

Bridging the Gap: Embedding Gifted Education in Teacher Preparation

Join us for this informal lunch session to explore how gifted and advanced learning can be meaningfully embedded into teacher education programs. In light of Kentucky House Bill 190 and the growing call for more equitable and differentiated instruction, this session aims to foster collaboration among teacher preparation programs to better equip future and current educators to recognize and respond to advanced learner needs. Share current practices, actionable strategies, challenges and solutions.

Born to Lead - Helping Gifted Learners Develop Leader Identity Purposefully

Gifted and advanced learners often show early signs of leadership potential—curiosity, problem-solving, initiative, and a drive to make an impact. Yet without intentional support, these traits may go unrecognized, underdeveloped, or misunderstood by both students and educators. This session invites educators, counselors, and curriculum designers to explore how the concept of leader identity can be used as a powerful lens for understanding and supporting gifted learners across settings. Leader identity refers to how individuals see themselves as leaders and the confidence they have in their ability to influence others. For gifted and advanced learners, especially those from underrepresented populations, building a strong leader identity can help them navigate challenges related to perfectionism, imposter syndrome, and social belonging. Grounded in research from educational psychology and gifted education, this interactive session explores how we can create spaces that foster authentic, inclusive, and strengths-based leadership development. Participants will engage in discussion, analyze scenarios, and leave with concrete strategies for integrating leader identity into curriculum, talent development models, and counseling supports. Special attention will be given to responsive practices that broaden the definition of leadership and ensure that every gifted student—regardless of background—sees leadership as a possibility for themselves. Whether you're a teacher, coordinator, or advocate, this session will help you unlock the leadership potential already within your students—and equip them to lead with clarity, courage, and purpose.

Beyond the Page: Our GT Reading Adventure

During the 24-25 school year, Bardstown Middle School piloted a GT Reading course designed to support GT-identified ELA students. This class was multi-grade and had students from 6-8 grades. Participants in this session will learn about some instructional strategies to support acceleration for all students in the ELA classroom. The session will

include information on how this course originated, as well as ideas for creating and designing a similar course in your school. Strategies for “digging deeper” into texts that were used with students will be provided, and you will walk away with lesson ideas. Activities and strategies can also be adapted for younger students. This course was piloted during the 2024-25 school year and was more successful than we even anticipated. I will share my first-hand account and ideas that I used during my year teaching this course.

Grouping, Looping, and Student Choice: Impacts on Rural Gifted Education

In a changing world, true K-12 gifted education can be hard to come by within the rural public school system. In a rural county in western Kentucky, Union County Public Schools are doing just that. We have developed programming focused not only on student area(s) of identification but also on student interest and self advocacy. This program contains a student driven engaging curriculum along with teacher looping. Union County’s ultimate goal through this program is to teach students to harness their abilities to succeed in and contribute to our ever changing world. Our program in a rural farming and mining community in western Kentucky. Over half of our student population comes from families that are hovering near the US federal poverty line. Our district, while supportive of our endeavors, does not have endless abundant resources for students. In addition to being highly effective for our students, the cost of the program we have created is minimal. Looping, grouping, and student choice have no cost. This program is duplicable on a large scale or small scale.

Teaching Leadership Across the Grade Levels

Come join the fun and participate in critical and creative thinking activities that foster leadership skills. From elementary, to middle, to high school, leadership skills can be easily embedded into current curriculum. Learn to recognize opportunities to incorporate leadership skills in various settings and content. Active listening, effective communication and collaboration, taking initiative, and sound decision making are all components of effective leaders. This session will take high-level curriculum and differentiate down through the grade levels. Leadership activities also provide opportunities for productive struggle and learning from failures which are lessons that some of our gifted students do not get to experience. Providing opportunities to grow leadership skills will help recognize students with potential for leadership and identify gifted leaders. Use our leadership activities with your students or use them as a starting point for your own ideas!

Interactive Resource - Responding to the Arts

This session is intended to walk educators through each section and component of an interactive resource as they prepare to guide students through an arts learning experience.

Dynamic Duos: Elevating Literacy Through Paired Text

Making connections aids retention, helps strengthen contextual understanding, and makes learning more real for students. This session will focus on resources to up your game in Paired Text for yourself and for the teachers you work with.

Kentucky Green Schools: Student-Led Investigations that Inspire Deeper Learning

In 2023, the Kentucky Association for Environmental Education (KAEE) and the Kentucky Environmental Education Council (KEEC) launched a joint Kentucky Green Schools program, building on years of collaboration. Today, more than 150 schools across the Commonwealth participate. The Kentucky Green Schools program empowers students to apply STE(A)M, investigative, and leadership skills to real-world challenges while fostering environmentally responsible behavior. Through five thematic investigations—energy, waste & recycling, water, school site, and school environment (air quality)—students gather and analyze data, identify challenges, and design action projects that reduce their school’s environmental footprint. In doing so, they not only create healthier, more sustainable learning environments but also practice the critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills that gifted learners crave. This session will “dive deeper” into how gifted students thrive in Green Teams: leading peers, conducting inquiry-based research, designing innovative solutions, strengthening community, and measuring real impacts. Participants will explore case studies of Kentucky schools where gifted students’ investigations sparked meaningful change—saving schools money, improving health, and building student agency. Attendees will leave with strategies and resources for integrating Kentucky Green Schools into gifted education programming to deepen engagement and real-world learning opportunities.

Future-Ready Thinkers: Engaging Gifted Learners with AI

Artificial Intelligence is transforming learning, and for gifted students it opens new doors for creativity, problem-solving, and inquiry. In this session, participants will explore free and practical AI tools that challenge learners to think critically, design original projects, and

extend their learning in meaningful ways. We'll highlight strategies for integrating AI into gifted classrooms to support differentiation, innovation, and student choice, while also addressing responsible use and digital citizenship. Whether you're new to AI or already experimenting, you'll leave with ready-to-use ideas and inspiration to spark curiosity and empower gifted learners with the tools of the future.

Ensuring All Students Grow As Readers

What helps all students grow as readers, including gifted students - and especially those who may be under-identified, such as 2+E or multilingual students? Identify characteristics of these advanced learners and discover what research says supports their growth. Explore evidence-based literacy practices that engage, challenge, and develop all readers; see why depth, complexity and differentiation are especially crucial for gifted / advanced learners.

Impact of Authentic Educational Engagement on Student Outcomes

BAMS is a data driven program that utilizes traditional teaching methods, hybrid educational programs, and authentic learning experiences to provide students with a well rounded education that prepares them for college and career. Students take nine classes per year, engage with professional mentors in the fields of engineering, environmental sciences, and social sciences to complete long term projects. During this session, a brief overview of the program will be presented but the bulk of the session will be students discussing how these authentic learning experiences have given students opportunities to grow both academically and personally in ways that would not have been possible otherwise.

Supporting GT Families: Sharing Practical Tools for Nurturing Life Skills

Parents/caregivers may understand that gifted students need academic challenge, but they may not know how they can support their child's intellectual development at home. This presentation is designed for any educator or coordinator who interacts with parents and caregivers. We will discuss practical, accessible ways to communicate with parents from different backgrounds about common challenges faced by gifted students. We'll also discuss how adults can nurture five essential life skills through their everyday interactions with children. These skills are detailed further in *STEM SMART Parenting: A Practical Guide for Nurturing Innovative Thinkers* (Bloomsbury, 2023). The people most invested in

children's success—parents, caregivers, and educators—are often the people with the least time to read educational research. To improve access, my research partners and I sought to unpack a particular area of research into a reader-friendly, practical format. We focused on STEM learning because it is a current high-interest topic that can be intimidating and often misunderstood by parents. We will focus this presentation on gifted students. The acronym "SMART" describes five life skills essential for success in STEM fields. Each letter corresponds to a simple, memorable phrase: S Struggle can be productive. M Mistakes are learning opportunities. A All topics and all people are connected to STEM. R Risk taking should be rewarded. T Think critically. For each topic in the acronym, we provide practical and easy-to-implement parenting strategies for high ability children at a variety of ages. The book addresses how parents can help their children, from toddlers to teenagers, cultivate critical thinking skills and become intellectual risk takers, prepared for a world where STEM proficiency is essential. This presentation will focus on key strategies from the book that gifted educators can share with parents from a variety of backgrounds using simple, jargon-free phrases and no-cost activities.

How one question can inspire students: Future City Competition

This dynamic session will help teachers and administrators explore how the Future City competition can inspire students to become innovative world changers. In this exciting STEAM initiative, students envision and design a city set at least 100 years in the future, with a focus on sustainability goals. Annually, over 70,000 students worldwide participate, showcasing their creativity and problem-solving skills. Educators will gain practical tools to implement the Future City program in their schools, promoting essential 21st-century skills like critical thinking and collaboration. Join us to inspire the leaders of tomorrow!

Beyond Identification: A Framework for Supporting ALL Advanced Learners

Current gifted identification captures only a fraction of students with advanced potential. Cultural, linguistic, and economic barriers limit identification, and twice-exceptional learners often go unrecognized, while "almost gifted" students receive no specialized support. The SEAD Framework addresses this equity gap and the need for talent development by providing systematic support that utilizes district-adopted curricula and other programming for ALL advanced learners, regardless of formal identification status. The SEAD Framework recognizes that advanced learners have "jagged profiles", unique combinations of strengths and growth areas across four interconnected domains. Innovative Impact: Paradigm Shift: Moves from binary identification ("gifted" vs. "not

gifted") to comprehensive profiling of advanced learning needs Equity-Centered: Systematically addresses cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic barriers in gifted education Whole-Child Approach: Recognizes that advanced learners need support across social-emotional, executive function, and academic domains Inclusive Framework: Supports identified gifted students while capturing the "almost gifted" and under-identified populations

Using Local Norms to Identify YOUR Students

Much of the data we use for identifying students for gifted services are based on state or national norms. Our students needing gifted services are in specific schools in different schools and may or may not look like these larger normed groups. Kentucky's gifted regulation (704 KAR 3:285) explicitly mentions the use of local norms in Section 4(1)(b). This session will discuss what local norms are and how they can be helpful. A focus will be on how to actually calculate and interpret these local norms. We will explore an online tool that you can use to quickly and easily generate the local norms with data from your district.

From Law to Lessons: Gifted Education in Action

This session is great for teachers new to gifted education or for those wanting to add to their gifted toolkits! With demands in today's classrooms, creating meaningful learning opportunities for students can be an overwhelming thought. Participants in this interactive workshop will explore service options for gifted students and how current classroom practices can be adapted to meet student needs. In addition, we will explore House Bill 190 (An Act Relating to Advanced Educational Opportunities) and National Association for Gifted Children resources that can support the planning and development of high quality instructional opportunities for learners at all levels. Incorporating participant experiences and resources, groups will take part in dialogue and planning to develop activities that engage students in a meaningful way that can be immediately implemented upon return to their campuses. Participants are asked to bring a copy of a unit or lesson plan to be used in the future.

The Importance of Advanced Coursework

This session will describe national and state initiatives related to advanced coursework. The tenets of advanced coursework will be highlighted, including recommendations of the National Trust. Legislation has been passed by seven states that require "opting out" rather

than "opting in" for advanced classes, usually beginning with mathematics classes. Overall, the session will focus on the importance of advanced coursework, including current examples and results.

STEM-based GT Activities for Young Ecologists

Gifted children are curious about the world around them and thrive in a creative classroom environment where problem-solving and critical thinking are encouraged. Harnessing these students' innate curiosity about the natural world and desire to protect it can be done with hands-on classroom activities that build STEM and inquiry skills, increase environmental literacy and facilitate discussion and learning projects on sustainable problem solving. At the same time, these activities can cultivate students' skills in research, writing, and communication. In this session, the presenter will facilitate a series of interdisciplinary lessons that involve collecting and analyzing data, creating 3D models, collaborative brainstorming, and working to solve authentic problems related to human-environmental interactions. All the presented activities are interdisciplinary, aligning with Kentucky Academic Standards for elementary mathematics and science. Standards topics include Ecosystems, Earth and Human Activities, Mathematical Practice (modeling, abstract and quantitative reasoning, problem solving), Communication and Collaboration. The presented activities are designed to empower high achieving students to explore timely topics while employing critical thinking skills and problem-solving strategies. The presenter will include time for group discussion with an emphasis on how the presented activities can be incorporated into lesson planning with differentiation for an inclusive classroom. Receive lesson plans with ideas for differentiation, all linked to state standards.

STEAM in GT and PTP Pull out Classes

STEAM education is vital for gifted students. It fosters their advanced critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity in a hands-on, interdisciplinary environment. This approach allows them to explore complex, real-world issues, collaborate with peers, and apply their knowledge to create innovative solutions, thereby nurturing their potential for leadership, academic success, and future careers in a rapidly evolving, technology-driven world. This session will share STEAM ideas that have been used in GT and PTP Pull out Classes and will demonstrate for teachers how to incorporate them into their classes. The focus of this session will be giving teachers something concrete that they can take back and immediately use in their classes. The plan is to discuss how important STEAM is for Gifted students and then provide resources for grades 4-6 classes and also for grades K-3 classes.

There will also be a separate part of the presentation to talk about technology specific resources as well.

Year-Round Innovation: Seasonal Engineering Design Challenges in the Classroom

The Year-Round Innovation Design Project engages middle school students in a creative, hands-on exploration of engineering and hands-on learning. The seasonal project I will focus on is our Haunted Mansion project where students design and construct their own haunted mansions, applying the Engineering Design Process (EDP) to guide their work. From brainstorming spooky blueprints to testing electrical circuits, students cycle through planning, building, testing, and refining their designs. A central focus of the project is the integration of simple electrical circuits to bring the mansions to life. Students experiment with LEDs, switches, and small motors to create eerie special effects such as flickering candlelight, hidden buzzers, or spinning ghosts. Gifted and advanced learners are encouraged to extend their designs by building parallel circuits, coding LED patterns, or incorporating interactive features controlled by switches and sensors. Beyond technical skills, the project emphasizes creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving. Students work in teams to develop a haunted house theme and storyline, blending science, technology, engineering, art, and storytelling into a cohesive design. They are encouraged to research real-world examples, such as Disney's Haunted Mansion, to inspire architectural features, lighting strategies, and guest experiences. As an extension activity, students create promotional flyers using Canva or Google tools to market their haunted mansion, highlighting both its storyline and special effects. This not only develops digital literacy but also allows students to present their work to a broader audience. The Haunted Mansion Design Project provides a rich, interdisciplinary learning experience that motivates students through the excitement of seasonal themes while reinforcing key STEM concepts. By combining engineering design, circuitry, and creativity, students gain both practical skills and confidence as innovative problem-solvers. I will include additional seasonal engineering design challenge ideas for every season.

Take a Deep Breath and Teach

Calm the brain, move the body, and extend your thinking as you explore the journey of adults and their professional learning through action research. Consider how this experience might apply to your setting and your students as you answer these questions: Why do we, as teachers, need to consider our own self-care to be the best we can be for our students? How is your mood impacting your mindset? How might this also be true for

your students? What might you do to help? Are there elements of action research that may be applicable to your learners? Topics: flexible thinking, mindfulness, movement, pretesting

Talent Search 101: Why should students participate?

Do you have students who are consistently scoring above the 90th percentile on grade-level tests? Do you wonder what level would challenge them on specific subjects such as math, science, or reading? Do you wonder why a student would take a test that is designed for older students? If so, this session is for you! We will tell you about The Talent Identification Program of Kentucky, the types of above-level assessments offered, and why students in grades 4-8 may want to participate.

Game On! A Playbook for Championing Gifted Education

Communities rally for sports with pride and passion, and it's time we brought that same commitment to gifted education. Designed for educators who are new to gifted education or coordinators who support those just starting out, this interactive session uses the familiar language of athletics to reframe conversations about gifted learners with parents, administrators, and policymakers. Together, we'll move through a "game program" filled with stats, highlight reels, and playbook strategies that make advocacy clear, relatable, and impactful. By the final buzzer, participants will leave with practical talking points, a personalized advocacy playbook, and creative recognition ideas to champion gifted students with the same enthusiasm reserved for Friday night lights.

Unlocking Potential through the Arts: Arts-Integration & Gifted Learning

Join our Arts-Integration and Gifted Learning experts for a dynamic conversation on how integrating the arts into gifted instruction can provide access, challenge, and joy for both students and educators. Key Highlights Insights from Dr. Ashley Perkins: With years of experience in art-integrated learning, Dr. Perkins will share her expertise in designing learning opportunities that are "...observed as a joyful experience as instruction is designed to align with children's natural curiosities by providing them with context, autonomy through choices, guided explorations and multiple forms of expression through the arts" (Haslip & Gullo, 2017). Implementation Strategy with Jessie Thompson Learn from Jessie Thompson, Supervisor for Gifted & Talented and Advanced Program (Jefferson County

Public School), as she shares how her team transformed an arts-integrated approach from concept to reality in one of the nation's largest school districts.

Inclusive Pathways: Equitable Identification and Cluster Grouping in Gifted Education

Cluster grouping has become the de facto method for serving gifted learners worldwide. When schools administer universal testing and apply building norms, cluster grouping broadens access and increases inclusion in gifted services. Effective gifted cluster models grow out of the school's own student population and begin with an identification process that reduces subjectivity and minimizes potential bias. Once identification is complete, administrators review the ability and achievement levels of all students in the grade level, compose cluster groups, and determine appropriate classroom placements. School leaders then develop a plan to train and support teachers of gifted cluster groups, with an emphasis on culturally responsive practices that ensure equitable opportunities for all learners. Cluster grouping can be considered structured autonomy. While the structure is intentional and consistent, schools retain the flexibility to compose classrooms based on students who will benefit from advanced learning opportunities, balancing achievement and ability across the grade level. This session provides practical guidance to help educators design, implement, and sustain an inclusive cluster-grouping model in any school setting.

Identifying and Serving Diverse Gifted Learners: Taking an Inclusive Approach

Racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic inequality in gifted education remains a widespread and persistent concern. While most educators acknowledge the inequities that exist in identifying gifted learners from diverse backgrounds and those living in poverty, relatively few have implemented meaningful solutions. Traditional identification practices often rely too heavily on dominant-language proficiency and standardized measures of academic achievement. As a result, schools frequently overlook students who demonstrate high potential but have not yet reached achievement levels aligned with their abilities. Despite continued attention from leading experts, these disparities continue to plague the field, limiting opportunities for many capable learners. Helping schools identify gifted students more equitably is critical to improving outcomes for all students, as well as enriching school communities with the talents of a broader, more diverse population. This session will expand participants' understanding of equitable identification processes, highlight the importance of culturally fair and non-biased assessments, and provide practical strategies that schools can implement to recognize gifted potential across student groups.

Presenters will also share effective classroom practices and programmatic approaches for nurturing high-potential learners once identified.

Local Accountability in the Bluegrass State

In this interactive session, participants will explore how to shift from compliance-driven accountability toward locally rooted systems of meaning and agency. Drawing on the Kentucky Local Accountability Design Guide & Toolkit, we'll unpack actionable steps for co-designing accountability systems anchored in shared definitions of student success, vibrant learning experiences, and performance assessment strategies. Attendees will leave with concrete ideas for engaging stakeholders, developing a Portrait of a Learner, designing student-driven exhibitions of learning, and building transparent dashboards that balance quantitative and qualitative data. Whether you're in early planning or refining your system, this session offers both inspiration and tools to deepen trust, equity, and relevance in your accountability efforts.

Super Enrichment, Super Acceleration: Integrated STEM learning in the classroom

Fully engage your gifted students as they delve into interacting with the world around them. As you look for ways to accelerate and differentiate learning in your classroom, use these integrated ideas to spark learning and creativity at an enriched level. Explore a deserted island, peer into a miniature world, and envision an innovative future with structural engineering changes. Participants will receive resource links and handouts at the end of this interactive session.

Math Minds in Motion

This session will examine research-based strategies for effectively engaging gifted and talented students in the mathematics classroom. Participants will explore methods that promote advanced problem-solving, foster creative and critical thinking, and encourage meaningful collaboration among high-ability learners. Emphasis will be placed on sharing tasks that provide appropriate challenge, support productive struggle, and extend students' mathematical reasoning beyond grade-level expectations. Attendees will leave with a collection of evidence-based strategies and adaptable resources to cultivate a rigorous and supportive learning environment that meets the unique needs of gifted and talented students.

Think Fast! Using Brain Jumpstarts to Boost Critical & Creative Thinking

FREE BOOKS! Attendees will be introduced to “Brain Jumpstart” exercises (quick teasers like Rebus Puzzles, Spot the Fake, Connections, etc.) that promote critical and creative thinking. We will review cognitive benefits of these strategies, and provide tips for classroom implementation. Books will be provided with ready-to-use “Brain Jumpstart” exercises.

Transforming Learning for Gifted Students

Do you find it challenging to connect classroom instruction with the needs of gifted students? This impactful session shares practical strategies to challenge advanced learners, keep them engaged and make instruction both manageable and exciting for every classroom. Participants will explore effective instructional principles for gifted and talented learners to support the professional growth and training needs of educators.