

MEGAT Spring Conference 2025

Presentation Descriptions

Session One - 9:40 to 10:25 am

1. VT Room: ***How Can We Answer the Most Fundamental Questions in Gifted Education? ~ D. Betsy McCoach, Ph.D*** *Audience: All Levels

We need to be able to answer the most important and fundamental questions that we face in the field of gifted education. What is giftedness? How should we identify students as gifted? How can we best meet the needs of gifted students in K-12 educational settings? However, the most fundamental questions that our field faces are also the most difficult to answer. This talk provides an overview of some of our field's most important unanswered questions and discusses the inherent challenges of conducting research in gifted education.

D. Betsy McCoach, Ph.D. is professor of Educational Psychology department at the University of Connecticut. Dr. McCoach is co-Principal Investigator for the National Center for Research on Gifted Education and three Javits grants. Dr. McCoach has served as the editor of *Gifted Child Quarterly* (2012-2017) and the *Journal of Advanced Academics* (2007-2012) and is currently Associate Editor of *Psychological Methods*. Dr. McCoach was the 2022 recipient of the National Association of Gifted Children's Distinguished Scholar Award, and she currently sits on the Board of Directors of NAGC.



2. CT Room: ***The Pentateuch: 5 Tech Competencies for 21st-century Gifted Students ~ Talbot S. Hook***
*Audience: All Levels - GT Educators, Classroom Teachers, Administrators, Parents, Lecture, Discussion

How can we prepare students for 21st-century issues like echo-chambers or AI? To help students grapple with these issues and develop responsible technology habits, technology education has to be more than just teaching students to use technologies proficiently. It must prepare students to flourish in a world increasingly driven by technological mastery and creative productivity. This session covers just that.

Talbot S. Hook is a fourth-year doctoral candidate in the Giftedness, Creativity, and Talent Development program. He received his BA in History and East Asian Studies and his Master of Arts in Teaching with endorsements in World History, Chinese, and English as a Second Language. He worked for six years at a rural Iowan school, teaching courses in technology, Spanish, and ESL, prior to matriculating at UCONN. He previously worked on Project Bump Up, but now currently splits his GA hours between the Center's acceleration study and TA work for EPSY 5710: Introduction to Gifted Education and Talent Development. His research interests are in mindfulness, technology, and conceptual issues in gifted education.

3. RI Room: ***Supporting 2eASD Students: Exploring the Impact of Professional Learning on Teacher Practices ~ Julie H. Delgado***

*Audience: All levels, GT Educators, Classroom Teachers, Admin, Parents, K-2, 3-5, Lecture, Discussion, Hands-on, Wkshp

Using interviews from Javits-funded Project LIFT, this study sought to understand teacher beliefs around the development of high potential and how professional learning can influence teacher perceptions and practices relating to high-potential students. We explain the results of our interpretive study, identify and contextualize patterns across time, and highlight teacher beliefs in their own voices.

Julie H. Delgado is a Ph.D. candidate in Educational Psychology at the University of Connecticut dual majoring in Special Education and Giftedness, Creativity, and Talent Development. She is a graduate research assistant currently working at Renzulli Center Outreach and Engagement after four years as a graduate research assistant on Project 2e-ASD. She received her B.A. from the University of Montana in Elementary Education with areas of emphasis in Mathematics and Psychology (2005) and her M.A. in Curriculum and Instruction Mathematics Major (2013) from University of Texas Arlington. Julie was a public elementary general education teacher for 15 years and a middle school volleyball coach.

4. York Room: *Connecting Young Writers with Author/Illustrators ~ Josh Alves and Tom Coleman*

**Audience: All Levels, 3-5, 6-8, GT Educators, Classroom Teachers, Administrators, Lecture, Discussion*

Presentation on how to facilitate the writer's workshop model and facilitate this work in conjunction with a local author/illustrator that includes remote presentations and guided writing experiences that foster creativity and imagination. The presentation will include how to bring student writing to publication and will include sharing the process that led to three book publications and will share this year's idea around an anthology of short stories that we are working on with students in grades 3-5. The principal idea is to inspire educators to utilize resources such as author/illustrators in their schools with their talented young writers as a means to meet the students where they are at and propel them further.

Josh Alves - Author, Illustrator, and Game Designer: Josh Alves is a children's book author, illustrator, and ideologist who gets to create in his studio in central Maine. As a husband and father, he constantly draws inspiration from his family. He loves humor, wit, and anything that gets your thinker thinking. When he's not working on books, you can find him creating art for mobile games, leading school visits and workshops, encouraging kids to unlock their own creativity and imagination. He is the author and illustrator of: *Lilly Bristol*, *Dinosaur Wrangler*, and the *Town a Tyrannosaurus Wrecks!*, *The Cryptic Adventures of the Araknid Kid Episodes 1 & 2*, and *Surprise!*. He is also the illustrator of Zeke Meeks Chapter Books and Animal All-Stars. He has been contracted by the Glenburn School for the last 8 or more years to assist in a writer's workshop model where he supports gifted learners. Through this process, he has assisted in the publication of 3 student books. We are currently working on an anthology of short stories with two different age-groups.

Tom Coleman is the REACH Director and teachers at Glenburn School where he also serves as the Instructional Coach for the school. Tom has helped facilitate this work with Josh and the students that he works with. Tom has been in education for 26+ years.

5. Somerset Room: *Expanding Horizons: The Academy Endorsement Program ~ Jennifer Cross*

**Audience: All Levels, K-2,3-5, GT Educators, Classroom Teachers, Admin, Parents, Lecture, Discussion, Hands-on, Wkshp*

This workshop explores the Academy endorsement program at Oceanside High School, an academic and experiential pathway that challenges students to take rigorous coursework in their area of strength, engage in extended learning opportunities, and explore diverse career possibilities. Learn how this model fosters student growth, ambition, and readiness for future success in a variety of fields.

Jennifer Cross has dedicated sixteen years to gifted education and currently serves as the Gifted and Talented Advisor at Oceanside High School in Rockland, Maine. In this role, she coordinates the Academy Program, guiding students as they explore rigorous academic pathways tailored to their strengths and passions. Her commitment lies in empowering students to take ownership of their learning and reach their full potential.

Session Two - 10:30 to 11:15

1. VT Room: *Help! This Gifted Child is Not Acting Gifted- Del Siegle, Ph.D and D. Betsy McCoach, Ph.D.*

**Audience: All Levels*

Limited student motivation is a frustrating issue teachers and parents of gifted students sometimes face. We will share research over the past 20 years that explored why some talented students are willing to tackle new challenges, while others seem insecure or uninterested. During this presentation, we will discuss possible causes of low motivation and strategies that promote an achievement-oriented attitude.

Del Siegle, Ph.D. Del Siegle is the Lynn and Ray Neag Endowed Chair for Talent Development at the University of Connecticut, where he directs the U. S. National Center for Research on Gifted Education (NCRGE). He is a past-president of the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) and recipient of their 2021 Founder's Memorial, 2018 Distinguished Scholar, and 2011 Distinguished Service Award. He is a former co-editor of *Gifted Child Quarterly* (GCQ) and the *Journal of Advanced Academics* (JOAA), co-author with Gary Davis and Sylvia Rimm of the 6th and 7th editions of *Education of the Gifted and Talented*, author of *The Underachieving Gifted Child: Recognizing, Understanding, & Reversing Underachievement*, and author of a technology column for *Gifted Child Today*. He has served as an Educational Psychology department head and Neag School of Education Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Affairs at the University of Connecticut.



D. Betsy McCoach, Ph.D. is professor of Educational Psychology department at the University of Connecticut. Dr. McCoach is co-Principal Investigator for the National Center for Research on Gifted Education and three Javits grants. Dr. McCoach has served as the editor of *Gifted Child Quarterly* (2012-2017) and the *Journal of Advanced Academics* (2007-2012) and is currently Associate Editor of *Psychological Methods*. Dr. McCoach was the 2022 recipient of the National Association of Gifted Children's Distinguished Scholar Award, and she currently sits on the Board of Directors of NAGC.



2. CT Room: *Inviting Exploration and Inquiry ~ Catherine A. Little, Ph.D.*

**Audience: Novice, Intermediate - GT Educators, Classroom Teachers, K-12 Lecture, Discussion, Hands-on, Workshop*

Inquiry-oriented learning provides opportunities for all learners to access challenge and pursue questions. Through embedded thinking skills and strategies, inquiry invites students to demonstrate potential that might not emerge in other activities. Using a broadened application of the 5E model, this session explores ways of applying elements of inquiry in reading and math to engage learners with challenging tasks.

Catherine A. Little, Ph.D., is a Professor in Giftedness, Creativity, and Talent Development at the University of Connecticut. Her research interests include professional learning, differentiation of curriculum and instruction for advanced learners, and questioning practices. Recently, she has been Project Director for Project SPARK, Project LIFT, and Project Focus, which are Javits-funded initiatives focused on working with schools and teachers to recognize and respond to advanced academic potential in the elementary grades, particularly in students from underserved populations. Catherine is currently serving as the President-Elect of the Board of Directors of the National Association for Gifted Children.

3. RI Room: *Literacy + Literature to Ignite, Delight and Cultivate Readers, Writers, and Thinkers ~ Susannah Richards, Ph.D.*

**Audience: All Levels, GT Educators, Classroom Teachers, Parents, K-8, Lecture, Discussion*

Kareem Between. The Gate, The Girl, and the Dragon. Plain Jane. The Night War. Meet the Mini-Mammals. The Bletchley Riddle. This session highlights recently published books (fiction, nonfiction, graphic novels, novels in verse, etc.) featuring innovative and evidence-based strategies for highly able students to increase and demonstrate comprehension of ideas, history, mystery, fantasy, and the world (past, present, & future).

Susannah Richards is an associate professor of education at Eastern Connecticut State University where she teaches courses on literacy, literature for youth, curriculum development, implementation, and assessment. She has a PhD in Educational Psychology with a focus on gifted education from the University of Connecticut where she studied literacy content, skills, and strategies used with highly able students. She lives in a house of books, regularly moderates panels with authors and illustrators, presents on books for youth and how to motivate students to read and think about them. Previously, she served on ALA Awards committees including the Newbery and Geisel award committees and is currently chair of the 2025 Boston Globe-Horn Book Award Committee.

4. MA Room: *Pathways Between the Paradigms: Perceptions of Maine's Gifted and Talented Teachers During Initial MTSS Implementation ~ Emily Gerry MacKinnon, Ph.D.*

**Audience: All Levels. GT Educators, Classroom Teachers, Admin, Parents, GT Educators, Classroom Teachers, Lecture, Q&A*

The purpose of the research study was to explore the perceptions of Maine's gifted and talented teachers around the MDOE's suggested implementation of the MTSS instructional framework at varying levels of intensity for students with gifts and talents, their perceptions of a change in their practice related to MTSS-GT, and factors related to their understanding and confidence levels.

Emily Gerry MacKinnon has been serving public education in Southern Maine for over two decades, most recently as Gifted and Talented/Extended Learning Opportunities Instructional Coach at RSU 57, Massabesic Schools. Emily was the Maine DOE LDP 2020/2021 York County fellow, and completed the NCEE NISL program focusing her ALP on raising expectations for all students by offering high level, engaging curricular experiences that will benefit all our students and function as talent surfacing opportunities. She was inducted into Phi Kappa Phi academic honor society in 2022, and just earned her PhD in Public Policy and Educational Leadership from the Muskie Institute at the University of Southern Maine. She believes if, from the start, the door is closed to underperforming or low achieving students in the cycle of opportunity for talent development, we are not supporting student achievement equitably. Also of interest to her are offering Extended Learning Opportunities that could serve a dual purpose to both find gifted learners and to serve interested students who might not be identified for services, but embrace additional academic challenge.

5. York Room: *Integrating 3D Printing Technology into Traditional Printmaking ~ Sara Myrick*

**Audience: All Levels. GT Educators, Classroom Teachers, Administrators, Parents, 6-8, 9-12, Hands-on, Workshop*

The hands-on exploration of the intersection between traditional printmaking and 3D printed tools. We will examine 3D printing as not just a product fabrication tool but also how it can be used to create unique tools for traditional and contemporary art practices. Participants will use provided materials to create their own artwork during this workshop period.

Sara Myrick has over a decade of experience as a K-12 certified Art Educator for AOS 77 and is the full time Art Teacher for Eastport Elementary and Shead High School. She is a part time adjunct art professor at Washington County Community College. She is owner of Coastal Whims, an art business celebrating her love of nature and handcrafting. Her widely varied artistic practice has included special focus on up-cycling, photography, print-making and jewelry. In addition to working in the schools, she leads many workshops around Washington County for all ages.

6. Somerset Room: *Task with a Creature: Implementing Bloom's Greatest Cognitive load ~*

James Siegel **Audience: Novice, Intermediate, Expert. GT Educators, Classroom Teachers, Administrators, Parents, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12, Lecture, Discussion, Demonstration*

"Task with a Creature" offers a specific entrance into a Creative narrative. The "creature" is any character, real or fictional, and the task should be whatever exemplifies something new but (made) plausible about the creature. GOs, an exhaustive list of poetry editing techniques, and directions for a Rationale (Metacognition) are included in the workshop.

James Siegel has been teaching literacy and numeracy for over three decades and as a GT Consultant for Portland Public Schools for over a decade. He holds a BFA and an MFA in writing as well as an MA in TESOL. His publications include dozens of poems in print journals as well as nonfiction in *The Modern Review* and--most recently, (February 9, 2025)--a column in the Portland Press Herald's Food section, ["Secret Spaghetti' sparked a happy marriage for this Portland couple."](#) Additionally, James taught five creative writing electives (Intro & Advanced) at Massabesic High School for half a dozen years where he ran a monthly Open Mic that several neighboring schools attended, which culminated in an award for *Teaching Excellence in Writing* from The College Board. James was a visiting artist at Wheaton College in 2023 where he presented *Task with a Creature*. When not working, James enjoys reading, writing, cooking, and trying to find the golf ball he just hit into the woods.

Session Three - 11:20 to 12:05

1. VT Room: *Using Strength-Based Pedagogy to Engage and Challenge 2E Students' Development* ~ Sally M. Reis, Ph.D. *Audience: All Levels

This session will provide an overview of exciting and positive new research about students who are both academically talented and have disabilities, focusing on recent research on students with ASD. The focus of this work is using strengths and interests to help develop talents in a broad range of students who are twice exceptional. Specific recent research results will be shared about how we can support the academic strengths and interests of this group of students and help them realize their potential.

Sally M. Reis holds the Letitia Neag Chair in Educational Psychology, is a Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor in the Neag School of Education and the former Vice Provost for Academic Affairs at the University of Connecticut. She also served as Principal Investigator of the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented and Head of the Educational Psychology Department. She was a classroom teacher in public education as well as an administrator before her work at UConn. She has authored and co-authored over 280 articles, books, book chapters, monographs and technical reports, and worked in a research team that has generated over 50 million dollars in grants in the last 15 years. Her latest work is funded research that enables an in-depth study of academic success in 2e students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, with the development of programs and interventions based on what works for this population.



2. CT Room: *Beliefs About Giftedness, Gifted Students, and Gifted Education: What Do Beliefs Mean for Teaching, Services, and Advocacy?* ~ Talbot S. Hook

**Audience: All Levels, GT Educators, Classroom Teachers Admin, Parents, K-12, Lecture, Discussion, Hands-on, Workshop*

Are gifted students good at everything? Is giftedness genetic? People in general believe many things about giftedness, gifted students, and gifted education, but what do teachers believe? Furthermore, what are the consequences of those beliefs on instruction and services? Come prepared to think, discuss, and challenge your own beliefs.

Talbot S. Hook is a fourth-year doctoral candidate in the Giftedness, Creativity, and Talent Development program. He received his BA in History and East Asian Studies and his Master of Arts in Teaching with endorsements in World History, Chinese, and English as a Second Language. He worked for six years at a rural Iowan school, teaching courses in technology, Spanish, and ESL, prior to matriculating at UCONN. He previously worked on Project Bump Up, but now currently splits his GA hours between the Center's acceleration study and TA work for EPSY 5710: Introduction to Gifted Education and Talent Development. His research interests are in mindfulness, technology, and conceptual issues in gifted education.

3. RI Room: *Welcome in Divergent Thinking through Poetry: The Power of Random!* ~ Charlotte Agell and Molly Kellogg *Audience: All Levels, GT Educators, Classroom Teachers, K-12, Hands-on, Workshop

Join us for an interactive workshop in which we will use the power of random to create group poems. This will break open our thought patterns to include various synectic thinking activities, which are natural vehicles for differentiation in classrooms of all sorts!

Charlotte Agell and Molly Kellogg are long-time educators, colleagues, and authors. They have taught GT learners, educators, college students and parents. Their book, *A Field Guide to Gifted to Gifted Students*, is used by classroom teachers, students and families to increase understanding of gifted learners. They live in the same town, which makes it easier to share ideas and inspirations on the spur of the moment!

4. York Room: *GT Programming in a K-8 School - One teacher, Diverse Needs ~ Jennifer Wright*

**Audience: All Levels, GT Educators, Classroom Teachers, Administrators, Parents, K-8, Discussion*

This will be a presentation of the program I am developing currently and a discussion of what is working at other small schools around Maine. We will share our ideas and insights about how to meet the needs of our gifted populations while maintaining our dedication to providing appropriate enrichment to the whole school population.

Jennifer Wright has been teaching K-8 for over 20 years. She has been a classroom teacher in both elementary and middle grades and now is the GT Enrichment Specialist K-8 for the Great Salt Bay Community School in Damariscotta, Maine. She was the Lincoln County Teacher of the Year and State Finalist in 2015, a state finalist for the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering in 2021, and received her Master's Certificate in Gifted Education and Talent Development from UCONN in 2024.

5. Somerset Room: *Developing High Potential: Teacher Perceptions and Behaviors ~ Julie H.*

Delgado, Ph.D. **Audience: All Levels, GT Educators, Classroom Teachers, Admin, Parents, K-5, Lecture, Discussion, Hands-on, Wkshp*

Using interviews from Javits-funded Project LIFT, this study sought to understand teacher beliefs around the development of high potential and how professional learning can influence teacher perceptions and practices relating to high-potential students. We explain the results of our interpretive study, identify and contextualize patterns across time, and highlight teacher beliefs in their own voices.

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