

Meeting the Needs of All Students is 21st Century Learning

Our ability to progress as a nation depends on highly able people who have the capacity for creative problem solving. Our education system needs to prepare our young people for the challenges that the future holds. To that end, we need to provide learning material at an appropriately challenging level so that they are able to access information and apply it to new situations. We can not allow our gifted students to bide their time while waiting for others. We need to give them what they need so they too can progress and learn something new every day.



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 needs must be taken into consideration when an individualized learning plan is developed. School districts support the learning needs of gifted and talented students in different ways. The key is that districts have staff who understand the unique needs of gifted and talented students and that strategies are developed to support the academic, social and emotional needs of those students from Kindergarten through graduation.

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 21st 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, the National Association for Gifted Children at www.nagc.org or the Wisconsin Department of Instruction Gifted Web site at www.dpi.wi.gov/cal/gifted.html. The Wisconsin Center for Academically Talented Youth at www.wcaty.org and the Greater Dane County TAG Network at www.greaterdanetag.org list local programming opportunities.

Sincerely,

On behalf of the Greater Dane County Talented and Gifted Network

Jodi Fanning	President	(Milton School District)
Amy Miller	Vice President	(Oregon School District)
Kitty Ver Kuilen	Secretary	(McFarland and Evansville School Districts)
Kristy Champion	Treasurer	(Beloit School District)
Lori Mueller	Past President	(Marshall School District)
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Sharon Daly	Past President	(Cambridge School District)
Martha Barlow	Past President	(Waunakee School District)
Ruth Robinson	Past President	(Janesville School District)