

## Meeting the Needs of All Students is 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning

Our creativity as a nation, our problem solving skills, our survival, depends on highly educated people. All students deserve the right to learn new material at an appropriately challenging level every day. For some students, who might be called highly able, accelerated learners, high achieving students or simply gifted, this is sometimes difficult to achieve.

Greater Dane County Talented and Gifted Network (GDCTGN) is comprised of 35 school districts in the greater Dane County region. We believe, and research supports, that gifted students, like the average or struggling students, need to encounter appropriately challenging coursework at their instructional level to develop their academic skills. For some gifted students, challenge can be found in a regular classroom. For others, taking highly selective courses such as honors or advanced placement courses may be the best chance for achieving that goal. Some may benefit from cluster grouping or accelerated placements. As a network, we collaborate to offer professional development for staff, competitive and informative opportunities for our students, and parent events in order to support a better understanding of the unique needs of gifted learners.

Gifted students can be found in all school districts, all socio-economic levels and in all ethnic groups. Gifted programming is not a one-size-fits-all model. Each student's unique learning needs and social and emotional issues must be taken into consideration when an individualized learning plan is developed. School districts support gifted and talented student learning needs in different ways. The key is that districts have staff who understand the needs of gifted and talented students and develop strategies and supports from Kindergarten through graduation to meet the variety of needs.

These efforts must include support for rigorous learning pathways for gifted students from ethnically, linguistically and economically diverse populations. And while we must support improved achievement of all students, we cannot close the achievement gap by holding back the achievement of some students in these diverse groups.

If students are fully engaged in their own learning and appropriately challenged, then we are truly preparing students for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. When schools focus on meeting the learning needs of each student, we are supporting the development of confidence, resiliency and problem solving skills that students will need for their future. All students deserve and need to learn every day.

For more information regarding the unique needs of the gifted population, visit the following websites: The Wisconsin Association for Talented and Gifted at [www.watg.org](http://www.watg.org), the National Association for Gifted Children at [www.nagc.org](http://www.nagc.org) or the Wisconsin Department of Instruction Gifted Web site at [www.dpi.wi.gov/cal/gifted.html](http://www.dpi.wi.gov/cal/gifted.html). The Wisconsin Center for Academically Talented Youth at [www.wcaty.org](http://www.wcaty.org) and the Greater Dane County TAG Network at [www.greaterdanetag.org](http://www.greaterdanetag.org) list local programming opportunities.

Sincerely,

### Greater Dane County Talented and Gifted Network

Jodi Fanning	President	(Milton School District)
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