

the challenge

Magazine for The Center for Gifted Studies

The Center Awarded More Than \$100,000 in New Grants

The Qatar Foundation International's grant of \$33,500 makes it possible to support ten students to study Arabic at the Summer Program for Verbally and Mathematically Precocious Youth (VAMPY). First preference will go to applicants who want to learn Arabic and need financial assistance to do so. The grant also will help defray travel costs if needed. The Arabic class will be offered for the fifth year at VAMPY, but it is the first time this amount of financial assistance has been available. This grant affords students the opportunity to learn the Arabic language and explore the strong cultural ties between Western and Arab cultures while they learn about the modern Arab world.



A grant of \$73,700 from the Jewish Heritage Fund for Excellence will provide opportunities for students across Kentucky, throughout the nation, and even internationally to access resources for meaningful Holocaust studies. This grant makes available the important collection of murals created by Nazi Germany and the Holocaust students at VAMPY during the past twenty-five years. This project includes a three-city touring exhibit of the murals in Louisville, Bowling Green, and Danville. Partners with The Center for Gifted Studies are the Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts and Kentucky Educational Television, and they will work together to develop and disseminate educational resources that allow students to connect this difficult history to their lives and communicate their personal responses.

Alums of the Nazi Germany and the Holocaust class are invited to come to Bowling Green during VAMPY on July 11th. It's a time to reminisce and celebrate.

Letter from Julia



Dear Friends of The Center for Gifted Studies,

Spring is blooming, and so is programming at The Center. Spring ushers in a summer full of programs for children and young people – SCATS, VAMPY, Camp Explore, and Camp Innovate. It is also the time that plans are finalized for our Advanced Placement Summer Institute and for welcoming the second cohort of National Stem Cell Foundation Scholars.

Friends of The Center provide a brighter future for individuals and for The Center. Your generous gifts support children participating in SCATS, VAMPY, Camp Explore, Camp Innovate,

and Super Saturdays. This support or financial assistance allows young people to participate, those whose personal situations wouldn't allow such participation. Another way that you help The Center expand its reach is by connecting us with funding opportunities with the grants from the Qatar Foundation International, the Jewish Heritage Fund for Excellence, and the National Stem Cell Foundation being wonderful examples.

If you or your child has had a very good experience in a program offered by The Center for Gifted Studies, please share that information with others. Remember – “An opportunity isn't a real opportunity until you know about it.”

I look forward to the 35th summer for SCATS and the 34th for VAMPY and the AP Institute. All programming continues with traditions and new ideas. Please help us spread the word about all of the wonderful opportunities offered by The Center for Gifted Studies.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Julia Link Roberts".

Julia Link Roberts
Mahurin Professor for Gifted Studies

Save
the Date



June 7
6:00pm CDT
Russell Miller Theatre
of Fine Arts
Ivan Wilson Fine Arts
Center at WKU

ASSESSMENT: THE SILENT KILLER OF LEARNING

Dr. Eric Mazur, internationally sought after speaker and thought leader in education, will speak on campus Wednesday, June 7. Dr. Mazur's teaching methods have been adopted across multiple science disciplines with a large national and international following. Dr. Mazur is the Balkanski Professor of Physics and Applied Physics at Harvard University, the author of several books, and the author or co-author of nearly 300 scientific publications.

This lecture is presented as part of the Mary Nixon Speaker Series of the National STEM Cell Foundation Scholars program, a collaboration between the National Stem Cell Foundation, The Carol Martin Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science, and The Center for Gifted Studies at WKU.

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THE MISSION FOR THE CENTER

We are committed to encouraging excellence by providing educational opportunities and resources to three populations: gifted and talented students, educators working with gifted students, and parents of gifted students.



THE VISION FOR THE CENTER

An internationally preeminent center, The Center for Gifted Studies envisions expanding services in five areas: (1) offering educational programs for gifted children and youth, (2) providing professional development opportunities for educators, (3) enhancing communication and advocacy for gifted children, (4) conducting research and developing curriculum to remove the learning ceiling, and (5) building a testing and counseling component for gifted children and their families.



The success of Super Saturdays starts with its teachers. These educators bring their classroom (and life) experiences to create challenging, rewarding, and entertaining classes for high-ability students in grades one through eight. Keeping the list of Super Saturdays classes fresh, challenging, inviting, and relevant, and then finding the right teachers to design and teach those classes, are parts of the behind-the-scenes work that goes into making the Super Saturdays class list each Fall and Winter. This past winter six new teachers taught in Super Saturdays, offering such classes as Crazy for Coding, Cool Science for Cool Kids, Castle Mechanics: Medieval Times Meet Today's Technology, Record Makers and Breakers, and Creating and Coding. Last fall a new teacher offered Breakout EDU - Escape Challenges for the Curious.

We asked the new teachers about their Super Saturdays' experiences. Shawn Quinn, teacher of Castle Mechanics: Medieval Times Meet Today's Technology, was familiar with Super Saturdays, as his own children have participated for several years "and loved every minute of it. Once they are in class it is all they can talk about." Shawn explained, "I was excited to be asked to teach in Super Saturdays. I love helping students find fun ways to explore as many subjects as possible, and Super Saturdays is a perfect fit for that."

Even though teachers have experience with high ability students, they can still have a learning curve given the class is made up of only high ability / high interest students who want to be in a classroom learn-

Even Teachers Can Be 'New Kids on the Block'



SAM OLDENBURG



ing on a Saturday. So what surprised these new teachers the most about teaching in Super Saturdays? “I was surprised at how much kids wanted to jump in and learn,” said Shawn. “At every turn the students offered insights and suggestions and tweaks to how we would go after a problem or topic. They were willing to experiment, fail, and try again over and over until we found the desired information or solution.” Cool Science for Curious Kids co-instructor Jennifer Thompson agreed, “My biggest surprise was the engagement and excitement that these students brought each and every Saturday. I loved that kids wanted to LEARN as much as they possibly could, even on the weekend.”

The biggest difference teaching in Super Saturdays for Shawn was the class size. “My group of ten students for Super Saturdays allowed me to get much deeper into content and tailor my approach to each kid and what he needed and wanted to explore. Also, having all of them super motivated to be there to learn helped. This makes my task in Super Saturdays more a job of keeping up with the students and feeding their insatiable appetite for knowledge instead of the other way around.”

“I was able to work more one on one with students and find activities that inter-



ested them,” Dianna Wolfe, teacher of Creating and Coding, said. “I got excited and nervous for each class, and I was sad when it ended. It made me learn more about

coding, and I found new fun ways to teach it.” Jennifer Huskey, who co-taught Cool Science for Curious Kids, echoed that: “This is a lot of hands-on all the time, with a much smaller group.”

All the new Winter Super Saturdays teachers ended the fourth Saturday with similar feelings and a new perspective on Super Saturdays. “I had one parent tell me this was where his son needed to be because he was excited about coding and school in general. He did not fit in as well at his regular school, but he fit in great in our class!” said Dianna. And Shawn shared, “It is important to give students as many opportunities to explore their passions and topics they are not always exposed to in school. Super Saturdays does that and does it with great success.”



Traveling to Ireland was a first for The Center for Gifted Studies. Twenty students and adults started in Dublin, made a circle of the beautiful island, and returned to Dublin to fly home. During those days, the weather was lovely, and no umbrellas were needed.

Waterford, the Blarney Stone, and Bunratty Castle may be familiar when thinking about Ireland. We saw each of them but also enjoyed a variety of cultural experiences and lovely sights. Different places we visited were favorites for individual travelers.

Ethan Tate (VAMPY 2016; Travel 2015-16) described seeing how glass was made in Waterford as a favorite stop: “We

got to see how glass is made and how, if you mess up, you can always restart. I have always wondered how glass is made because my mom loves it. It’s cool to see the company that makes glass you can see all over the world, even in castles. The amount of time, skill, and work it takes to make the glass is really magnificent.”

Harrison Witt (SCATS 2014; VAMPY 2015-16) said, “The best part about this trip was seeing different forms of architecture. Especially in Dublin, there was a unique mix between the older stone buildings and newer modern-looking ones. The farther away we moved from Dublin, though, stone buildings became a more common form of architecture. In the

Knowth Tombs, it was interesting seeing how the builders meticulously built the foundation of the tombs with multiple layers of rock.”

For Alyia Mauldin (Super Saturdays 2007-10), visiting the castles was the highlight of the trip: “Walking into the castles was like walking into another world. I could have spent the whole week just wandering around the beautiful estates. Now I know exactly what it’s like to be a princess like I’ve always dreamed of being.”

Hayley Watson (Super Saturdays 2010, 13) said, “I enjoyed visiting all of the different historical landmarks, like the cathedrals. We attended the services at St. Patrick’s Cathedral and listened to

The Center Travels to Ireland



the choir. I was amazed to see all of the furniture and buildings that were there for more than a hundred years. My favorite part of this trip was getting to see and experience all of the different landscapes in Ireland.”

Eden Casebier (Super Saturdays 2009) reflected on her experience: “My favorite part of the trip was getting to go exploring. Sometimes when you go on trips you stay near the hotel the entire time, or the group requires you to stay with them 24/7 and gives you no free time. However, this





ALLEN SUMMERS

trip let us walk around and explore for a period of time. We also got to see many interesting places like the castles, beautiful landscapes, historical sites, and the cliffs. Seeing the horses and sheep was fun; up until this point I had never seen a real sheep, only photographs. I enjoyed looking for gifts for my friends as a keepsake. I made new friends on this trip, too.”

Jordan Hagan Tooley (Super Saturdays 2001; Travel 2008, 09, 11) summed up the trip to Ireland, saying, “It was a trip of a lifetime. It would be hard to narrow down my favorite from the trip, but the Cliffs of Moher and the Burren were truly the most magnificent views I’ve ever seen. From the breathtaking scenery to the robust Irish culture, I can honestly say, this trip was one I will never forget!”

All who traveled with The Center for Gifted Studies to Ireland will remember the places, the making of Waterford crystal, the architecture, the castles, and the views.

The next travel experience for The Center will be to Greece in early October. Come travel along with us!



ALLEN SUMMERS

HISTORY The Center for Gifted Studies has offered annual opportunities for international travel for three decades. Travel experiences have been to Austria, Belgium, China, England, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Russia, Scotland, Spain, and Wales. Travel is planned for eighth grade and high school honors students and interested adults.

The chance to visit other countries will forever change how you view your own country and its relationship to the world as a whole.

– RICHARD ROBERTS

Emma Bolden (VAMPY 1995-96; VAMPY Writing Instructor 2009) received a 2017 Creative Writing Fellowship in Poetry from the National Endowment for the Arts, one of 37 in the United States. This allows her time and space to create, revise, conduct research, and connect with readers. She earned a BFA in Creative Writing from Sarah Lawrence College and an MFA in Creative Writing from University of North Carolina Wilmington. She currently works as the senior reviews editor for the *Tupelo Quarterly*.

Rebecca Begtrup Broniatowski (VAMPY 1996-97; Travel) graduated from Tulane University in 2003. She obtained her DO (Doctor of Osteopathy) and MPH degrees from Nova Southeastern Medical School in Ft. Lauderdale, FL, in 2007. Rebecca then completed a triple board residency in general pediatrics, adult psychiatry, and child and adolescent psychiatry at Tulane University Medical Center, followed by a fellowship in eating disorders psychiatry at Sheppard Pratt Health System, University of Maryland. Rebecca is currently working at Children's National Medical Center in Washington, DC, specializing in feeding and eating disorders in children and adolescents. She has been married for almost four years and gave birth to their first child, a daughter, in January, 2017.

Pang Chartisathian Hartman (SCATS 1987; VAMPY 1990) and her husband, Michael, were recently awarded the honor of their video game Stash being named a 2017 "Best Indie Game" winner of the Taco Bell "Feed the Beta" indie game competition. Selected from a wide pool of applicants, Stash will now

Alumni Update

have promotional assistance from Taco Bell throughout its launch. A graduate of Centre College, Pang and her husband own Frogdice. Their daughter Anya is also a SCATS alumna. And next summer, their youngest, Mina, will continue the tradition.

Scott Nass (VAMPY 1988-91; Counselor) has been selected for the inaugural class of Leaders in Health Equity Fellows as part of a new program at George Washington University's Health Workforce Institute. He will spend time in DC and Rwanda with the cohort developing capac-

ity to implement a health equity project at his home location, Eisenhower Medical Center Family Medicine Residency Program in California.

Harper Jean Tobin (SCATS 1994-95; VAMPY 1997) is director of policy at the National Center for Transgender Equality where she coordinates all aspects of advocacy on federal administrative policies and regulations and works to provide information for the public about laws and policies that affect transgender people.

She also chairs the board of HIPS, an organization that promotes rights, health and safety for those involved in sex work, sex trade, or drug use in Washington, DC. Harper

Jean previously worked at the National Senior Citizens Law Center's Federal Rights Project. Harper Jean's writing on transgender equality and other issues has appeared in numerous publications. A Kentucky native, she earned degrees in law and social work from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland and is an alumna of Oberlin College.

"My time at SCATS and VAMPY fed my intellectual curiosity and gave me friendships that lasted for years and even decades. I'm delighted to have members of my family in the programs today."



Ron Skillern (VAMPY Instructor 1992-2017), named Kentucky's 2017 Teacher of the Year, has been on sabbatical from teaching Advanced Placement U.S. Government and Politics at Bowling Green High School (1996-2014; 2015-present). As he travels throughout Kentucky, learning from and meeting with educators and students, he is in awe of the devotion, innovation, and success so evident in the Commonwealth's public schools. Recently, he had the honor of speaking on behalf of Advanced Placement achievements in KY schools, at February's first AP Honors Day, held at the Capitol in Frankfort. In March, he was inducted into the Kentucky Teacher Hall of Fame. Ron has degrees from Western Kentucky University and Vanderbilt. Ron has one daughter, Elizabeth, with his wife, Ada; Elizabeth is looking forward to her third summer of Camp Explore.



SAM OLDENBURG

GATTON ACADEMY

A REDEDICATION



SAM OLDENBURG



SAM OLDENBURG

Last October, The Carol Martin Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science in Kentucky was rededicated after being expanded and renovated over a 15-month time period. This renovation was funded completely from private gifts, with the lead gift coming from the school's namesake, Carol Martin "Bill" Gatton. In honor of his family, each wing bears the name of Mr. Gatton's parents: the Harry W. Gatton Sr. Wing and the Edith Martin Gatton Wing. In addition to The Academy gift, he made scholarship donations honoring his brother, Charles, and his sister, Marie, who lived in Schneider Hall when she attended WKU in the 1920s. At the ceremony, Mr. Gatton shared the poem "The Bridge Builder" by Will Allen Dromgoole that tells the story of an old man who builds a bridge over a deep chasm even though he will not benefit from it. He built it for the "youth whose feet must pass this way." Pete Mahurin, friend to both The Center for Gifted Studies and The Gatton Academy, commented: "I've never known a better bridge builder than Bill Gatton." WKU agreed, naming Mr. Gatton WKU's 2016 Philanthropist of the Year.

Dr. Julia Roberts remarked, "Way back in 1997 when Dr. Charles McGruder and I wrote the first proposal for an academy, I dreamed of 200 Kentucky students spending their last two years of high school engaged in college-level study. The expansion of Florence Schneider Hall has allowed that dream to come true as we now have that capacity, with the class of 2018 to be the first class to have the enhanced number of students." The Gatton Academy's Class of 2019 will bring the number of students close to capacity.



Gustaf Swanson's Gifts of Art



Since Schneider Hall opened almost ten years ago as home to The Center for Gifted Studies and The Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science, Gustaf (Gus) Swanson (1942-2016) made annual gifts of art from his collection. Those pieces of art are displayed prominently throughout Schneider Hall.

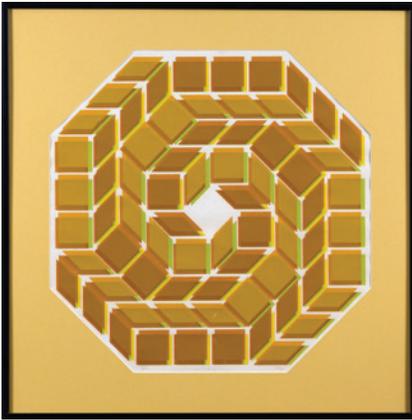
Gus was an artist, a teacher of art, and an art collector. He appreciated beautiful things and was happy to share pieces from his eclectic collection. He enjoyed a long career in education in the Hancock County schools in a variety of roles, including working as a gifted educator.

Gus was loyal to WKU, his alma mater, and was devoted to The Center for Gifted Studies. In an interview, Gus remarked, "I always love to come to Western."

Gus and Beverly Swanson visited Schneider Hall in September to share information about each piece of art he had given to The Center for Gifted Studies and The Gatton Academy. He described the various gifts of art and the history of each. The gifts include "best in show" and "judge's choice." They are watercolor and oil paintings, woodcut art, and other media. Subject matter for the art is as varied as Secretariat, a landscape, a native portrait, and nonrepresentational subjects.

Anyone visiting Schneider Hall will enjoy the art that is displayed from the collection of Gustaf Swanson. Gus was a special friend of The Center for Gifted Studies!





HISTORY

Julia Roberts,
Executive

Director of The Center for Gifted Studies and The Gatton Academy, envisioned Schneider Hall filled with art even in the early planning stages of the Academy. Gus Swanson heard of this interest and pledged to share art from his extensive collection. He is such a good example of one of the myriad ways that donors enhance opportunities for young people – in this, case, those are opportunities to appreciate beautiful and eclectic pieces of art.

My husband was a lover of all things beautiful – from his extensive art collection to delicate pieces of china, antique furniture, and classic architecture. Another of Gus's great loves included WKU. Our visits here were always filled with joy and special friendships, and Gus was always treated royally by the Spirit Masters, who respectfully and carefully always helped him with his wheelchair and/or power chair. The Center for Gifted Studies and The Gatton Academy held a special place in his big heart, and he chose to share his legacy of artwork with future students, hoping that they, too, would be inspired by the beauty and talent reflected in his collection.

– BEVERLY SWANSON

WORLD CONFERENCE TO BE HELD DOWN UNDER

Imagine being in a room with people from all around the world who are interested in serving the needs of gifted learners. The World Council for Gifted and Talented Children (WCGTC) offers just this opportunity. The WCGTC will host the 22nd Biennial World Conference with the School of Education at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia July 20-23.

Seven keynote presentations are planned that include Seon-Young Lee, South Korea; Jane Piirto, USA; Karen Rogers, USA; Mark Scott, Australia; Kirsi Tirri, Finland; Helen Watt, Australia; and Jim Watters, Australia. There will also be a preconference on July 20th featuring eight workshops conducted by experts in the field. These experts include Michele Kane, USA; Leonie Kronborg, Australia; Seon-Young Lee, South Korea; Sue Prior, Australia; Julia Link Roberts, USA; Karen Rogers, USA; Dorothy Sisk, USA; Margaret Sutherland, Scotland; and Klaus Urban, Germany.

It is anticipated that more than 600 participants from approximately 50 countries will attend the conference. Participants include parents, teachers, researchers, graduate students, and psychologists, among others interested in gifted education. Many of these participants will also share their knowledge by giving presentations.

Renata Prado, a graduate student at the University of Brasilia and participant at the 2015 World Conference notes, "As a doctoral student, it was a great investment in myself and a unique experience to meet scholars from all over the world, improve my knowledge about the field, and make networks. I came back home with great ideas and very excited about enhancing gifted area in Brazil."

Previous World Conferences have been held in London, San Francisco, Jerusalem, Montreal, Manila, Hamburg, Salt Lake City, Sydney, The Hague, Toronto, Hong Kong, Seattle, Istanbul, Barcelona, Adelaide, New Orleans, Warwick, Vancouver, Prague, Louisville, and Odense. Sydney will be the first repeated city, first hosting the World Conference in 1989.

The WCGTC Headquarters relocated to Western Kentucky University on January 1, 2011. The agreement was renewed in August 2015, and the Headquarters will remain at WKU through at least December 2020. This addition further illustrates WKU's dedication to gifted education and internationalization. For more information, visit www.world-gifted.org.

friends

John & Kathy Abbott
Louisville, KY

Mark & Benita Albert
Oak Ridge, TN

James & Deborrah Allen
Alvaton, KY

Nellie Arnett
Bowling Green, KY
Super Saturdays

AT&T
Louisville, KY
IdeaFestival Bowling Green

Robert & Barbara Begtrup
Nashville, TN

Nancy Bell
Radcliff, KY

Marilee Benson
Bardstown, KY

Dann & Kathie Cann
Leitchfield, KY

Tom & Ann Clark
Raywick, KY

Tyler Clark
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1989-91; Counselor) Cline
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Louisville, KY

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Bowling Green, KY

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(VAMPY 1990-93)*

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Bowling Green, KY

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*In Memory of Amanda
Brown Hollinsworth*

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Tom & Janice Donan
Bardstown, KY

Wayne & Jean Dudgeon
Elizabethtown, KY

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Little Rock, AR

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WSS 2003-05; SCATS 2006;
VAMPY 2007-08; Counselor)
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Owensboro, KY

John & Tracy Inman
Bowling Green, KY

Meredith & Harriette Johnson
Bowling Green, KY
In Honor of Dr. Julia Link Roberts

Thomas Johnston (VAMPY
1999-2000; Teaching Assistant;
Counselor) & Anna Hitron
(VAMPY 1996-99, Counselor)
Louisville, KY
Alumni Fund & Greatest Need

Ints & Melissa Kampars
Hardinsburg, KY
Alumni Fund

Rizwan & Huma Khan
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Blacksburg, VA

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Franklin, KY

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Owensboro, KY

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Nashville, TN
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Franklin, KY

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Paducah, KY

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Paducah, KY

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Zimmerman (VAMPY 1992-93;
Counselor) Troy, OH
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La Canada Flintridge, CA

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VAMPY

Peter & Sarah Reed
Louisville, KY

Kevin Reilly & Ann Marie
Sarnese-Reilly
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Alumni Fund

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Wurtland, KY

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Bowling Green, KY

David & Susan Thomison
Bowling Green, KY

Mary Nancy Todd
Bardstown, KY

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Princeton, KY

Chris & Tracee Troutt
Elizabethtown, KY

Catherine Ward
Bowling Green, KY

Jon Warren
Bowling Green, KY

Elaine Webb
Burkesville, KY

Nathan & Olivia Webb
Louisville, KY

Lori Wittlin (VAMPY 1987-89)
Houston, TX
VAMPY

David & Donna Wooden
Leitchfield, KY

Stuart & Linda Yeoman
Alvaton, KY

Courtney Young
Crestwood, KY

Alan Yungbluth
Bowling Green, KY

**IN MEMORY OF
CATHERINE WISEMAN**

Anonymous

Hazel Farley
Lexington, KY

Robert Gardner, III
Lexington, KY

Charles & Carolyn Hardcastle
Bowling Green, KY

Dick & Julia Roberts
Bowling Green, KY

Junko Tokuda
New York, NY

Nila Wells
Lexington, KY

IN MEMORY OF GUSTAF SWANSON

Sam & Mary Evans
Bowling Green, KY

Michael & Grazyna Murphy
Owensboro, KY

Dick & Julia Roberts
Bowling Green, KY

Gayle Soeldner
Saint Charles, IL

Beverly Swanson
Owensboro, KY

Art pieces from Beverly Swanson
Owensboro, KY

**IN MEMORY OF MARGARET
"MEG" GATTEN**

Donnie Gatten with family and
friends of Meg Gatten
Memorial Scholarship for VAMPY



Roger & Mary Ann Pardieck
Columbus, IN

Paul & Anne Pedersen
Barbourville, KY
VAMPY

Ron & Jan Peeler
Bowling Green, KY

Kimberly Lorch Perrins
(VAMPY 1994-97)
Atlanta, GA
Alumni Fund

Robert & Linda Pinter
Erie, PA
Riley Jane Lawrence Fund

James & Rebecca Simpson
Bowling Green, KY

Janet Skees
Louisville, KY

Rebekah Soares
Pearland, TX

Jim & Joyce Ann Spiceland
Salisbury, NC

John & Emily Stewart
LaGrange, KY

Richard Tewksbury & Lisa Sutton
Louisville, KY
Riley Jane Lawrence Fund

Kendrick & Claudia Wells
Louisville, KY

Michael & Sherry Whitten
Germantown, TN
VAMPY

K. P. & Linda Winkenhofe
Plano, TX

Max & Lucy Wilson
Hickman, KY

Joe & Judy Wismann
Talent, OR



SAM OLDENBURG

Differentiation tends to be a common service for exceptional learners, including those with gifts and talents. Unfortunately, many educators lack basic training in differentiating the curriculum, especially for advanced learners. So, in spite of best intentions, differentiation, although listed in an individual education plan or required on lesson plans, may not actually be effective differentiation. It may be more work, unrelated lessons, or choice of topics – all of which are not differentiation.

Differentiation occurs when an educator intentionally matches what and how the student is learning, at what complexity level the student is learning, and/or how the student is demonstrating what he is learning with the student's needs, interests, and abilities.

The first critical step in matching learning experiences to the learner is planning. In fact, there are questions that must be answered thoroughly before effective differentiation occurs.

Differentiation: The Importance of Planning

Three Questions for Effective Differentiation

Educators must ask and answer these three questions:

1. Planning Question: What do I want students to know, understand, and be able to do?
2. Preassessing Question: Who already knows, understands, and/or can use the content or demonstrate the skills? Who needs additional support in order to know, understand, and/or demonstrate skills?

3. Differentiation Question: What can I do for him, her, or them so they can make continuous progress and extend their learning? (Roberts & Inman, 2015, p. 11)

If the goal of learning is continuous progress, the teacher must determine what the child already knows about the content she has planned to teach. Since a child cannot learn what he already knows, that learning experience must differ from the learning experiences of others who are ready to learn the content as planned. It's that simple.

Dimensions of Differentiation

Of course planning the learning experiences involves examining standards, programs of study, curriculum maps, and other district- or state-adopted guidelines central to learning. It also involves the educator considering how she is making the match. Part of the planning, then, is determining what should be differentiated: content, process, product, or assessment.

CONTENT: What do you want the students to know?

Content refers to skills, information, and concepts a student is learning. Content can be simple or complex – most topics in a elementary science class (for example the cell) can have an entire graduate level class taught on that one topic. Not only can a teacher differentiate content by going more in depth, but she can also have the student study a tangential area not typically covered in the unit (such as weaponry in the Civil War) or allow the student to continue to the next unit. Note the litmus test in the box on the right; it's a quick guide to determine what is not appropriate for advanced learners.

PROCESS: What do you want the students to do cognitively with what they know?

Process is not what the child is doing to learn – such as reading a text versus interviewing someone. Rather, process refers to their brains: at what level are they processing this material? For example, if a child does not fully understand how to add fractions, then he needs to begin at very simple levels when beginning the addition of complex fractions: what are complex fractions, for example. Whereas a

learner who learned how to add fractions is ready to begin applying what he knows about adding simple fractions to adding complex fractions and analyzing the difference. For the child who has mastered adding fractions and can readily apply that mastery to complex fractions, she is ready for complex problems and predicting outcomes. Differentiation of process involves varying the sophistication of the minds-on part of learning depending on how the child is ready to think about the concept.

PRODUCT: How can the students demonstrate what they've learned?

When what the child is learning is more important than how he demonstrates it, differentiation of product works well. For example, if students are researching the French Revolution with the intent of understanding the social, economic, and political causes, then it may not matter to the teacher how the students show what they learned. Some may produce a PowerPoint complete with videos embedded while others may write an analytical essay. However, if an English teacher is teaching the essay, then student products

Would-Could-Should Litmus Test for Learning Experiences

Would all children want to be involved in such learning experiences?

Could all children participate in such learning experiences?

Should all children be expected to succeed in such learning experiences?

If the answer is yes, then the learning experience is appropriate for all learners; it does not need to be differentiated for gifted learners. (Passow, p.12)



Center Offers Differentiation Workshop



SAM O'LENNBURG

More than 50 educators joined Julia Roberts and Tracy Inman October 26 to explore differentiation with a focus on advanced learners. Based on their best-selling, award-winning book *Strategies for Differentiating Instruction: Best Practices for the Classroom (3rd ed.)*, they presented practical strategies that allowed all students to learn at appropriately challenging levels and make continuous progress by focusing on students' various levels of knowledge and readiness to learn.

Fayette County Schools sent 20 educators to the workshop. Elementary principal and instructional leader Grant Davis attended with hopes of learning how to help teachers incorporate differentiation strategies and techniques in their classrooms to advance student achievement, particularly for higher level learners. He didn't leave disappointed. In fact, within just a few months, many of the ideas had already been implemented, including the multi-level Venn diagram for tiering assignments which he claimed to be a "huge hit." He said, "I appreciated getting to meet other teachers and administrators to gather ideas. I took pictures of the posters created and used these for professional learning during our 'Tune Up Tuesday PDs' and in my weekly newsletter to staff."

An integral part of The Center's mission is to address the needs of educators who work with gifted and talented students. Offering workshops such as this one on differentiation is one way to address those needs.

should be essays. Professionals create products of all kinds from the architect drawing a blueprint to the sales rep pitching an idea through a Presi to a curator designing a museum exhibit. Student products must be held to high standards so that they understand the expectations of professionals creating those products. Of course, they will need guidance on criteria – as many teachers will. Products should be authentic and real world.

ASSESSMENT: How does the educator assess what has been learned?

Perhaps the hardest dimension to differentiate, assessment can be modified to match learner need. It's interesting how educators don't think twice about modifying assessment for learners who need more time and less complexity but feel differentiating assessment for gifted learners is unfair. They need to realize that learners with gifts and talents are also exceptional learners – they learn very differently from the norm. In order for students to have growth, they must be assessed at a level that allows students to show that growth.

Next Steps

Without intentional planning to differentiate, learning experiences may not be appropriate to the learner. The next critical step, then, is determining what the learner already knows, understands, and is able to do – the second question for effective differentiation. This pre-assessment question deserves a separate article – to be included in another issue of *The Challenge*.

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WKU OFFERS SPECIALIST DEGREE IN GIFTED EDUCATION AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT

The Specialist Degree in Gifted Education and Talent Development (Ed.S.) was approved this spring. The Ed.S. is the degree for individuals who have completed a master's degree and are interested in specializing in gifted education. It is a 30-hour degree program which includes 21 hours of coursework in gifted education plus a specialist project (six hours) that also focuses on gifted education and talent development. For educators in Kentucky, the Ed.S. is a pathway for a Rank I, offering the advantage of earning an advanced degree program while meeting the 30-hour requirement for a Rank I.

Currently, Dr. Janet Tassel, Dr. Antonia Szymanski, and Dr. Julia Roberts are the faculty teaching the courses that lead to the Endorsement in Gifted Education, the MAE in Gifted Education and Talent Development, and now the Ed.S. in Gifted Education and Talent Development. WKU is the only institution in Kentucky offering the MAE and the Ed.S. in Gifted Education and Talent Development.

Graduate programming is important for building the expertise to lead in a school or school district as well as to implement instruction and programming in ways that are defensible and that provide appropriate challenge and allow for gifted students to make continuous progress.

HISTORY WKU has offered the 12-graduate-hour program Kentucky requires for the Endorsement in Gifted Education since 1984 when the Gifted Endorsement was first approved in Kentucky. In 2015, the Master of Arts in Education (MAE) was approved.

"Working in gifted education is my passion. I knew I wanted to be involved as soon as the new specialty degree track was announced. I love being able to work closely with experts in the field such as Dr. Roberts, Dr. Tassel, and Dr. Szymanski; all have helped me develop professionally as both an educator and a researcher. I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to earn an Ed.S. in Gifted Education and Talent Development at WKU!"

– JENNIFER SHEFFIELD, STEAM and Gifted and Talented Consultant, Green River Regional Education Consortium



“When we focus on a student’s strengths rather than his weaknesses, students are able to be more successful and well-adjusted.”

– NANCY SKIPWORTH,
Russellville Independent Schools

Many people mistakenly believe that gifted students will be fine on their own. Since these students tend to be high achieving, it is easy to think they do not require additional attention. This could not be further from the truth. Not only do gifted students have unique learning needs, they also have unique social and emotional needs. The Berta Seminar, hosted annually by The Center for Gifted Studies, provides an important opportunity to educate parents, counselors, teachers, and others about this need.

Parents and educators traveled more than 100 miles to attend the seminar in October. Dr. Steven Pfeiffer, professor of psychology at the Florida State University, led the discussions. He focused on head and heart strengths. Head strengths are what might be traditionally thought of when discussing gifted children – problem-solving ability, rational thought, and other cognitive skills.

Heart strengths, on the other hand, relate to the emotional dimension of gifted children. Heart strengths include emotional intelligence (the ability to understand your emotions, the emotions of others, and how to react to them), social skills, and character strengths. Steven noted seven signature character strengths for predicting success in later life for gifted children: humility, persistence/self-discipline, empathy, kindness/compassion, gratitude, enthusiasm, and team work.

Balancing Head & Heart Strengths: A Necessity for Success

A balance between head and heart strengths is necessary for success. Steven emphasized the importance of balance, noting that 15%–20% of gifted children are unbalanced. He encouraged parents to reflect on how head and heart strengths interact, specifically in their children. To maintain balance, he provided three key ideas: resist the temptation to focus on your child's gifts at the expense of his/her other developmental experiences, normalize your child's experience, and set and enforce limits.

The Center for Gifted Studies will continue to host The Berta Seminar each Fall at no charge to participants. For more information and to subscribe to information updates, visit www.wku.edu/gifted/educators/bertha.

REFERENCE

Pfeiffer, S. I. (2013). Lessons learned from working with high-ability students. *Gifted Education International*, 29 (1), 86 – 97.

HISTORY It is thanks to the generosity of Vince and Kathleen Berta that this event is free and open to the public. In 2001, the Bowling Green residents made a generous donation to The Center for Gifted Studies to establish The Berta Fund for Excellence. The Bertas realized that gifted children had needs that came from their strengths and meeting those needs required both parents and teachers. The Berta Fund for Excellence brings in experts in the field of education to conduct seminars and presentations designed specifically for the parents of gifted children. And because educating gifted students requires teachers as well as parents, The Berta Fund for Excellence also sponsors a professional development seminar for educators to learn how to better meet the needs of gifted young people in the classroom.

Private gifts, like that of the Berta Family, are critical to the growth and outreach of The Center for Gifted Studies. This endowed seminar will continue in perpetuity, leaving a lasting legacy and positively impacting educators and families of gifted young people for generations.

– AMANDA LICH, WKU Senior Director of Principle Gifts

Rico Tyler Honored as The Center's Volunteer of the Year



Rico Tyler was recognized as the 2016 volunteer of the year for The Center for Gifted Studies during the university-wide Summit Awards ceremony held during homecoming week in October.

Rico has been involved with The Center in various ways for most of his professional career. He is currently a master teacher in the SkyTeach program at WKU, which prepares students to become math and science teachers, but his involvement with The Center began when he took courses in gifted education taught by Julia Roberts as part of his master's degree.

More recently, Rico has been a part of Super Saturdays and the National Stem Cell Foundation (NSCF) Scholars program. His desire to stay involved with The Center

stems from his passion for teaching, he explained. "I tend to do things I enjoy doing, and I like teaching, and that includes helping other people teach," he said.

Throughout Super Saturdays, Rico works with his SkyTeach students who teach courses themselves during Super Saturdays. He assists in lesson planning throughout the week and helps execute their lessons on Saturdays, but, ultimately, he takes pride in seeing them begin to lead classes of their own. "When it comes to Super Saturdays, what I really enjoy is watching my own students become professionals," he said. "Because I'm teaching in a university setting, I actually get to see my students move from being student to colleague."

Rico finds a similar enjoyment through his involvement with the NSCF Scholars. Now entering its second summer, that program brings together ten middle school sci-

ence teachers from throughout the United States for a week of learning and sharing at WKU with additional follow-up throughout the year.

"It's an interesting dynamic for teachers to just watch them do what they do with each other," he said. "Most of them are pretty familiar with their colleagues in their state, but here you have people from Alaska sharing ideas with people from Alabama. You have teachers from New York who are seeking the help of teachers from Washington."

Throughout all of his involvement with The Center, Rico has found it to be a fulfilling organization for which to volunteer. "Over the years I've done, off and on, different things that involve The Center, and I've just developed a real appreciation for the staff," he said. "They work really hard, they get things done, and that makes the work a lot more enjoyable."

“Everything I know I learned by working with a child or working with a team in a school.” With that statement, Daphne Pereles began the Twice-Exceptional Seminar on November 11 at the WKU Augenstein Alumni Center in Bowling Green. The importance of the team approach for addressing the needs of twice-exceptional (2e) students was an important theme of the day.

The room full of general education teachers, gifted/talented teachers, special education teachers, counselors, administrators, and parents became members of a team and spent the day learning about three students: Lance, a primary student with autism spectrum disorder who has advanced abilities in science; Hadley, a gifted middle schooler who struggles with reading and writing; and Pedro, a high school student who creates new devices out of old electronics but misses deadlines and is often late for class.

These student case studies demonstrated the frustration and confusion that families and schools face when trying to understand why children who appear to be so intelligent and capable struggle in the classroom. Students who demonstrate gifts and talents but also have a disability are known as twice exceptional. These gifted students can have a learning disability, a behavior or emotional disability, a sensory or physical disability, an attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or an autism spectrum disorder.

Daphne introduced the definition of twice exceptionality that was created by the National Twice-Exceptional Community of Practice in 2014. (See sidebar.)

She emphasized the importance of bringing all the people who work with the child together as a problem-solving team in the school. This team includes general education teachers, special educators, gifted/talented teachers, guidance counselors, special area teachers, administrators, and parents. She modeled what should



SAM OLDENBURG

It Takes a Team

happen with a school team by guiding the teams of workshop participants to first focus on the child’s strengths and talents while supporting and addressing his/her disability. Identifying the child’s learning strengths and interests guides the team’s development of a comprehensive plan for the child. The next important consideration is to address the child’s learning needs to determine what accommodations and modifications need to be made with instructional approaches and learning materials in the plan. The third critical area is the child’s social and emotional needs. Twice-exceptional students may experience anxiety and low self-concepts due to their learning issues. The resulting plan must be individualized and flexible while addressing the needs of the whole child.

Recognizing the value of the team approach, Casey County Schools brought a collaborative team of both gifted and talented and special educators to the seminar. Toyah Robey, Casey County Director of Special Education, stated, “Daphne Pereles provided the information and tools we need to develop a more systematic approach, moving away from a segregated philosophy to one that views 2e students as individuals as opposed to gifted or special ed. As a result, we are more encouraged and motivated to keep excellence moving as we work together to build our district’s capacity among all stakeholders, because it is the right thing to do for all students.” Aubrey Davis, special education teacher at Liberty Elementary School in Casey County added, “The

seminar allowed me to hear personal stories and educated views from not just teachers, but directors and parents. The seminar also helped me as a teacher to realize that outside views are of a great value and having a team with the same motive to meet the student's needs makes a world of difference." Crystal Thompson, G/T Resource Teacher from Hart County echoed the value of the team approach when she said, "The structure of the training allowed for collaboration among a variety of stakeholders. I enjoyed working through the scenarios and learning from the diverse perspectives at our table. I believe I am better equipped to identify and work with others to meet the needs of these learners."

Parents of twice-exceptional children are key members of the problem-solving team. They face many dilemmas, and one of the most important ones is advocating for their child's gifted needs while obtaining required interventions for a diagnosed disability. To become effective advocates, parents must increase their knowledge of twice-exceptionalities. Brent Collins, a parent from Bloomington, IL, said, "I traveled seven hours to attend the

HISTORY This was the fifth year The Center for Gifted Studies has offered the Twice-Exceptional Seminar. Originally funded through a gift from Bowling Green attorney Flora Templeton Stuart and her Arts Education Task Force – Twice Exceptional Foundation, the seminar is now funded through private donations to The Center. Previous speakers have included Dr. Mary Ruth Coleman, Dr. Susan Baum, Dr. Beverly Trail, Dr. Elizabeth Nielson, and Dr. Dennis Higgins.

It is critical that educators receive training to recognize the instructional needs of twice-exceptional students. Too often these children are misunderstood and undereducated. Their gifts are ignored while their learning challenges are amplified. Without teacher training, twice-exceptional children are not likely to reach their full potential as learners and as independent adults.

– VICKI WRITSEL, Bowling Green Independent Schools



SAM OLDENBURG



National Twice-Exceptional Community of Practice Definition

Twice-exceptional individuals evidence exceptional ability and disability, which results in a unique set of circumstances. Their exceptional ability may dominate, hiding their disability; their disability may dominate, hiding their exceptional ability; each may mask the other so that neither is recognized or addressed.

2e students, who may perform below, at, or above grade level, require the following:

- Specialized methods of identification that consider the possible interaction of the exceptionalities,
- Enriched/advanced educational opportunities that develop the child's

interests, gifts, and talents while also meeting the child's learning needs,

- Simultaneous supports that ensure the child's academic success and social-emotional well-being, such as accommodations, therapeutic interventions, and specialized instruction.

Working successfully with this unique population requires specialized academic training and ongoing professional development.

REFERENCE

Baldwin, L., Baum, S., Pereles, D., & Hughes, C. (2015). Twice-exceptional learners: The journey toward a shared vision. *Gifted Child Today*, 38 (4), pp. 206-214.

twice-exceptional workshop with no hesitation. It was even more rewarding than I anticipated. It was an eye-opening experience into my son's mind and the world he tries desperately to fit within every day. Being at the table with educators gave me powerful insight into my child's academic world, hearing challenges and creative solutions to helping 2e students survive and thrive in the classroom. The WKU staff pointed me to resources I needed to begin my 2e parenting journey, to which I am truly grateful. I look forward to attending future events!"

Teaching and parenting children who are twice exceptional is very challenging. The characteristics and needs of these children are multi-dimensional and require a variety of services. Educators and parents working together as a team can provide learning opportunities to help these children soar! The next Twice Exceptional Seminar will be held in the Fall of 2017.

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