

+ New Mexico Association for The Gifted

+ We envision a time when all students in New Mexico including gifted students are given an appropriate educational experience that matches their abilities and potentials, where there is ample opportunity for their intellectual challenge and growth, and those who work with them are adequately trained to appreciate, understand, and nurture their unique talents.



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“Up, Up, and Away! Teaching Superheroes to Fly”

12th Annual Fall Institute

October 14 -15, 2016

NMHU Rio Rancho Center

Register thru 9/30/16 \$125 (\$160 for 2);

Register in October \$150 (\$185 for 2)

Register online at nmgifted.org

This conference is faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive, and able to leap tall buildings in a single bound. Activate your powers as a teacher of gifted students!

- NMAG is the only state-wide organization that provides professional development for teachers of the gifted, and at a low cost, with national speakers. It is accessible, friendly, and fun.
- Previous participants say this is the one event each year where they feel connected among gifted education colleagues in New Mexico, an overall “fabulous weekend!”
- This conference provides both the opportunity to network and to have your voice heard about upcoming policy work, shaping the future of gifted education policy in New Mexico.
- Teachers present breakout sessions about what works in their classroom day to day. It’s teachers teaching teachers!
- Each year at the Fall Institute, NMAG presents awards, so come join us and celebrate your colleagues.

Look for full schedule online 9/ 1/2016.



Report: NAGC State Affiliates Conference

By: Christy Jewel-Roth

At the beginning of March this year, Dr. PJ Sedillo (NMAC President-Elect) and I attended the annual [State Affiliates Conference](#) in Washington, DC. Attendees (teachers, administrators and gifted specialists) from across the country met to talk about issues related to children identified as gifted, both in our respective states, as well as nationally. Our report focuses on the new ESSA.

President's Report on the Every Student Succeeds Act

One topic, in particular, was of great interest to those of us in gifted education, that of the [Every Student Succeeds Act](#) (ESSA). In December 2015, President Obama signed this federal legislation into law. As you likely already know, this is the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and will replace No Child Left Behind, beginning in the 2016-17 school year. There are some great provisions in the law that relate to gifted students, which have not been there previously. Here is some of what NAGC's Executive Director had to say about the legislation in a press release:



NAGC Executive Director M. René Islas

"ESEA Reauthorization marks the first time that Congress makes clear that Title I funds may be used to identify and serve gifted students, which will ensure that high-ability students from low-income families and other under-served populations receive the challenging instruction that they require to achieve their potential," NAGC Executive Director [M. René Islas](#) said. "ESEA requires states to say how they will use valuable training dollars to equip teachers in how to identify high-potential learners and to meet the academic needs of such high-performers, and it requires school districts that receive such funds to address the unique needs of gifted students."



On the last day of this conference, we were able to walk Capitol Hill and meet with our New Mexico senators and representatives, or their staff, and personally thank them for supporting ESSA, as all five of them voted yes. Now that the legislation has been signed into law, the hard work of rolling it out in the states, in phases, begins and NMAG hopes to be instrumental in this process. In relation to this, please also read the letter the NMAG board recently sent to our state officials. In addition, the law retains the authorization of the high-impact Jacob Javits Gifted Education Grant program, which has yielded numerous strategies to identify and serve academically talented students, particularly those from communities that have historically been under-represented in such programs,” Islas added



Beyond AI Creativity in School

by Steve Heil

After the initial chest constriction and moment of panic, I started to think rationally about the latest [artificial intelligence \(AI\) news](#): Google engineers made a machine that can compose music. It's the stated goal of Google's [Project Magenta](#) to make "compelling" music and art. The [example](#) I listened to, with variations on a theme of the first notes of "Twinkle Twinkle," sounded like music to me, with simple patterns that drew me in and more complex patterns that held my attention, a nice balance of elaboration and simplicity, every dimension of composition calculated by algorithms. But could it ever generate an inspired performance?

Cognitive Scientist, Margaret Bowden, on [MIT's Technology Review](#), calls this algorithmic art made by AI "combinational creativity," essentially imitation remixed. She points out that AI's processing is "hugely limited by relevance blindness." The processing that leads to contextual relevance will be a monumental leap for AI, and I won't speculate about how soon or how likely it will be that engineers can get machines across such a chasm. Although Project Magenta piques my interest, as a teacher helping to develop students' talents, I have much more optimism about the potential of children and youth to make that same leap from imitation to inspiration.

Programming Student Creativity

Do you teach students to be creative? Wouldn't you be proud if one of your students composed that tune from Project Magenta? It is a significant accomplishment, but it's not enough. Students don't have the same limitation that AI has, so in school let's push past that point. Often in school, when we teach creativity, we stop at the same rough spot that has stymied AI.

Here's news that computer code can generate a basic kind of creative product. But the computer can't yet demonstrate judgement or analysis of its audience or its context in order to make

significant artistic contributions. Often in school, when we teach creativity, we stop at the same rough spot that has stymied AI. In school we often codify the discoveries of eminent creatives, and feed the code to students, who follow the code to imitate and remix.

Many of us design our own curriculum. We geek out about generating the frameworks we use to guide our students' creative work. We recognize patterns in our domain, translate them to custom-coded curriculum, and trumpet the success of these algorithms as evidenced in our students' products: science investigations, compositions, and works of art. These exercises in imitation are part of developing mastery, but why stop there if there are ways to push beyond?

Magenta and many other similar attempts in the last decade show that AI can generate compelling patterns using the tools of creativity, basically [SCAMPER](#)ing its way to original inventions. To achieve the complex creativity we've placed at the top of Bloom's revised taxonomy, which depends on both problem finding and problem solving, we need to teach students a balance of creative and evaluative thinking that leads to relevance, impact, even inspiration.

Toward Relevant Creativity

The Magenta Team recognizes that AI has reached a pause, expecting humans, for now, to take the program to the next level. They are eager to see what artists and musicians will do with AI. At this point, artists are expected to guide the art machine, just as Rembrandt ran his workshop. But there is no reason to stop at the same point with our students. Let's move beyond teaching the tools of creativity and leading students through the discoveries of creative greats. Here are three steps we can take to inspire students to see and solve problems, and to evaluate for themselves when and how well their products make an impact.

Three Steps to Surpass AI Creativity in Your Classroom

1. Make the leap with inquiry-based learning.

Let students practice making the big decisions early, having both voice and choice about creative products. Their self-direction may seem naive, but relevance grows with opportunities to practice evaluative thinking linked to creative production. Buck Institute of Education sets a Gold Standard for Project-based Learning that includes [Student Voice and Choice](#) as an essential element. Edutopia's [inquiry-based learning](#) thread provides some specific examples of the practice. I recommend [My Kids Suck at Inquiry](#) (April

2016) by International PYP teacher Kristen Blum, also reposted on the [Inquire Within](#) blog.

2. Reflect on what worked and what didn't work.

Use reflective discussion and writing to help students develop evaluative thinking skills at various stages in a creative project. The art department faculty at [New Mexico School for the Arts](#) cite critique as their primary tool for helping students grow from imitators to inspired artists. New Mexico's [Destination Imagination](#) Annual Tournament and Road Map curriculum for participating teams makes constant use of team reflection as students select and solve creative problems that span disciplines.

3. Assess for impact, not just originality, craft, or style.

Grant Wiggins, co-author of ASCD's book [Understanding by Design](#), values assessing student learning with criteria for impact. This will develop a sense of relevance that bridges a gap between artificial intelligence and real creative productivity. Awareness of impact, **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**, is "key to student autonomy, reflected in self-assessment and self-adjustment."

Draft Legislation for 2017- by Christy Jewel-Roth

*NM State
Representative
Christine
Trujillo,
District 25*



In late June I met with State Representative, [Christine Trujillo](#), to propose legislation, drafted by NMAG, to benefit the students of New Mexico's public schools.

[Christine Trujillo](#), a retired educator, has represented [District 25](#) in Bernalillo County since 2013. She is currently a member of the House Appropriations & Finance Committee, the House Education Committee, and the Legislative Education Study Committee. In 2015 she sponsored the memorial [HB 5](#) Gifted Day at the legislature. She has agreed to work with our board to put forward ideas for gifted and advanced students in the next legislative 60-day session in January 2017.

A huge thank you to our past president, Geoffrey Moon, for getting the board started on the writing of these legislative ideas!

As you read through the bullet points, please feel to offer additional ideas that we may have forgotten. You can comment below (log in with an existing Google or Facebook account if you wish) or [email us](#) your thoughts and ideas.

Draft Legislation to Uphold the Right to Appropriate Curriculum Placement

Whereas

- Among the most effective and best-researched educational interventions are acceleration options such as early entry to kindergarten, grade skipping, single-subject acceleration, faster-paced courses, dual and concurrent credit courses, early entry to college and credit for demonstrated mastery;
- Acceleration has been shown to have little or no adverse socio-emotional impact on students;
- Grouping similarly able students for acceleration of school curriculum has been shown to have positive social and academic impacts;
- Grouping of gifted students is recognized as the most common Least Restrictive Environment, because it exposes them to appropriately challenging curriculum and provides the opportunity for functional social interactions;
- Gifted students are often separated from their similarly able peers in order to heterogeneously populate general education classrooms;
- Acceleration is under-utilized in New Mexico schools;
- Not all NM districts have acceleration policies;
- Acceleration costs less than many other educational interventions;
- Existing district-level acceleration policies vary widely;
- Dual credit memoranda sometimes prevent students from taking available dual-credit courses;
- Giftedness is a priority in ESSA; and
- According to the National Association for Gifted Children definition, the population of gifted students is far larger than that allowed under the NM exceptionality.

The State Shall

- Allow early entry to Kindergarten;
- Allow credit for demonstrated mastery; and
- Establish needs and research-based interventions for gifted and high-ability learners as a priority for expending ESSA funds.

Schools Shall

- Adopt a policy for academic acceleration that:
 - Specifies a range of available options,
 - Specifies non-discrimination and inclusiveness of all students, including those with disabilities, language differences, and socio-economic disadvantages,
 - Empowers the IEP team (for identified gifted students and those with disabilities), and the SAT team (for all other students) to make acceleration decisions.
- Includes procedures for:
 - Appeal and due process,
 - Safe reversion of placement within a reasonable timeframe, if the acceleration is ineffective,
- Not infringe on the right of a student to accelerate through a dual-credit or concurrent credit course because their home school offers the course that would earn high school credit;
- Group and accelerate gifted and high ability students as appropriate for their individual needs;
- Provide special supports for disadvantaged and disabled students to participate in acceleration; &
- Accept accelerated credit or college credit toward graduation from all accredited schools.

Draft Legislation to Identify Twice-Exceptional Students

Whereas

- Giftedness is recognized as an exceptionality in New Mexico;
- Giftedness can co-exist with learning disabilities;
- Giftedness and learning disabilities often mask the effects of each other, thus suppressing identification of as gifted, disabled, or twice-exceptional;
- PED's TEAM manual prevents identification of learning disabilities in gifted students without significant discrepancy from average grade performance; and
- Twice-exceptional students have need for services that arise both from their giftedness and from their disabilities. Current NM funding rules only allow reporting and caseload designation as either gifted or disabled.

PED shall

- Revise the TEAM manual to support identification based on difference from cognitive level, not grade level and
- Provide protections and services for students who have IDEA and section 504 disabilities through the IEP process.

Draft Legislation to Fully Fund Individual Education for Gifted Students

Whereas

- New Mexico rules require special education, including ancillary services and transportation as necessary to provide FAPE for gifted students;
- The need for social work services, transportation, occupational therapy, and more extensive levels of gifted education services is higher in exceptionally gifted students than in the general student population;
- The PED has refused to reimburse cost of ancillary services such as occupational therapy, social work, and transportation for gifted students who do not have an IDEA disability; and
- Local educational authorities often restrain the level of service provision to the minimal level.

PED Shall

- Fund ancillary services and transportation for gifted students without requiring IDEA disability identification.

Schools shall

- Consider ancillary services and transportation when planning an individual education plan; and
- Consider, and when appropriate, provide a range of services up to and including extensive levels of gifted education.

We've decided to repost this press release from SFPS as a clear articulation of a vision that aligns well with our association's vision for education in New Mexico. This is also a pivotal theme of our October 14 & 15, 2016 [Institute for Gifted Education](#).

Santa Fe Schools Improve Equity in Gifted Education

June 14, 2016, Santa Fe, NM

[Santa Fe Public Schools](#), building on its commitments to diversity and [world-class schools](#), has embarked on a multi-year mission to increase the identification and improve services to gifted students through its new program of Services for Advanced and Gifted Education. By identifying and removing barriers to participation, SFPS SAGE has started on a path to establish strong gifted programs across all schools, including students from every background.

Giftedness, according to the [National Association for Gifted Children](#), is defined as high performance or potential in about the top 10% of a field or domain. The State of New Mexico [provides supplemental funding](#) to support services for a portion of the intellectually gifted, around 3-7% of the total school population. To maintain motivation, growth in skill and knowledge, and interested in school, these students generally require more advanced curriculum than their grade level provides. In addition, some subgroups of gifted students, such as those with extremely high levels of ability, specific learning challenges, or those who will be in their family's first generation to attend college, may need special services to help develop potentials into results.

In past years, gifted students have been found in Santa Fe schools using a series of IQ, achievement, and thinking skill tests that were administered when a parent or teacher felt very strongly that a student may be gifted. While the tests measure a broad range of abilities associated with good educational and life outcomes, and are highly reliable, this system failed to identify many of our gifted students. Why? IQ scores and the likelihood of a student being nominated for testing are both influenced by students' previous opportunities. Students who are culturally different, linguistically diverse, or economically disadvantaged are underrepresented in gifted programs across the United States, since they are less likely to get referred for testing in the first place and, if tested, are on average less prepared to score well on the tests.

To reduce this inequity, Santa Fe School's SAGE program has trained teachers to better recognize characteristics of giftedness, and in addition to teacher and parent nominations, mined achievement test scores to find and automatically refer high-performing students. Improving equity in testing, SAGE is using tests that can be delivered in Spanish as well as English, and compares each student to others with similar previous opportunities. More than 800 students, or about 1/20 Santa Fe public school students, were tested this past school year.

Improvements in identification have already made progress. SFPS has identified 167% more English Language Learners, nearly doubled the number of gifted students who are economically disadvantaged, and increased ethnically Hispanic students by 70% since September 2015. Compared to students identified using the previous referral and identification system, these students much better represent Santa Fe's diversity, but have nearly identical academic achievement, when taking into account for language development and economic disadvantage. These increases have been felt most at schools with historically low rates of gifted identification, like Kearny, Sweeney and Salazar Elementary, where there are now 5 to 7 times more identified students – enough to fund more teaching staff, and a much broader range of services.

Leveling the playing field in education can't stop with finding gifted students equitably; to create good educational outcomes for these students, we must provide additional opportunities and supports. These students will require supports to be successful in more rigorous coursework, direct instruction in critical thinking, research, and language skills, and enrichment to develop interest in possible educational and career horizons.

Through its SAGE program, SFPS has started to improve gifted education services. Nationally recognized, research-based curricula were piloted successfully enough in the 2015-2016 school year to warrant expanded implementation in 2016-2017. Service delivery increased in 15-16 at Cesar Chavez, Nina Otero, Nava, Kearny, Salazar, Sweeney, EJ Martinez, Amy Biehl, DeVargas, El Camino Real, and Tesuque, and will further grow in 16-17, across the K-12 grade span.

Santa Fe Public Schools is committed to identifying and developing the talents of all students, regardless of background. In the 2015-2016 school year, SFPS made significant strides toward improving diversity in gifted education, and will continue building programming options to deliver on this commitment.

To learn more about characteristics of gifted students and the SAGE gifted program or find out how to nominate your child, contact Geoffrey Moon, SAGE Program Support Specialist, at (505) 467-2622 or email gmoon@sfps.k12.nm.us.

Notes from NMAG Conference 2016



Keynote: Del Siegle

Promising Practices in Gifted Education for Underserved Populations

Every child has a right to learn something new every day. Unfortunately, for many students from underserved populations this ideal is never realized. We will share findings from NCRGE's first year's work. These include practices associated with increased participation of underserved students in gifted programs.

Bio : Dr. Del Siegle is a professor in gifted and talented education and Head of the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Connecticut. He is a past president of the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) and chair elect of the Research on Giftedness, Creativity, and Talent SIG of the American Educational Research Association (AERA). He currently is coeditor of Gifted Child Quarterly and authors a technology column for Gifted Child Today. He joined Dr. Gary Davis and Dr. Sylvia Rimm as a coauthor of the sixth edition of the popular textbook, Education of the Gifted and Talented.

Presenter Nathan Levy

Gifted educator, consultant, and author of popular Stories with Holes books, will also be presenting in his popular, dynamic style and offering gifted education materials. Find out how learning can propel itself with thought provoking ideas, raising student achievement and parents' and teachers' enthusiasm. Nathan Levy's materials are available online on his website: storieswithholes.com

Vendor Tables for 2016 Fall Institute

You're invited to sell your wares at a table during the 2016 Fall Institute at NMHU Rio Rancho Center, October 14 & 15, 2016.

Click the button below to pay now the \$20 fee for table space for either or both days of the Fall Institute.

Call for Award Nominations

Dear NMAG members:

Please consider nominating someone you know who is doing an outstanding job advocating for gifted students, either serving as an administrator or advocate benefiting gifted students, or serving as a teacher of gifted students. We would like to recognize these people at our Annual Meeting on October 15. These recipients will receive a framed certificate and a lifetime membership in the New Mexico Association for the Gifted. There are many people supporting gifted students in New Mexico; please join us in recognizing a few of the outstanding educators. Your nomination form ([Award Nomination Form 2016 NMAG](#)) needs to be emailed to nmgifted@gmail.com by August 26, 2016. The nomination form is attached.

Thank you for your thoughtful nominations. I hope to see you on October 14 & 15 at our Fall Gifted Institute where we have some outstanding people presenting.

Sincerely,

Geoffrey Moon

Past President, New Mexico Association for the Gifted