Julia Link Roberts was named the Ann Isaacs Founder’s Memorial Award recipient at the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) Conference in Albuquerque in November, 2019.  

Jonathan Plucker, NAGC President and the Julian C. Stanley Professor of Talent Development at Johns Hopkins University said, “The Ann Isaacs Founder’s Award honors an individual who has made extraordinary contributions to NAGC and the field of gifted education over an extended period of time. One of the perks of being NAGC president is having the opportunity to nominate someone for this prestigious award. As I considered potential nominees, I quickly thought of Dr. Roberts but admit that I dismissed the idea, assuming she had received the award years earlier! But when I double-checked the list of past recipients, I was both surprised she had not received it and pleased that I could nominate her. Dr. Roberts has been a great colleague, friend, and mentor to me throughout my career, and her many contributions to helping students in the Commonwealth, across the country, and around the globe are well known and impressive. The Isaacs Founder’s Award is a great honor for any individual, but in this particular case, it is but a small token representing the gratitude of thousands upon thousands of scholars, educators, and students and their families for Dr. Roberts’ selfless contributions.”  

Julia is the Mahurin Professor of Gifted Studies and the Executive Director of The Center for Gifted Studies and The Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science in Kentucky.
Dear Friends of The Center for Gifted Studies,

As I write this letter, the United States is experiencing unusual times as the coronavirus is prompting most of us to stay inside and practice social distancing. Please know that I want all of you to stay well! These are times in which we rely on leadership in government, the medical community, and researchers – all of whom are working together to help stop the spread of the virus and come up with a vaccine for this new virus. All of us need both science and hope to make it through this time when many of us are “sheltering in place.”

I am certainly hoping that summer programming will operate as scheduled. I think you know that summer is our favorite time at The Center for Gifted Studies. We are planning for all of the programs for children, young people, and educators that are described in this edition of The Challenge.

To add encouragement to my letter, I want to share a portion of a letter I recently received from Jessie Richards-Elms (VAMPY).

It wasn’t until I took a genetics course my final year at VAMPY that I realized how much I loved science and the laboratory experience. I went to UT Knoxville as a preveterinary major, still quite a bit uncertain of myself and my abilities. As it turns out, though, I did fine. VAMPY made the transition to college living seamless. Not only had it given me confidence in the STEM field, but it had given me confidence in myself and I was able to overcome any uncertainties and nervousness being away from home. I have seen so many people from my hometown (smart, gifted people) struggle in college because they lacked the academic background needed to succeed…. I credit VAMPY in particular for giving me the confidence I needed at a critical time in my life. Now, I hold a Master’s in Comparative & Experimental Medicine and am in my third year of a dual DVM/PhD program…. I wouldn’t have even considered STEM if it was not for VAMPY. I never dreamed something like this even possible in high school.

Sending wishes for good health and safety and for getting back to normal so all of the outstanding individuals who plan and teach in The Center’s programs are back to making the tremendous differences in lives that Jessie describes in her letter. Thank you, Jessie!

Sincerely,

Julia Link Roberts
Mahurin Professor for Gifted Studies
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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 Center Attends Gifted Education Month Proclamation Signing

The Center for Gifted Studies joined hundreds of lawmakers, educators, and students in the Capitol Rotunda in Frankfort on February 5, 2020, to watch Governor Andy Beshear sign the Proclamation declaring February as Gifted Education Month in Kentucky.

Julia Roberts oversaw the proceedings, and several speakers joined her at the podium to share their experiences with gifted education. Two Gatton Academy students shared their experiences with the crowd. Alec Ramos, a junior from Paducah, entertained those assembled with a violin performance of the “Orange Blossom Special.”

Austin White, a senior from Daviess County, talked about how gifted and talented services have given him life-expanding and life-changing experiences. “Through the Gatton Academy I have had the chance to take classes taught by college professors in any subject area I have ever been interested in,” said Austin. “I’ve discovered a passion for a subject I’ve only had the opportunity to explore at Gatton: computer science. Thankfully for me, it is a subject that can be applied to almost any other field, leaving me an excuse to continue learning, even past college graduation.”

Other students in attendance included Josh Loiacona and Emma Collins, both seniors at the Craft Academy for Excellence in Science and Mathematics, and Todd Prater, 2018 KAGE distinguished student.

Senior Advisor to Governor Beshear Rocky Adkins, Representative Regina Huff, and Senator Jimmy Higdon all gave their support to the proceedings and took the opportunity to speak about the importance of gifted education in Kentucky.

Representative Patti Minter, who represents District 20 in the Kentucky House of Representatives, said, “Students who are able to perform at higher levels should have the opportunity to do so. Students who thrive with academic challenges should be able to meet those challenges head-on. Gifted education is critical to preparing the next generation of thinkers, doers, and leaders.”

Governor Beshear spoke of how gifted and talented programming promotes innovative ways to approach learning and that participation in this programming spurs creative thinking and offers innovative ways of learning.

If the roar of applause from the hundreds of students gathered around Governor Beshear as he signed the Proclamation is any indication, the next generation of thinkers, doers, and leaders is ready for all the educational opportunities that come their way.
Mary Catherine Carter (SCATS 2009-10, VAMPY 2011) graduated from Syracuse University in 2018 with a BS in psychology. She is currently working towards an MS in occupational therapy at Ithaca College and will finish in 2020. She writes, “

After SCATS and VAMPY, I went on to do a three-week program with the Junior State of America in Washington, DC, in 2012. SCATS and VAMPY gave me the confidence that shy, 11-year-old me needed to explore new interests and meet new people. I still credit SCATS and VAMPY with a big part of how I ended up at Syracuse University and now at Ithaca College pursuing my Masters. I love keeping up with friends I made through social media and seeing the exciting things they’re doing now!

Jeff Carlyle (SCATS 1991) graduated from the University of Evansville with a BS in computer science engineering in 2001. He is a senior software engineer for Google and lives in Sunnyvale, CA.

Erin Cox (SCATS 2007, VAMPY 2008) received a BS in architectural engineering with a focus on mechanical, electrical, and plumbing system design from the University of Cincinnati in 2017. She now works for PEDCO E&A Services in Cincinnati.

I work on a variety of projects for such clients as P&G, GE, Fidelity Investments, and many more. My tasks and jobs vary day to day, and I am constantly working towards our goal of helping our clients achieve beyond what they can do by themselves and ensure that all of their needs are met. The Center’s emphasis on both academic and social development was crucial. I gained both fond memories and important lessons there. I fully intend to send any children I have to the program.

James Detwiler (SCATS 1989) is a chaplain in the US Air Force. He received a BS in political science from the University of Kentucky in 1999, a Master’s of Divinity from Gateway Seminary in 2008, and a PhD from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 2015.

I currently serve over 1,000 Airmen and their families within the 90th Maintenance Group and 90th Operations Group at F. E. Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne, WY. I provide pastoral leadership and care, advise squadron and group leadership, offer confidential counseling, and ensure the free exercise of religion. I have many fond memories of camp.

Chelsea Douglas (SCATS 2001-02) received a BA in economics from Centre College in 2010 and a certificate in accounting from University of Louisville in 2012. She works for Crowe in Louisville as an audit manager.

In 2016, I transferred to Crowe’s London office for a six-month secondment. I was recently selected for a two-year fellowship within Crowe to develop firm methodology regarding technology and the future of the auditing profession, including the use of data analytics, artificial intelligence, and other technologies. I am recently engaged and looking forward to celebrating our wedding in 2020.
Katherine Steinbock Dyke (VAMPY 1998-99) is a manufacturing project manager at Whip Mix Corporation in Louisville, which manufactures and sells dental supplies and lab equipment. She is a graduate of American University with a degree in International Studies.

I remember having an absolute blast! I loved being on a college campus and making new friends.

Matt Flanagan (SCATS 1986) of Bardstown graduated from Centre College in 1994 with a BS in mathematics and physics and from Campbellsville University in 2012 with Master of Theology in pastoral leadership. Since 2018, he has served as the children and student ministry consultant for the Kentucky Baptist Convention in Louisville.

Austyn Gaffney (SS 1999) graduated from Transylvania University in 2012 with a BA in political science and from the University of Kentucky in 2018 with an MFA in creative writing. She is an editorial fellow at Sierra Magazine in Oakland, CA, and lives in Berkeley.

Tuhin Ganguly (VAMPY 1992-93) graduated from Washington University in St. Louis in 2001 with a degree in biology and business. He writes, “I was checked in on the first day of college by a VAMPY alum from my class, Anne Klimke (VAMPY 1992-93), whom I hadn’t seen in 10 years at that point.” Tuhin was a biochemist at Monsanto in St. Louis for four years before attending law school at Washington University and graduating in 2008. He currently works at Pepper Hamilton, LLP, making partner in 2018. He lives in DC with his wife and toddler.

James Gillenwater (VAMPY 1996, SCATS 1997) received his BA in English and Spanish from Vanderbilt in 2005 and his JD from Duke University Law School in 2012. He is an attorney at Greenberg Traurig PA in Miami, FL.

The Center is a wonderful educational and social resource to Kentucky kids like me. I am grateful for the learning opportunities and connections it afforded me. Since studying at The Center over twenty years ago, I've lived abroad, travelled the world as part of the U.S. National Rugby Team, and practiced international litigation in both Washington, DC, and Miami. I'm not sure I would have had such aspirations, much less been able to achieve them, if I hadn't had my perspectives broadened by attending The Center at such a young age.

Joseph Groom (SCATS 2002-03, VAMPY 2005, Gatton 2007-08, TA 2009, Counselor 2012) is a postdoctoral research associate at the University of Washington. He graduated from Vanderbilt University in 2012 with degrees in molecular and cellular biology and in German and from the University of Georgia in 2017 with a PhD in genetics. He researches prominent environmental bacteria that consume methane, with the applications of mitigating greenhouse gases and the industrial production of valuable chemicals from waste. Currently he is focusing on how metals and nitrogen oxides impact methane metabolism. He loves living in Seattle with his dog, Dizzy.

Going to VAMPY and SCATS prepared me academically and socially.
Wei-Shin Lai (VAMPY 1990-91), graduated from the University of Michigan in 1998 with a BA in cellular and molecular biology and earned an MD from the University of Virginia-Charlottesville in 2002. She is the CEO of AcousticSleep, which makes headphones “so comfortable you can wear them in bed.” In October, she was invited to Washington, DC, to participate in a panel held by Google and the US Chamber of Commerce to discuss small businesses and digital innovation.

Ted Matherly (SCATS 1996-97, VAMPY 1997-2000) graduated in 2006 from the University of Michigan with a BA in communications and from the University of Maryland in 2013 with a PhD in marketing. He served as an assistant professor at Oklahoma State University from 2102-19 and is currently a visiting assistant professor at Tulane University in the Freeman School of Business. He and his wife had their first child, James Lewin Matherly, on July 4, 2019.

Charles Gordon McKemie (VAMPY 1997, 1999), received his Bachelor of Business Administration with a concentration in finance from Emory University in 2007. After working as an analyst at Lehman Brothers as an assistant vice president in high yield research at Barclays Capital, and an associate in leveraged finance at Citigroup, he became a principal at GSO Capital Partners in New York, NY, in 2012. He is also a US credit research analyst involved with the ongoing analysis and evaluation of primary and secondary fixed income investments and sits on LCS’s US Syndicated Credit Investment Committee.

Erica Newland (SCATS 1998) graduated from Yale University in 2008 with a BS in applied mathematics. She was a senior policy analyst at the Center for Democracy & Technology for three years before attending Yale Law School, during which she worked for the National Security Division at the Department for Justice and the Senate Judiciary Committee. She received a JD in 2015 and went on to serve as a law clerk for the Hon. Merrick Garland on the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia and as an attorney-adviser at the Office of Legal Counsel at the Department of Justice. She now works as counsel for Protect Democracy, a “nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to fighting attacks, from at home and abroad, on our right to free, fair, and fully informed self-government.”

In my school, there were not a lot of offerings for academically-inclined kids until tenth grade.

I was bored a lot. One of the things I really enjoyed at SCATS was that learning was one of the purposes of being there, and the other campers were also curious. I enjoyed that type of engagement.

Kathleen Overly (SCATS 1995) is the director of judicial programs at the University of Texas School of Law. She earned a BA in political science from Wake Forest University in 2003, a JD from the University of Michigan Law School in 2005, and an EdD in higher education from the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education in 2012. She lives in Pflugerville, TX.

Justin Penny (SCATS 2004-05, VAMPY 2006-07, Counselor 2010) double majored in biology and classics at the University of Kentucky, graduating in 2013. He received a DO and an MA in bioethics from the University of Missouri at Kansas City in 2017. He now is a resident physician at the University of Minnesota’s Smiley’s Family Medicine Residency Program in Minneapolis.

Ginny Sloan Raeuchle (SCATS 1994-6) earned a BA in in family studies from Samford University in 2004 and is working on her MAT in K12 special education at the University of the Cumberlands. She lives in Glasgow and is a teacher at The Academy, an alternative school for kids
with behavior issues. She has been married for nearly 10 years and has rambunctious twin boys who were three in February.

I have the most fond memories of The Center, and I hold a special place in my heart for Dr. Julia and her daughter! It was one of the best times in my early academic career.

**Jessie Richards-Elms** (Super Saturdays 2004, SCATS 2007, VAMPY 2008-10) graduated from the University of Tennessee with a degree in preveterinary medicine. She earned an MA in comparative and experimental medicine from UT in 2018 and is in her third year of a dual DVM/PhD program, also at UT.

**Robert Rowland** (SCATS 1990-01, Counselor 1996-97) earned an AAS in paramedicine from WKU and a BS in business management from Mid-Continent University. He is the program director of Air Evac Lifeteam, the leading air medical service in the United States. Robert lives in Bowling Green.

**Melissa Scruggs** (VAMPY 1998-2001) earned a BS in geology from University of Missouri-Kansas City in 2011 and an MS in geology with an emphasis on volcanology from California State University, Fresno in 2014. She is currently a PhD candidate in geology with an emphasis on magma dynamics and petrochemistry at the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB) where she is part of the Magma Dynamics Group at the UCSB Department of Earth Sciences. She has published in *American Mineralogist* and the *Encyclopedia of Geochemistry*, and presented at the Goldschmidt International Conference in Geochemistry and the American Geophysical Union’s Annual Fall Meeting.

My mom remembers me telling her I liked VAMPY better than school because there were people there who were like me. It gave me a place to look forward to going to. 24 years later I still talk to some of my friends from camp on a weekly basis. Things like the dances, mandatory fun, and meeting people from everywhere who were just as into things as I was all helped me so much as a person. VAMPY was such a great experience, and it has really helped me to grow into who I am today.

**Dr. Kirstin Hamblin Squint** (VAMPY 1986-89) is an associate professor of English at High Point University in High Point, NC. She earned a BA in English from Eureka College in 1995, an MA in English with a fiction writing emphasis from Miami University of Ohio in 1998, and a PhD in comparative literature from Louisiana State University in 2008. Her published works include the 2018 monograph *LeAnne Howe at the Intersections of Southern and Native American Literature* and the forthcoming *Swamp Souths: Literary and Cultural Ecologies*, co-edited with Eric Gary Anderson, Taylor Hagood, and Anthony Wilson. Her essay “Kentucky Coming and Going” appeared as a chapter in the 2019 *Appalachian Reckoning: A Region Responds to Hillbilly Elegy*, edited by Anthony Harkins and Meredith McCarroll. In 2019-20 she will serve as the Whichard Visiting Distinguished Professor at East Carolina University.

**Morgan Stone** (SCATS 2003-04) earned a BA in sociology from WKU in 2013 and an MA in criminal justice from Eastern Kentucky University in 2016. She was a member of the United States Peace Corps from June 2016-July 2018, serving in the Republic of Moldova as an English education volunteer where she worked alongside Moldovan English teachers in teaching students from grades 5-12. She began a PhD program in sociology at the University of Kentucky in 2018 and is studying education and crime in rural spaces, with a focus on school discipline in rural schools.
All summer long, The Center for Gifted Studies offers programming for students and educators on the campus of Western Kentucky University. For more information on any of our opportunities, please visit our website at wku.edu/gifted.

Programming for students will begin June 7-19 with SCATS (the Summer Camp for Academically Talented Middle Schoolers). Academically talented students who finished grades 6-8 in the previous school year take four courses from a wide array of choices, and campers can be residential or nonresidential. Taught by teachers engaged in gifted education, classes change each year but always include STEM fields, the humanities, and the fine arts. When not in class, students are likely to be playing sports or board games, participating in creative group activities created by camp counselors, preparing for the end of camp talent show, or hanging out in their residential hall, creating a community whose members share interests.

VAMPY (the Summer Program for Verbally and Mathematically Precocious Youth) will be held June 21 – July 11. A residential experience for students who finished grades 7-10 in the previous school year and have scored at or above the average for college-bound seniors on one section of the SAT or ACT, VAMPY offers a rigorous educational environment where students focus on one course during six class hours each weekday, plus a nightly study hall. Courses range from STEM fields — such as genetics and chemistry — to the humanities — such as Arabic and Pop Culture — with each course using a variety of pedagogical techniques inside and outside the classroom walls. When not in class, students participate in a variety of activities designed to help them form lifelong bonds with peers who are accepting, curious, and engaged in the world around them.

From July 6-10 we will offer Camp Camp Innovate, a day camp for advanced ability and high interest students who finished grades 3-5 in the previous school year. The camp’s approach is interdisciplinary: students study the theme of innovation across a variety of disciplines like language arts, math, science, social studies, theater, and art. Throughout the week, teachers experienced in gifted education guide the students in learning that is differentiated for their particular needs and advanced levels.

Our final program this summer will be Camp Explore, held July 13-17, a day camp that provides an enrichment experience for students of advanced ability and high interest who have finished grades 1-3 in the previous school year. The camp’s interdisciplinary approach means students study a single big idea — such as “change” or “patterns” — across a variety of disciplines like language arts, math, science, social studies, theater, and art. Teachers experienced in gifted education encourage higher order thinking and differentiate according to students’ abilities and interests.
Teachers have multiple opportunities this summer to learn about addressing the needs of high ability learners.

First, our 37th annual Advanced Placement Summer Institute (APSI), which is endorsed by The College Board, will take place June 22-26 offering more than 20 workshops for beginners and experienced teachers under the guidance of top-rate consultants, many of whom have served as graders for the exam, table leaders, and exam writers. The program provides teachers with information on the structure and content of the test, resources to use with their students, and activities to prepare them.

On June 24, we will host an AP Coordinator Workshop. This full-day workshop is designed to help new and experienced AP coordinators learn how to efficiently and successfully manage their schools’ AP program. Participants will have the chance to exchange best practices and learn new ways to handle their coordinating responsibilities.

On June 29-July 2, we will hold out inaugural Pre-AP Institute at WKU. This program will provide a four-day collaborative experience that empowers participants to begin to prepare and plan for their Pre-AP courses. Teachers explore course materials and experience model lessons from the student’s point of view. They also work with peers to begin to plan and build their own course materials, so they are ready on day one of instruction.

Finally, in order to reach more teachers, we will host a second APSI from July 13-16. This program will offer nine workshop at Ritenour High School in St. Louis, MO. We are excited about continuing our exemplary opportunities while adding new ones.
Roots can't ground unless the seed is sown,
And trees without a foundation can't grow.
Though the soil of my heart's been cold,
These Kentucky mountain songs have found their home.

Almost 700 participants from over 25 middle and high schools across 20 school districts in Kentucky listened in rapt attention as 18-year-old Larah Helayne shared her song “Roots” at the seventh annual IdeaFestival Bowling Green on February 11, 2020. Standing on stage with just her guitar and her powerful voice, Larah was the final presenter of the morning speaker sessions, and her words perfectly summed up this year’s theme of Land and Legacy: Building Ideas That Will Last.

Other presenters also shared ideas about where we come from and how we can affect the future. The first speaker session, titled “Re-Imagining Our Relationship to the Land,” featured Kellyn LaCour-Conant, a coastal resources scientist at Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority of Louisiana. She stressed the important of “restoring our connections to each other and the environment and finding some sense of harmony in how we live together.” Next, Timothy Kercheville, farm manager at

(Continued on page 15)
Travel has been an ongoing part of the programming at The Center for Gifted Studies for thirty years. First, we traveled in the summer for two or three weeks; and, when summer schedules got busier, we switched to spring break travel opportunities and later added a fall travel experience. Perhaps the key question is “Why travel with The Center?” The travel experiences must be very good or they would not have continued over such a long time.

Ethan Tate (VAMPY 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018) has been a traveler with The Center to multiple countries. He wrote about his travel experiences.

I have grown up loving to travel around the world because my mom pushed me to explore the unknown in life. My family takes vacations out of the country whenever my dad can get off work, and it was always a fantastic experience. My parents gave my older brother and me the chance to travel with The Center to Belgium. It was an amazing experience for me, an eighth grader at the time, to travel and grow as an individual. I got to see so many museums, statues, and paintings that I had studied in school. Along with that came an amazing amount of history that allowed me to understand the culture of the countries. I learned more on each of my trips than I do in months of a history class. I travelled to different countries over five times with The Center and could not have loved it any more than I did. Not only did I learn about the history and cultures of where I went, but I also grew as a person on each trip. At first, going out of the country without your parents is scary, especially for an eighth grader, but as the trip went on, I realized that Dr. Roberts and the other adults were there for me if I ever had a worry or difficulty. While they were always there to help, they also gave me enough freedom to explore on my own and this responsibility for myself helped me grow to believe that I can be a successful adult. For the first time I had to decide if I was going to spend my budget on an ice cream or a souvenir without my parents. I had to decide if I wanted to spend my thirty minutes inside the museum or walking outside into a town square to experience the culture. With all of this freedom, I also knew that if I made a mistake and spent too much, other adults would be there to assist me and make sure my experience was safe and fun. All of these came together to make an amazing experience in other countries. I am so glad I travelled so many times with The Center.

The Center has traveled with eighth grade and high school students to various countries – Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Russia, Scotland, Spain, and The Netherlands.

Check out travel opportunities with The Center and share information with potential travelers. They will learn a lot while they have enjoyable experiences on their travels. Details for the next travel experience will be available soon.
the International Center of Kentucky, shared his story of working with refugees to create a community garden. The third speaker was Shelby Rader, a 2009 graduate of The Gatton Academy and of WKU who is now an assistant research scientist in geochemistry at Indiana University; she talked about how her study of trace metals helps predict what soils may pose risks to humans.

The second session, titled "How Ideas Become Legacies," began with Samantha Fore, chef/owner of Tuk Tuk Sri Lankan Bites in Lexington, discussing how she developed a definition of authenticity for her work — including "work hard and be nice to people" and "Dolly Parton eats for free." The second speaker, Gerry Seavo James, is the founder of the Explore Kentucky Initiative and the Waterman Series; he focused on how he chose to step away from becoming a viral star in order to immerse himself in a range of projects including cleaning up streams and working to preserve Kentucky’s Red River Gorge. Larah, a singer-songwriter from Mt. Sterling, then spoke and sang to the audience.

In the afternoon, participants traveled to the third floor of the Downing Student Union to explore over 20 minds-on, hands-on activities. These stations encompassed a wide range of disciplines and allowed students to put their ideas into action as well as talk to the activity creators about their fields of expertise. The activities included letterpress and block printing, improv comedy, building a smartphone microscope, 3-D printing pens, Spirograph art, the latest technology for the sight-impaired, mural painting, animal anatomy, learning how to pitch yourself, entrepreneurial idea-generation, magic for beginners, clowning, stop motion animation, a Black History Month art exhibit, a honey extractor and beeswax candle making, robots, a Lego writing workshop, two poetry stations, a video game lab, and willow furniture-making. In addition, the morning speakers made themselves available to chat — and take selfies — with the students.

Sponsors of the festival included Vid Monster Productions (which filmed and live streamed the speaker sessions), AT&T, the Bowling Green Area Economic Development Authority, and The Gatton Academy. A special thank you goes out to them for their generosity in making the day possible.

To see highlights, including videos, or to sign up for the festival mailing list, visit The Center’s website. The next festival will take place in February 2021.
Dr. Susan Baum, co-director of the International Center for Talent Development and Director of the National Institute for 2E Research and Development at Bridges Academy, presented at the 2019 Twice-Exceptional Students Seminar on September 18, 2019, with a workshop entitled “Strength-Based, Talent-Focused Strategies for 2e Students with Differently Wired Brains.” The free presentation was designed to help participants understand that twice-exceptional (2e) students, who are defined as having at least one exceptional ability and disability, have differently wired brains and how the dual diagnosis of giftedness and challenges further complicates the issue. She taught her audience, made up of educators and parents, how to arrange curriculum and instruction to optimize learning and how to create 2e friendly environments where educational experiences are strength-based and talent-focused.

Among the attendees at the seminar were students of WKU education professor Dusteen Knott. As special education majors, these students are preparing to work with youth from prekindergarten through 12 grade. Susan's focus on how to dually differentiate lessons to accommodate both the strengths and challenges of individual students opened their eyes to the necessity and challenge of such teaching.
Twice-exceptional individuals evidence exceptional ability and dis-ability, 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,
- and 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.


One of Dusteen’s students, participant Caleb Kirchner (Super Saturdays 2005-07; 10-11; SCATS 2012), commented, “My biggest takeaway was how important it is to balance getting students the help that they need for their disability with enabling them to use their gifts.”

Another student, Sammy Lester, said, “The biggest challenge is trying to help 2e students use their gifts while also helping them with their struggles. It’s important to balance those things and mesh them together in order to set them up for success, whatever they want to do.”

Finally, special education major Danielle Durbin noted, “I had not had any background on 2e students. The seminar opened me up to the idea of how important it is to recognize these students, to work with them based on their strengths, and then to also offer the supports and interventions that they need.”

Dr. Tom Hébert will speak at the 2020 Twice-Exceptional Student Seminar on October 16.
Evolution International Opportunities at The Gatton Academy

International travel and learning are central to The Gatton Academy experience. Since 2007, a travel abroad opportunity to western Europe has been offered each school year. Nations visited include Italy, Greece, France, Monaco, Portugal, and Spain, with a total of 292 Gatton Academy students traveling. These travel abroad programs took place during WKU’s Winter Term and included daily educational excursions of their host nation(s) over two weeks of travel.

This early model of travel abroad at The Gatton Academy followed The Center’s lead. For many years, The Center has offered educational travel abroad opportunities during fall and spring breaks for gifted learners and their families. When The Academy opened, it followed this honored tradition.

Kaitlin Hartley (Gatton Academy 2009; TA 2012) traveled on the inaugural program to Italy in January 2008. For her, the world became a much bigger place after her first voyage abroad. “Suddenly I had so many places to go. I couldn’t stop with Italy—I was eager to travel near and far after this experience,” Kaitlin said. “And I did. After this opportunity, I studied abroad four times, and I haven’t stopped exploring the world. I consider myself a global citizen, and The Gatton Academy’s winter travel abroad program is what sparked this within myself.” She is now living and working in Sydney, Australia.

After the inaugural program in Italy, The Gatton Academy explored different program routes in southwestern Europe, where the January climate was milder. In 2012, trips started regularly alternating between Italy and Greece. In doing a regular rotation, every student knew their travel options for their two-year Gatton Academy experience.

After the popularity of the first several years’ winter travel abroad programs, The Gatton Academy launched study abroad programs in 2011 in Costa Rica (winter) and Harlaxton, England (summer). The new study abroad programs featured students traveling with WKU professors, taking on an intensive academic focus and earning college credit for the work performed abroad. Popularity of these two programs has soared in the years since, and it is now routine for 90% of Gatton Academy graduates to study abroad sometime during their two years as a student.

The Gatton Academy has five articulated goals for its international programs. Through travel abroad, the program seeks to internationalize the student experience, help students discover new educational and career opportunities, foster awareness of global diversity, provide opportunities for personal growth abroad, and increase students’ perceptions of belonging in the Academy community.

Many Gatton Academy students have their first experience beyond United States’ borders through the travel abroad series. Current Gatton Academy senior John Thornhill (Super Saturdays 2013; SCATS 2015-16; VAMPY 2017; Gatton Academy 2020) is one such student. His January 2020 travel to Italy provided him new, international perspectives. “Our travel spotlighted how different our customs are. I learned from our Italian guide how she could ride a train to France,” John explained. “It made me realize how even our geography affects our ability to leave the United States.”

Traveling with peers and forming strong connections with others in The Gatton Academy community is a hallmark of the program’s travel and study abroad ex-
experiences. Gatton Academy senior Ethan Coots (’20 Gatton Academy) said one of the benefits of traveling abroad to Italy in January 2020 was the new peer connections he established. “Spending two weeks with the group, I definitely learned a lot about my peers,” Ethan said. “And, I learned a lot from them, too. I learned so much art history with them and from them. I made a lot of new friends.”

John agreed. “Those two weeks were less stressful than our school year,” he added. “Other than GROWWeek, we’re loaded with our course schedules at the Academy. It was great to see how each of us learned about the culture we visited. Over dinner, we shared different opinions on the things we tried. Some people would love a dish while another would try one bite and be done.”

As Ethan and John look forward to May graduation, they are both considering future study abroad opportunities during college. “If I have the opportunity to study abroad for a semester during college, I will do it,” Ethan said. “I had no clue that I wanted to do this before traveling to Italy this year.”

As The Gatton Academy looks forward, the Costa Rica and Harlaxton, England programs will continue to be annual destinations. In fact, the Costa Rica program now has a second offering, doubling the number of participants to meet demand. However, after 13 years, The Academy is trading one adventure in pursuit of another. The January 2020 Italy program was the last of the beloved series as The Academy plans to launch a new credit-bearing study abroad or study away program soon to replace the annual western Europe program.
Differentiation, the core of good teaching, is not a new concept. Teachers in one-room schoolhouses differentiated as they taught the range of students who came to them each day. Yet differentiation remains one of the most challenging aspects of teaching today. Harry Passow (1988), in working with the Curriculum Council of National/State Leadership Training Institute on the Gifted/Talented, suggested three questions educators might utilize to help determine if the learning experiences they provide are sufficiently differentiated for students with gifts and talents. These have come to be known as Passow’s Would-Could-Should Test.

- **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?

When the answer is yes to any of these questions, the learning experiences are not sufficiently differentiated for gifted learners.

If all students *would* want to be involved in a lesson or learning activity, then certainly all should have the opportunity. If all students are involved, it is not differentiated. In contrast, if only some students would want to be involved, the lesson or learning activity may be provided to those who want to do it while those who do not are provided a different activity on the same topic. Sometimes, teachers design a learning experience specifically for a few gifted and talented students in their classrooms. When the learning experience...
is offered, other students may initially see it as desirable and ask to do the activity as well. However, these students often change their minds once they better understand the complexity of the learning experience. They discover for themselves that the learning experience was not designed to match their learning needs and ask to switch to one that better suits them (i.e., one they would want to do).

If all students could participate in a lesson or learning experience, then it may be appropriate for all students, but it is not differentiated for advanced learners. The same is true if all students should be expected to succeed in the learning experience. Passow’s (1988) could and should questions relate to readiness, appropriate content, and the level at which students are thinking about or processing concepts. Students’ readiness varies greatly within classrooms. These children need learning experiences that not all students in their classrooms could do or should be successful doing. Students whose readiness and/or content mastery exceeds their peers need opportunities to learn at appropriate levels and to master new content. Students also need the opportunity to learn through processes that are appropriately complex.

SOURCE


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Julia Roberts and Tracy Inman presented two levels of workshop focused on Differentiation on November 12, 2019. Participants new to differentiation attended the beginning workshop and received award-winning *Strategies for Differentiating Instruction: Best Practices for the Classroom* (3rd ed.). They explored establishing a culture conducive to differentiation, the use of assessment in differentiation, differentiation strategies, and more. The experienced workshop guided those ready for a more advanced approach in the differentiation of products and the use of a protocol (i.e., DAP Tool – Developing and Assessing Product Tool) that simplifies the differentiation process and removes the learning ceiling for students.

Each participant received a copy of *Assessing Differentiated Student Products: A Protocol for Development and Evaluation* (2nd ed.). Twenty-five educators from six school districts attended.

Both books are available through Prufrock Press at prufrock.com.
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In 2022, The Center for Gifted Studies turns 40, and we want to celebrate! Please help us plan by sharing ideas on ways to mark this momentous anniversary. Speaker series? Cook-out? Reception? Reunion? All ideas are welcome. Send your thoughts to julia.roberts@wku.edu.
Parents continually take stock of their children’s school progress. Hopefully their children are making good efforts, earning positive grades, and enjoying school. For some parents, there comes a time when they realize that their children’s small problems are simply not disappearing. They wonder why their children are not working to their abilities in school. They may have already heard the word “underachiever” from an earlier teacher, but they hoped their children would mature out of the problem. The parents are puzzled, and so are the children’s teachers.

Underachievement is epidemic and enters every classroom and many homes. Underachievers usually begin as apparently bright and often very verbal preschoolers, but at some point their enthusiasm for learning and their satisfactory school performance change. Symptoms of underachievement may include unfinished work, loss of homework, disorganization, disinterest in school, excuses like “I forgot,” blaming others for problems, and declining grades.

Underachievement results when some things go wrong both at home and school. Underachievers deny themselves the opportunity to build confidence because they direct their energies toward avoiding the relationship between process and outcome, between effort and achievement.

Well-intentioned parenting mistakes frequently have the effect of destroying parenting leadership. The children learn rituals of either unusual dependence or dominance, or both. These dependent and dominant patterns begin to feel natural to children and parents alike. Parents often believe that teachers and the school structure will resolve their children’s problems or that children will mature out of them…. They continue to use them to preserve their fragile self-concepts.

The dependency pattern is often masked as insecurity, immaturity, passivity, or learning disabilities. Dependent underachievers ask for more help than they require. They may insist on having parents sit with them while they do their homework. Dominant
underachievers are more vociferous in arguing about why they shouldn’t have to do their work; they tend to blame teachers or parents for their problems. They like to pick and choose only the schoolwork they enjoy.

Preventing Underachievement

- Parenting by positive expectations can be extraordinarily successful for children both in school and out....
- Model hard work and satisfaction of accomplishment....
- Voice your sincere respect for educational institutions and teachers....
- Involve your children in developing study routines....
- Be consistent with your children’s other parent(s) in setting goals for children....
- Help your children cope with competition....
- Encourage independence in your children without giving them more power than they can handle....
- Praise children realistically with words that set goals they’ll be able to achieve....
- Don’t give up on your children....

Additional Reading

For more information about reversing the problem of underachievement, consult Why Bright Kids Get Poor Grades-And What You Can Do About It (Great Potential Press, 2008).
Rico Tyler Delights and Inspires with STEM Fun for Parents

While hundreds of Super Saturdays participants have experienced the special brand of minds-on, hands-on science education Rico Tyler has provided over the years, a new opportunity brought Rico’s expertise to a new audience: adults.

STEM Fun, a series of classes designed to inspire parents, community leaders, and other adults who work with children, took place the first three weeks of Super Saturdays. Sessions focused on a different science activity each week. Participants could then pass on the experiments, lessons, and scientific principles to the children in their lives.

“Parents often ask me how to get involved,” said Rico. “They find themselves volunteering at school events or helping out with Scouts and 4H, and they want to accomplish some real teaching. A lot of people are worried about being in charge of an event like that, but you can do really good, intriguing science in any setting. It doesn’t have to be just gimmicks. There can be real learning taking place.”

Rico stated the goal of STEM Fun was to make sure participants left each week feeling confident and comfortable working with students and that they would enjoy the experience of teaching science. The foundation of each session was experiencing first-hand how even simple experiments designed to be replicated at home could still accurately demonstrate real scientific principles in a way that engages young people.

Rico is a teacher educator with nearly 40 years of classroom experience. Before joining WKU in 2001, he spent 19 years as a high school physics instructor and won the Presidential Award in Science Teaching. He is a long-time friend of The Center.

“I hope these classes inspire participants,” said Rico. “I hope they walk away knowing the same joy I’ve always felt in the classroom.”

Winter
Super Saturdays

By the Numbers

366 Participants
40 School Districts
27 Classes
4 Amazing Saturdays!

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VAMPY
June 21 – July 11

Advanced Placement Summer Institute
June 22-26

Pre-AP Summer Institute
June 29 – July 2

Camp Innovate
July 6-10

Advanced Placement Summer Institute (St. Louis, MO)
July 13-16

Camp Explore
July 13-17

Berta Seminar
October 16