you for continuing to serve gifted learners to the very best of your ability, even when the work is demanding.

As we look forward to summer, I encourage each of you to take time for yourselves. Step back, rest, and recharge. You have earned the opportunity to pause, reflect, and renew your energy. Whether that means spending time with family, exploring new interests, traveling, or simply enjoying a slower pace, I hope your summer is filled with moments that bring you joy and relaxation.

Your work matters deeply, and the passion you bring to gifted education strengthens our entire community. If you are looking for new challenges, I would suggest looking into the Summer Education workshops hosted by DESE's Director of Gifted Education, Christine Nobbe, or the New Teachers to Gifted workshop this summer in Kirksville, MO. You can find more information about these opportunities on the GAM website. Also, remember that GAM's Annual Conference is just around the corner and there are early bird prices through August 3rd. I look forward to the continued collaboration, innovation, and advocacy that will come in the year ahead.

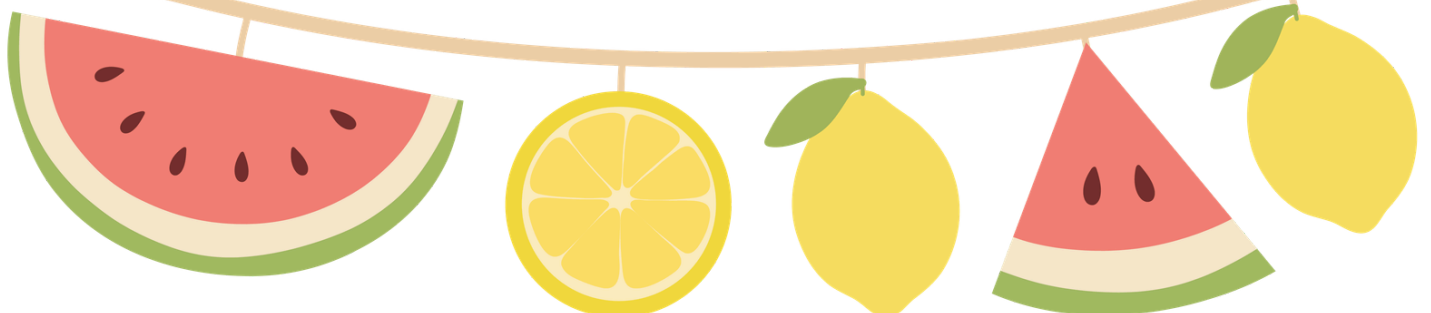
Wishing you a restful, enjoyable, and well-deserved summer.

Warm regards,

Heather Tomicich

Executive President

Gifted Association of Missouri





Message from the Editor

Welcome to the summer issue of GAMbit!

This issue pulls back the curtain on something we don't always get to celebrate loudly enough: the remarkable work happening at the administrative level of gifted education. **Beyond the Classroom: Administrative Insights** shines a spotlight on the leaders, frameworks, and philosophies that shape the experience of gifted learners long before they ever walk into a gifted education classroom.

We're delighted to have Kate Place, our 2026 GAMbit Featured Writer, kick things off with a deep dive into Multidimensional Learning, exploring the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains. From there, gifted education guru Andi McNair walks us through her gifted onboarding framework, making the case for why welcoming families into the gifted journey is one of the most important things an administrator can do. Then, two experienced gifted directors from the St. Louis area offer hard-won perspective on leading gifted programs with purpose and vision. And in GAMbits and Pieces, Dr. Bronwyn MacFarlane brings fresh thinking to differentiating academic competitions, while Samantha, a high school senior, shares how growing up gifted has shaped her dream of becoming a teacher herself.

Dig in. There's a lot to explore!

Dr. Katherine Rottjakob Bryda, GAMbit Chair

Helpful Resources for Gifted Education Administrators:



- [Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Education Programming Standards \(NAGC, 2019\)](#)
- [Advanced Gifted Education Professional Preparation Standards \(Council for Exceptional Children: The Association for the Gifted, 2013\)](#)



- *Designing Services and Programs for High-Ability Learners: A Guidebook for Gifted Education* (Eckert & Robins, 2017)
- *Gifted Program Evaluation: A Handbook for Administrators and Coordinators* (Neumeister & Burney, 2019)
- *Designing Gifted Education Programs and Services* (Peters & Brulles, 2017)
- *Identifying and Serving Diverse Gifted Learners* (Castellano & Chandler, 2022)

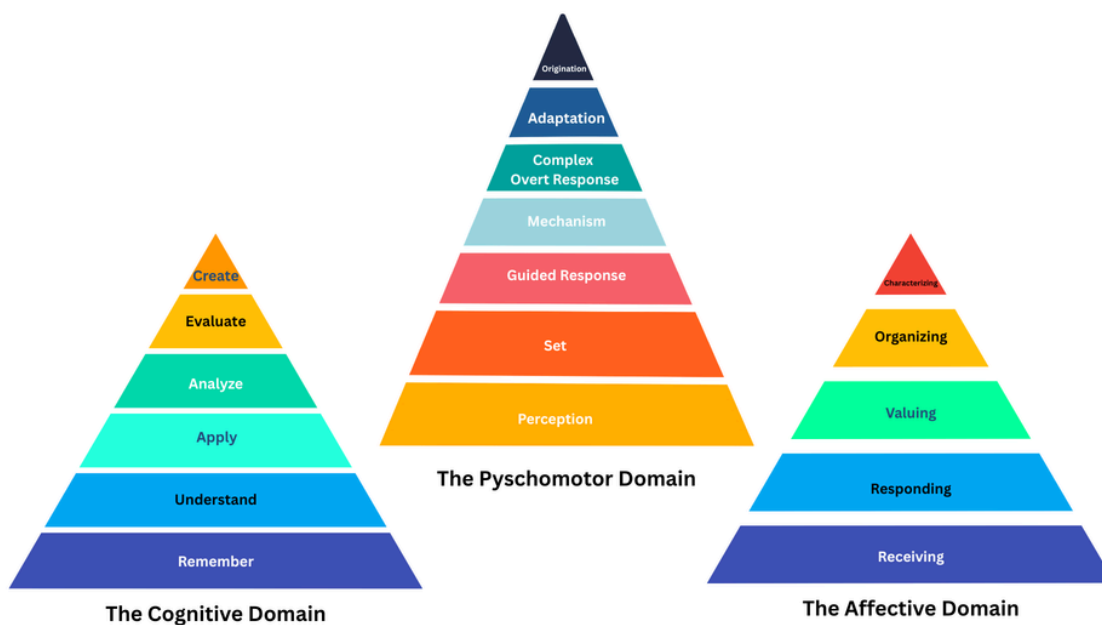
The Formula for Multidimensional Learning

By Kate Place



Bored. Disengaged. Distracted. I cringe when students and parents use these words to describe feelings and attitudes about school. Students deserve enriching learning experiences every day and these don't happen by accident or magic. Believe it or not, there's a formula for creating multidimensional lessons that spark neural connections and the formula has been around for fifty years.

Foundational to any education program, Bloom's Taxonomy provides scaffolding for learning and lesson design. We all memorized and regurgitated the familiar cognitive domain that was, in 2001, revised to include these levels: remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create (Ruhl, 2025). But Bloom's Taxonomy isn't a one-sided pyramid. A formula for multidimensional learning includes The Cognitive Domain + The Affective Domain + The Psychomotor Domain. The affective domain progresses through five levels: receiving, responding, valuing, organizing, and characterizing (Ruhl, 2025). The psychomotor domain includes levels that help students use tools and muscles with precision and dexterity, and build through movement levels: perception, set, guided response, mechanism, complex overt response, adaptation, origination (Ruhl, 2025). Learning experiences that intentionally incorporate all three learning domains activate firing and wiring in the brain and result in cognitive excitement, purpose, and action.



Multidimensional Teacher

continued from Page 4

I saw this multidimensional learning in Advanced Photography and Graphic Design, a middle school unit of study in our gifted program. Seventh and eighth graders were putting the final touches on their course portfolios. One student reflected on how his photography improved when he applied the principle of thirds (cognitive domain). He went on to highlight different lessons about lighting and line. Another student beamed with pride when he shared how he used his design skills to develop marketing materials for his mom's new business. He not only listened to his mom's needs and created designs that matched her vision, but he also found purpose and value in the work (affective domain). I watched another student manipulating Adobe Illustrator while using a Wacom board to create digital images. She was imitating the motions and steps outlined in her online course modules as she developed muscle memory to manipulate new tools with synchrony (psychomotor domain).

In another example, students applied their study of water pressure and water basins to design fountains from water bottles (cognitive). The creative problem-solving experience didn't end there. Just as city fountains usually elicit awareness about an important issue or honor people, places and ideas, students considered their own values to share a message using their fountains (affective). Students manipulated water bottles and other materials to carefully build their fountains. Fine motor skills that have been growing and evolving were necessary for the fountains to come to life (psychomotor). The formula for meaningful learning is when the three learning domains are intentionally woven into lessons.

Planning for multidimensional lessons includes experiences that incorporate cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning. Lessons are rich when they integrate a focus on intellectual growth, emotions and attitudes, and deliberate movement and motor skills. This is more than ensuring social emotional learning or kinesthetic experiences, but it's sophisticated multidimensional learning that becomes memorable for students and leaves them with transferrable. In the gifted classroom this is critical thinking, appreciation, and meaningful action.

continued on Page 6

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](#).

Multidimensional Teacher

continued from Page 5

References

Canva. (2026). Learning domains [Graphic]. <https://www.canva.com>

Ruhl, C. (2025, March 11). Bloom's taxonomy of learning. Simply Psychology. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/blooms-taxonomy.html>



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.

See who you've
been missing in
gifted education



The Naglieri General Ability Tests™ (Naglieri—Verbal, Naglieri—Quantitative, and Naglieri—Nonverbal) were explicitly designed to identify students with high intellectual ability in a fair manner by minimizing the influence of language and prior knowledge.

Individual Reports in
Spanish Now Available





GAM STEM Grant Recipients

Inventing with Makey Makey: Hands- On STEM for All (Miami R-1 School District)

We used the Makey- Makey devices that we purchased with the GAM STEM Grant money, to make an interactive Valentine's Day Bulletin Board. The student's made cards that when the circuit was closed said a special Valentine's message. The 5th grade students shared the project with the other students in the school. Students were able to use the skills they learned in the Valentine's Card project to teach the other student's how to make interactive posters.



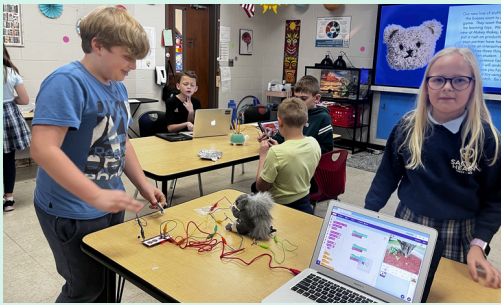
Creative Engineering with Strawbees (Ladue School District)

Over the course of the school year, gifted learners in grades 1–4 explored engineering, physics, and design thinking through open-ended challenges. The Strawbees building system is ideal for gifted learners because it supports rapid prototyping, encourages iterative learning, and fosters collaborative creativity. Each student completed three introductory build sessions, including building a tower, designing a shape and a free choice design. My fourth-grade students brought Roman, Greek, and Chinese architecture to life by using Strawbees to dive deeper into our ancient architecture unit. They built scale models of ancient Roman bridges, Greek columns and temples, and the Great Wall of China.



Design, Code, Create: A Makey Makey Experience for Gifted Learners (Lincoln County R-III School District)

Fourth grade gifted students participated in a STEM-based design project using Makey Makey kits and Scratch coding to create interactive stuffed animals intended to teach kindergarten students foundational skills. The goal of the project was to combine technology, engineering, and creativity with purposeful communication by designing an engaging learning tool for a younger audience.



The project culminated in a cross-grade experience where fourth grade students presented and demonstrated their interactive stuffed animals to kindergarten students. This authentic audience provided meaningful feedback and allowed older students to practice leadership, communication, and empathy while reinforcing the educational purpose of their designs.

Visualizing STEM Elementary Opportunities in Rural Missouri (Chillicothe R-II School District)

Chillicothe Elementary School has been very thankful this spring to utilize all its new tools, provided by the GAM Lange Grant. Their project titled Visualizing STEM Elementary Opportunities in Rural Missouri has really come to life this semester as kids are able to take far better observations of scientific principles including vacuums in space, sound waves, microbiology, and mammal dissection. The tools seen in the attached pictures were not available in any of the classrooms before, so it's truly bringing science to life.

We want to extend a heartfelt thank you to the Lange Family for their support of rural education!



2026 GIFTED ASSOCIATION OF MISSOURI

Conference

OCTOBER 16-17, 2026

LINDBERGH HIGH SCHOOL
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI



BRYAN PEARLMAN
Closing Speaker



**KAREN
RAMBO-HERNANDEZ**
Keynote Speaker

ADVENTURES IN GIFTED EDUCATION

Designed with both gifted specialists and general education teachers in mind, this year's conference invites you to explore practical, engaging ways to support advanced learners in every classroom.

EARLY BIRD RATE: \$300 THROUGH AUGUST 3RD
\$375 STARTING AUGUST 4TH.



The Gifted Onboarding Framework: A Meaningful Way to Support Gifted Learners and their Families

By: Andi McNair (A Meaningful Mess, LLC)

What comes to mind when you hear the word *onboarding*? For many, the definition is "the act or process of familiarizing a new customer with one's products or services." For me, it's a more personal memory: starting fresh at a new campus or within a new organization. Each time, I was expertly onboarded or familiarized with expectations, my specific role, the organization's function, and the mutual benefits we would gain from our shared services.

In contrast, when we consider the *gifted experience*, learners rarely receive a similar, structured onboarding into their new journey. The standard process is often transactional: students are tested, they qualify for services, a letter is mailed home, and then...something changes. This shift might manifest as a weekly pull-out session, differentiated assignments, or, regrettably, nothing more than a sudden change in expectations from their family and teachers.

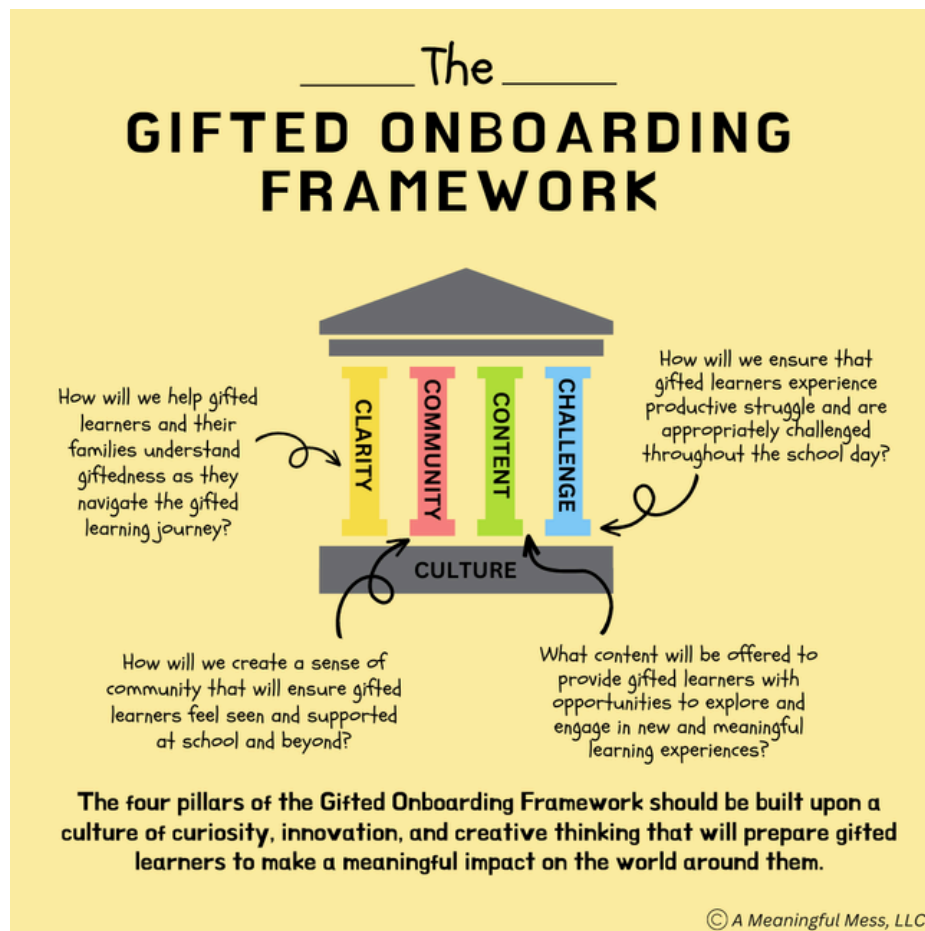
Not too long ago, I was out for a walk and I began to wonder what it might look like for gifted learners and their families to be onboarding into the experience. What if we could create a meaningful and intentional framework that would provide clarity? What if before gifted services were offered, we provided families with an opportunity to understand what giftedness is, what giftedness isn't, and what gifted services will look like moving forward? When I think back to my work with gifted learners, it's easy to recognize the need for gifted onboarding and the impact that the lack of onboarding has on learners and their families.

After thinking through this, I sat down and created the Gifted Onboarding Framework. The Framework is made up of four pillars - Clarity, Community, Content, and Challenge. Those four pillars are supported by the foundation of Culture. Let me explain.

Clarity is the first pillar of the framework, and though all pillars are equally important, the journey must begin here. This is because a lack of clear understanding about what giftedness truly is forces gifted learners and their families to fill the void with assumptions. These assumptions, such as believing that being gifted demands A Honor Roll status or guaranteed success at school, are dangerous, leading directly to negative outcomes like imposter syndrome and perfectionism. By providing clear definitions, we help learners and families make sense of the gifted experience and operate from a place of genuine understanding rather than harmful speculation.

Gifted Onboarding Framework

continued from Page 10



Community aims to help gifted learners forge essential connections that extend far beyond the school walls. This pillar reinforces the crucial understanding that their giftedness is not just a school attribute, but a lifelong way of thinking. By facilitating connections with gifted adults, learners begin to see how they can leverage their unique abilities to create genuine impact and drive change. Practically, Community can be cultivated through mentorships with outside experts and by giving learners opportunities to apply their advanced thinking to solve real problems outside of the standard curriculum.

The Content pillar addresses what is inside the "shiny box", the actual substance of gifted services. This pillar demands that we examine what gifted learners are truly experiencing and whether the curriculum is meaningful and relevant. The focus must shift from merely providing more content to offering opportunities for learners to explore interests in depth while acquiring real-world skills applicable beyond the classroom walls. Content, ultimately, defines what they will learn, how they will learn it, and why it matters.

continued on Page 12

Gifted Onboarding Framework

continued from Page 11

The fourth and final pillar, Challenge, acknowledges that gifted learners are gifted all day long. Therefore, they require challenge and the opportunity for productive struggle both within and outside of formal gifted services. A key priority on every campus must be equipping all educators with the tools, resources, and strategies needed to design instruction for depth in a way that is manageable for staff and meaningful for students. True Challenge is not about increasing difficulty or volume; it is about promoting the depth of thinking that encourages learners to move beyond simple acquisition and toward deep understanding.

Supporting all four pillars is the critical foundation of Culture. If the school environment surrounding gifted services is built on assumptions and misunderstanding, the entire framework risks collapsing. When the foundation is solid, however, administrators, educators, families, and learners operate from a shared understanding of giftedness, working collaboratively to ensure gifted learners are seen, supported, and appropriately served.

To learn more about the Gifted Onboarding Framework, please visit andimcnair.com/giftedonboarding. I would be delighted to help you, your campus, or your district implement this Framework to redesign or reimagine your gifted services in a way that makes sense for everyone involved.

References

McNair, A. (n.d.). *The Gifted Onboarding Framework* [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://www.andimcnair.com/blog/thegiftedonboardingframework>.



Andi McNair is the owner and gifted education consultant for A Meaningful Mess, LLC. After 16 years as a classroom teacher and almost 10 years as a gifted specialist at ESC Region 12, Andi now focuses on empowering educators with practical strategies to engage and inspire today's gifted learners. She was named one of the Top People in Education to Watch in 2016 and has authored several books, including *Genius Hour: Passion Projects that Ignite Innovation and Student Inquiry* and *Designing for Depth: A Framework for Purposeful Differentiation*.



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**

FALL: AUGUST 1, 2026

WINTER: NOVEMBER 1, 2026

Questions? Email
gambitpublication@gmail.com

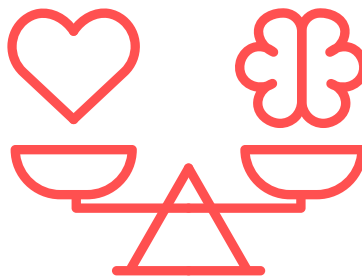
If interested in
writing an
article, please
fill out our
interest form
[LINK HERE.](#)

The Next Challenge in Gifted Education: Finding Your Balance

By: Dr. Denny Rhodes (Director of Gifted Education, Rockwood School District)

For twelve years, I have been on the front line of running gifted programs. At times, I have felt more like a defense attorney than an administrator. In gifted, we have spent years justifying the need for gifted services so we can serve children and families. In light of landmark legislation, the conversation in Missouri has changed.

As we shift from justifying our existence, an unforeseen challenge awaits us. In this exciting new era, we need to navigate a delicate tightrope. We are the fulcrum working to equalize the advocacy of parents, professional burnout of teachers, and the complex task of finding gifted students. To effectively meet the needs of all stakeholders, we need to master one critical discipline: **Balance**.



Oftentimes, parents come to the table seeking the best path forward for their child. An administrator's duty is to balance the needs of the parents with the reality of what can be done within an educational setting. Many parents start a conversation by saying, "I don't want to be that parent." My response has always been, "Please be that parent for your child. You have one run through with each child, and you need to be their greatest advocate." I have found balance by listening and being honest with the parents that I serve. It is essential to take the information and see where you can help. The **balance** comes into talking about what we can and cannot do. It isn't always possible to do everything. Do what you can when you can.

Teachers are the ones on the frontline making it happen in the classroom. They deliver services that support students' educational growth while helping them realize who they are as learners; that is more than enough. Teachers have an amazingly difficult mission to carry out. Administrators are required to meet the ever-increasing demands placed upon educators. We need to find time to support teachers with curriculum writing, adopting

Finding Your Balance

continued from Page 14

new district initiatives, and other external demands. How do you accomplish this without creating burnout in the professionals who support students each day? It comes back to one word: **balance**. You need to be an advocate for them so that they can do the best work for their students. The **balance** comes from finding ways to navigate external pressure with personal well-being while still moving forward. In a business that centers on people, **balance** is keeping this realization at the forefront of every decision.

The complex needs of the students can go in many different directions. Within this context, I am focusing on finding students to serve. Gifted administrators realize there are always more students to find for gifted services. How do you **balance** finding students for gifted services while ensuring the gifted services can be effectively executed? Gifted education is designed to allow more one-on-one interactions. We must **balance** the identification process so as not to overburden the gifted classroom. When you overburden the system, you cannot meet the needs of the students you serve. While this may be the most difficult area to **balance**, getting it right brings balance to everything else.

Balance looks different for everyone everywhere. In the end, it may sound like I am painting a bleak picture; however, it is truly a wonderful time to be in gifted education. We can finally focus on finding a sense of **balance** rather than focusing on justifying our existence. That is the way forward. Celebrate the growth and find balance in how you move forward.



Dr. Denny Rhodes currently serves as the Director of Gifted Education for the Rockwood School District (near St. Louis, MO). In his 27+ years of teaching, he has also worked as a gifted teacher for grades 1-8, an assistant principal, and a middle school science teacher. As a 10+-year member of the Advisory Council on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children, Dennis has channeled his passion for gifted education into advocating for it throughout the state.





TRUMAN
STATE UNIVERSITY

SUMMER '26, FALL '26 AND SPRING '27

100% Online Gifted Education

Learn the skills you need to better identify gifted characteristics in students, develop effective curricula, and provide support throughout the learning process. You're in control with completely online study options. Complete the full Master's program, hand-pick a single course, or anything in between.

WHY TRUMAN?

- An emphasis on current challenges and opportunities unique to gifted education
- A combination of Truman Education faculty and active expert practitioners
- Fully online coursework combined with practical field experience
- A program designed for the working professional

MASTER OF ARTS IN GIFTED EDUCATION

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

GIFTED CERTIFICATION

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

SUMMER 2026

- ED 550 G** – Introduction to Gifted and Talented (1st or 2nd, 5-weeks)
- ED 605 G** – Psychology of Exceptional Children (1st or 2nd, 5-weeks)
- ED 626 G** – Creativity*
- ED 650 G** – Identification of Gifted**
- ED 652 G** – Affective Needs of Gifted*
- ED 653 G** – Programming and Administration of Gifted (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)

* Offered first 8-week session

** 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



Email
gifted@truman.edu



Top Ten Things I've Learned as a Gifted Administrator After a Decade of Adventure!

By: Dr. Tracy Bednarick-Humes (Director of Gifted Programming at Lindbergh Schools; GAM Conference Vice President)

Serving as a gifted administrator has been one of the most challenging and rewarding roles in my career. It requires a unique blend of instructional leadership, advocacy, empathy, and flexibility. Along the way, I've learned lessons that have reshaped how I think about students, families, and education as a whole. Here are the top ten:

1

1. Asynchronous development is real—and it can surprise you.

Gifted students often develop unevenly across domains. A student may reason at a highly advanced level but refuse to write for fear of misspelling a word. These moments can be confusing if you expect uniform excellence, but they are a hallmark of giftedness. Understanding this helps us respond with patience and intention rather than frustration.

2

2. Partnering with parents is essential.

Parents know their children best, and when it comes to gifted learners, they are often deeply attuned to both their strengths and struggles. These are their “little geniuses,” and they simply want what is best. When schools approach families as partners rather than obstacles, outcomes improve for everyone.

3

3. Not every child needs gifted services.

This can be a difficult but necessary truth. Gifted programming is designed to meet specific learning needs, not to serve as a reward or status. Maintaining clarity around this helps ensure that services remain meaningful and appropriately targeted.

4

4. Activities are not enough—analysis, discussion, and reflection matter.

A hands-on activity may be engaging, but without opportunities to analyze, discuss, and reflect, it does not become rigorous learning. Depth comes from what students do with the experience, not just the experience itself. It's essential to plan for these moments!

Top Ten Things

continued from Page 17

5

5. Social-emotional learning belongs in academic instruction.

Gifted students need structured opportunities to build collaboration, resilience, and self-awareness. These skills can—and should—be embedded into content lessons. Something as simple as giving students a low-stakes, fun collaboration before a high-demand group task can significantly improve outcomes.

6

6. You will wear more hats than you expect.

On any given day, you may be a principal, teacher, evaluator, testing coordinator, coach, advocate, and systems designer. The role is multifaceted and constantly evolving. Flexibility is not optional—it's essential. People always tell me I'm so busy and I kind of take it personally, because I want to have time for everyone and every need. Unfortunately, it's not always possible, so it's key to empower your team to be decisions-makers and leaders.

7

7. You must understand and articulate equity in gifted programming.

Equity is a critical and sometimes contentious topic. It's important to be able to clearly explain what equitable identification and services look like—and why they matter—to those who both agree and disagree.

8

8. People won't read your communication the first time.

And that's okay. Families and educators are navigating information overload. Share important information clearly, and then share it again. Often, it will be revisited when it becomes personally relevant.

9

9. You are supporting an entire ecosystem.

The work extends far beyond students. You are supporting parents, classroom teachers, and fellow administrators. Recognizing this—and celebrating their efforts—builds stronger systems. This is complex work, and people need encouragement and resources to do it well.

10

10. Gifted students will bring you immense joy.

Amid the challenges, there is a constant stream of humor, curiosity, and unexpected insight that makes this work deeply fulfilling.

continued on Page 19

Top Ten Things

continued from Page 18

For example, during an indoor recess conversation with second graders:

Kid A: Were pirates real?

Kid B: No, I don't think so.

Teacher: They were real!

Kid B: But did they bury treasure?

Teacher: Probably not very often. (And then I proceed to explain piracy back in the day.)

Kid C chimes in: You can pirate music!

Kid A: Pirates definitely had music.

Teacher: No, he means downloading music illegally. Without paying for it. I did that a LOT as a teenager.

Kid A: You were a pirate??

Teacher: Well, it was before streaming services! I downloaded a lot of music illegally. But the pirates were really the ones hosting the downloads, not the people downloading it.

Kid A: That's what people say when they don't want to feel guilty!

Or during a lesson analyzing historical farming data:

<Class is talking about data trends in farming from 1870s to 1970s>

2nd Grader #1: But it's not a distinct pattern! It didn't just double every year.

Teacher: That's right. But this is real data, and real data doesn't always follow predictable patterns.

2nd Grader #2: Like Brexit!

These moments capture the essence of gifted learners: curious, quick-witted, and constantly making connections in ways that both challenge and delight. They remind me, every day, why this work matters.



Dr. Tracy Bednarick-Humes is the Gifted Coordinator for Lindbergh Schools and serves as Conference Vice President for the Gifted Association of Missouri. With more than 25 years in education, she is passionate about supporting the academic and social-emotional needs of gifted and twice-exceptional learners through equitable programming and innovative practices. Dr. Bednarick-Humes is the recipient of the 2022 National Association for Gifted Children Coordinator Award and the 2021 Lois A. Evans Gifted Education Award from Lindenwood University.



GAIN MASTERY IN GIFTED EDUCATION

Join a top-ranked Mizzou education program



Earn your full M Ed in Gifted Education or complete only the courses you need to meet DESE requirements with Mizzou Online.

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:

→ **MASTER OF EDUCATION IN GIFTED EDUCATION**

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](https://mizzou.us/gambit)

DESE Gifted Education Update
March 31, 2026
Christine Nobbe
Director of Gifted Education
Christine.Nobbe@dese.mo.gov



Core Data/MOSIS Maps

DESE made updates to the Gifted Services Availability and Student Participation maps, providing additional information. To locate the maps go to [DESE's Gifted Education page](#) or [click on this direct link](#). Parents and community members should be able to understand the information provided, but school personnel might request additional information:

- On the left side of the map, you can choose Availability or Student Participation and on the right side you can choose the school year. School years are called by their "last name" so the 2024-2025 school year is called 2025.
- The map visualizes data obtained from Core Data/MOSIS. August Screen 3 Gifted Contact information is shared on the map. August Screen 25 data (identification/selection criteria) is used to determine if a district has a gifted program or not. The percent of students served derives from the October Student Core.
- If you discover incorrect information in any school year from 2020 to 2025 confer with your district/charter Core Data expert about making corrections.

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 under the "Meeting Timeline." (Click on the green bars to expand each section.)

Toolbox to Assess the Missouri Gifted Learner Outcomes and Document Gifted Learner Growth or "MO-GLOs Assessment Toolbox"

You are invited to participate in an exciting project! The goals of the project are to:

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 currently being used in gifted programs;
3. develop new tools to assess the MO-GLOs; and
4. create a "Toolbox to Assess the Missouri Gifted Learner Outcomes and Document Gifted Learner Growth" or "MO-GLOs Assessment Toolbox" which will be available to Missouri's gifted educators.

You can contribute by participating in a summer workshop. Please see the 2026 Summer Gifted Education Workshop flyer in the GAMbit or [click on this Eventbrite link now](#). If you cannot attend a workshop, please complete [this form to indicate your interest](#) in participating in another way.

MFAA and MSA: Follow the Magic!

You can follow the magic of Missouri Fine Arts Academy and Missouri Scholars Academy via social media. MFAA (May 31 – June 13) is on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. MSA (June 7 – 27) is on Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

Please Join the Gifted-Ed Listserv!

Stay up to date by [subscribing to the Gifted-Ed listserv](#) and inviting your colleagues to subscribe.

Bring on the Sunshine!

Some people are so much sunshine to the square inch.
- Walt Whitman

I hope you can enjoy the sunshine, and bring sunshine to others, on these long summer days!

-Christine



Collection

2026 Summer Gifted Education Workshops



Christine Nobbe, DESE Director of Gifted Education
73 followers

Join me for one or more summer workshops! Image Credit: Courtesy of Allison Shelley/The Verbatim Agency for American Education: Images of Teachers and Students in Action

Visit the **2026 Summer Gifted Education Workshops** [collection page](#) to learn more about **nine free** summer learning opportunities hosted by Christine Nobbe, DESE's Director of Gifted Education. This summer's collection includes two popular workshops: "Gifted Education Bootcamp" and "Small & Mighty: A Workshop for Gifted Educators in Small Schools." Both workshops are offered via Zoom with morning and afternoon sessions.

New this year is a workshop called "MO-GLOs Assessment Toolbox" which is being offered at three in-person locations and online so that educators across the state can participate in this exciting project! The goals of the project are to

- Engage Missouri's gifted education community to enhance gifted programs, improve teaching and learning, and document student growth using the Missouri Gifted Learner Outcomes (MO-GLOs).
- Collect model examples of assessment tools used in gifted programs.
- Develop new tools to assess [Missouri Gifted Learner Outcomes](#).
- Create a Toolbox to Assess the Missouri Gifted Learner Outcomes and Document Gifted Learner Growth, also referred to as the MO-GLOs Assessment Tool

Portrait of a Gifted Learner



Once the Toolbox is assembled, it will be shared with Missouri's gifted education specialists.

[Go to the workshop collection page](#) and select a workshop to register!



MISSOURI

FINE ARTS

ACADEMY

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



Missouri State Capital Report

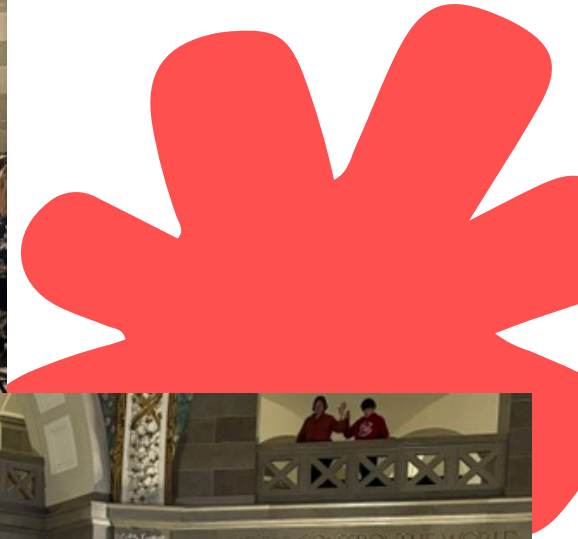
By Kyna Iman (GAM Governmental Affairs Consultant)

On Wednesday, February 11, right in the middle of Gifted Education week celebrations, students, teachers and parents supporting gifted education descended on the Capitol in Jefferson City, Missouri. The purpose of GAM Day at the Capitol is to advocate and educate Missouri's elected leaders of the importance of gifted education programs and services in their districts.

Gifted advocates from across the state were introduced in the House of Representatives prior to gathering in the Capitol Rotunda. Representative Brenda Shields, who is the sponsor for the priority legislation GAM is advocating for passage - House Bill 1757 - addressed students stressing the importance of telling their story. Other speakers included GAM President, Heather Tomicich, GAM Chairman of Advocacy, Meredith Wisniewski, DESE Gifted Coordinator, Christine Nobbe, Chairman of the Advisory Council on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children, Beth Winton, and GAM Governmental Consultant, Kyna Iman.

After the awards ceremony in the rotunda, students and parents met with their elected officials and toured the Capitol. It was a wonderful day for Gifted Education in our state!!





MO State Capital Report

continued from Page 25



Legislative Priorities for GAM include advocating for:

Funding for the Missouri Scholars Academy and Missouri Fine Arts Academy. The House and Senate appropriation committees cut funding for the June, 2027, academies by \$175,000.00. The core funding was reduced from \$850,000.00 to \$675,000.00.

Legislation is still pending for passage of House Bill 1757.

This bill requires school districts beginning in the 2027-28 school year to provide universal screenings for all students at least once before 3rd grade for the purpose of identifying potential gifted students. The bill outlines the screening requirements that provide a body of current, valid, and reliable evidence gathered from a minimum of two areas outlined in the bill. The screening must be reviewed by at least three staff members trained in testing, administration, or gifted education. A child not meeting the criteria on a single screening does not prevent the child from being identified as gifted. The bill requires districts to establish a process for the universal screenings, annual notification to parents, and the identification of students for gifted programs using criteria recommended by the Advisory Council on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children and the State Board of Education.

Full bill text can be read here: [HOUSE BILL NO. 1757](#)

Keep up the good fight!

Kyna Iman
GAM Governmental Consultant



PRE-COLLEGE PROGRAMS

Continue on your path of academic discovery!

N UNIVERSITY N S L

To learn more visit,
[PRECOLLEGE.WASHU.EDU](https://precollege.washu.edu)
or scan the QR code:



Differentiating Academic Competitions

GAMbits
and Pieces

By Bronwyn MacFarlane, Ph.D. (GAM Board, Region 2 Director)

Academic competitions can help build advanced programs and increase awareness about the educational needs of gifted students. While academic competitions fit well into gifted program design, they can also be part of differentiation for regular classrooms, offered beyond the school day, or be sponsored by community organizations. A review and selection process should begin with open-ended competitions that are feasible for students to participate in their setting, whether in traditional classrooms, through community organizations, or at home.

A recent dissertation research study examined the relationship between high school Science Olympiad participation and the decision of incoming college students to major in a STEM field; whom most participants were identified as gifted. The study, completed by one of my recent doctoral graduates who teaches Advanced Placement chemistry in Missouri, provided recommendations to assist schools with starting Science Olympiad teams in underserved urban and rural areas as a method to introduce students to STEM at critical times influencing career development and support STEM talent development (Spiegel, 2025). Advanced learners benefit from individualization, autonomy, and challenge, and academic competitions can offer educators with the hallmarks of differentiation.

When considering differentiation approaches to apply to local settings, various academic competitions may fit better with the dimensions of *depth*, *complexity*, *acceleration*, *challenge*, and *creativity*. Like curriculum, academic competitions are typically organized according to grade and age levels, with expanding levels of more demanding expectations (VanTassel-Baska, 1992). When curriculum is differentiated for gifted students, the work moves to higher levels of expectation in respect to content, process, and concept demands (Renzulli & Reis, 1997; Tomlinson, 2017). Acceleration makes more advanced content available to students at earlier ages and levels.

Harry Passow's test of whether curriculum is differentiated:

“SHOULD all kids do it? COULD all kids do it? WOULD all kids want to? If the answer to any of these questions is “yes” then the curriculum is not differentiated.”

Differentiating Academic Competitions *continued from Page 28*

Academic competitions vary in format and consideration for the best type of differentiation whether traditional formats with math contests, science fairs, debate, Olympiads, robotics, academic bowls, artistic and written essay entries, or virtual competitions in programming, science, or writing online, and more. Offering *choice* fits well with *depth, complexity, and creativity* whether participating in organized competitions or creating a local invitational for a specific community. In practice, these terms of depth, complexity, acceleration, challenge, and creativity may come through in competition participation as shown in Table 1.

Curriculum may be differentiated among the five interrelated dimensions of content, process, product, learning environment, and affect (learner characteristics). Differentiation of **CONTENT**, the what students learn, can be modified by the degree of depth, complexity, abstraction, and pacing with authentic materials, interdisciplinary connections, and advanced concepts; **ALL OF** which is more effective than simply assigning “more” work. Academic competitions can provide *differentiation of CONTENT* at a level which may be higher and more in depth than grade level curriculum as well as domain-specific content to match or cultivate student interest.

Academic competitions also provide opportunities for participants to vary their individual **PROCESS** with different strategies, methods, and paths. They learn about strategic thinking in math, science, and logic competitions, as well as inquiry and problem solving in open-ended competitions. By varying their process, gifted students practice and build adaptability, metacognition, reasoning, and flexible thinking. Students also learn about demonstrating their learning with their chosen **PRODUCT**. Competitions reward sophisticated products and provide students with real rubrics to practice producing work at expected levels, make revisions, and assess their work.

Table 1. Differentiation alignment to academic competition participation

Type of Differentiation	Application to Competition
Content	Advanced, accelerated, challenging competition-level material
Process	Inquiry-based depth, creativity, problem-solving
Product	Authentic, creative competition outputs
Environment	Settings incorporating support, complexity, and simulations
Affect	Motivation, resilience, challenging identity development

Differentiating Academic Competitions *continued from Page 29*

Academic competitions also provide gifted students with an *affective* opportunity to build emotional awareness about their motivation, work habits, goal setting, resilience and coping strategies for all performance levels, self-identity and self-concept. Coaches can support learners by discussing affective topics and normalize anxiety and pressure while emphasizing growth over rankings to teach healthy motivation and engagement.

When intentionally aligned with and applied to differentiation dimensions and research-based curricular practices, an academic competition can serve as creative and authentic differentiated educational tool and be part of gifted programming, included within regular classrooms, or offered beyond the school day at home and in the community.

References

Renzulli, J. S., & Reis, S. M. (1997). *The schoolwide enrichment model: A how-to guide for educational excellence*. Mansfield Center, CT: Creative Learning Press.

Rinn, A. N., Mun, R. U., & Hodges, J. (2022). *2020–2021 State of the states in gifted education*. National Association of Gifted Children and the Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted. <https://nagc.org/page/state-of-the-states-report>

Spiegel, G. (2025). "Relationship between high school Science Olympiad participation and declaration of college STEM major." Arkansas State University, Jonesboro, AR. Dissertations and Theses Database.

Tomlinson, C. (2017). *How to differentiate instruction in academically diverse classrooms*. ASCD.

VanTassel-Baska, J. (1992). Educational decision making on acceleration and grouping. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 36(2), 68–72. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001698629203600203>



Bronwyn MacFarlane, Ph.D., is a GAM Region 2 Director on the GAM Board of Directors and a doctoral professor who teaches graduate courses in gifted education, leadership, and policy. She chaired 40 completed doctoral student dissertation research committees and published 5 books. She has advocated for children's creative programming as president of two non-profit boards of directors; served as a board officer of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children; and volunteers from local to international levels.

2026

DRURY UNIVERSITY PRE-COLLEGE PROGRAMS

CAMP



www.drury.edu/giftededucation
Drury University Pre-College Summer Programs
900 N. Benton Ave. Lay 103
Springfield, MO 65802
417.873.7386

SIGN UP NOW FOR WINTERSCAPE

REGISTRATION IS OPEN!

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/giftededucation

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

Growing up Gifted: How My Experience as a Gifted Learner Inspired Me to Pursue a Career in Education

GAMbits
and Pieces

By Samantha P (Rockwood School District Senior)



From mapping archeological sites and testing chocolate chip cookie recipes to constructing a cardboard boat and directing, filming, and starring in a short film, my experiences as a gifted student helped me rediscover a love of learning. I've found a place for myself inside each of my classrooms throughout my K-12 education, but in gifted classes, I first felt empowered to let my curiosity run free. Instead of working simply to meet a benchmark so I could advance to the next grade, being a gifted student allowed me to share my enthusiasm for education with like-minded peers and learn together simply for the growth and joy of discovering something new. Gifted curriculum in my school district provided me with opportunities to pursue topics that interested me, whether that was experimenting with graphic design in third grade or my fifth-grade research on how our brain responds to mistakes. Now, I oversee the design and layout of my school's newspaper as editor-in-chief, and I've explored other elements of psychology in research-based ELA courses and my AP Psychology class. Indeed, my gifted classes strengthened the collaboration and problem-solving skills I use in these roles as a leader and learner at my high school. Upon graduating this May, I hope to bring these skills into a different classroom: my own. Gifted education inspired me to become an elementary educator because I witnessed how my gifted teachers, including Dr. Megan Burian, Kathy Poole, and Carol McClintock, thoughtfully crafted learning opportunities that encouraged critical thinking and revitalized students' eagerness to grow. While my kindergarten lessons may not include Shark Tank pitches or designing public parks, I look forward to incorporating elements of project-based learning and student-led "passion projects," similar to those I was offered as a gifted student, in my future curriculum.

Differentiating Academic Competitions *continued from Page 32*

Moreover, gifted education reinforced my belief that students who care about what they're learning ultimately become invested in their education as a whole. I, and countless other gifted students, are a testament to this philosophy, and I look forward to applying this principle in my own classroom.



Samantha P. is a gifted senior at Marquette High School outside of St. Louis, Missouri. This fall, Samantha plans on attending the Honors College at the University of Georgia as a double major in elementary education and psychology. In her free time, Samantha enjoys reading, exploring local coffee shops with her friends, and running track in the spring. Samantha also dances competitively and will minor in dance at UGA.

PLAYFUL LEARNING WORKSHOP

From 3D Printing to Everyday Physics to LEGOs in the Classroom, Prepare to be **INSPIRED!**



WEDNESDAY
JULY 29, 2026



TIME
8:30 - 3:00 PM



MARYVILLE
UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR ACCESS
AND ACHIEVEMENT

**GRAB YOUR
SPOT TODAY!**

<https://www.maryvilleca2.com/stemworkshop>

GAM District Regional Directors



CLICK NAME
TO EMAIL!



<p>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.</p>	Region 1 Director	Tara Pruett
	Region 1 Assistant Director	Hallie Henry
<p>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.</p>	Region 2 Director	Brownyn MacFarlane
	Region 2 Assistant Director	Eric Gunter
<p>Region 3 is located on the west side of Missouri and includes Platte, Clay, Jackson and Cass counties.</p>	Region 3 Director	Jody Brison-Molina
	Region 3 Assistant Director	Tiffany Strezoski
<p>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.</p>	Region 4 Director	Angie Cochran
	Region 4 Assistant Director	Emily Woodall
<p>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.</p>	Region 5 Director	Ashley Zeiler
	Region 5 Assistant Director	Sarah Mason
<p>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.</p>	Region 6 Director	Caitlin Selle
	Region 6 Assistant Director	Christina Wallace
<p>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.</p>	Region 7 Director	Arielle Lee
	Region 7 Assistant Director	Cassandra Carnahan
<p>Region 8 is located in the eastern portion of Missouri and includes the following counties: St. Charles, St. Louis, and Jefferson.</p>	Region 8 Co-Director	Jennifer Blank
	Region 8 Co-Director	Alex Dzurick
<p>Region 9 includes the following counties: Bates, Benton, Carroll, Cass, Henry, Hickory, Johnson, Lafayette, Morgan, Pettis, Ray, St. Clair, Saline, and Vernon.</p>	Region 9 Co-Director	Kristine Torres
	Region 9 Co-Director	Jodi Blumhorst



EXTEND YOUR REACH: ADVERTISE IN THE GAMbit

ATTENTION ADVERTISERS:

Interested in 2026 GAMbit advertising? Complete the Google Form [LINK HERE](#) to let us know!

ADVERTISE/SPONSOR

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!



2026 GAMBIT ADVERTISING RATES

Optimize your campaigns for the best possible outcomes.



Full Page: \$125

Specs:
Color
8.5x11
PDF required



Half Page: \$75

Specs:
Color
5.5x4.25
OR 4.25x5.5
PDF required



Classified: \$40

Specs:
Black & White
Up to 100 words
Small logo (png or pdf required)



GAMBIT QUARTERLY DEADLINES

Spring 2026: Ads due Feb 1; published on or before Mar 1.

Special Insert: Summer Camps/Programs

Summer 2026: Ads due April 1; published on or before May 1.

Fall 2026: Ads due August 1; published on or before Sept 1.

Winter 2026: Ads due Nov 1; published on or before Dec 1.



SPONSORSHIP AND VENDOR OPPORTUNITIES

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