



Bexley City School District

To provide educational experiences that engage, equip and empower each student.

FALL NEWSLETTER for FAMILIES of GIFTED LEARNERS

August 18, 2020

Introduction as We Start the New Year

Hello, Bexley community! My name is Dr. Colleen Boyle, and I am the new Coordinator of Curriculum and Gifted for Bexley City Schools. I am excited to be joining the district team of educators and look forward to getting to know our students and families. My role in the district combines all the things I love doing in the field of education: designing curriculum and programs, managing and administering assessments, organizing and analyzing educational data, and, my passion area, coordinating gifted education. I've been an educator for 26 years, most of which has been connected to gifted education in some way. Originally from northeastern Ohio, I've taught in military communities in Texas and Italy before returning to Central Ohio, where I have worked with a variety of districts in both classroom and administrative roles.

As a grown up gifted kid who loved school, I've continued that love for learning. I hold a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Wright State University, and I earned my master's degrees in gifted education from University of North Texas and educational administration from the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. A few years after completing that last degree, the graduate school "itch" returned, and I completed my doctorate in educational psychology, which also included extensive coursework and residency in clinical and school psychology, from Walden University. I've had opportunities to sharpen my leadership skills and continue my professional growth through my involvement as a past president of the Ohio Association for Gifted Children and involvement with the National Association for Gifted Children and SENG organizations.

I am really excited to get to know your children and find ways to support and build upon the existing services for gifted learners in Bexley. This will include collaboration with teachers to help them access tools and develop skills to teach this student population. My work also will involve partnering with all of you as we collaborate to support your children at school and at home. Each quarter, I will send a newsletter to the families of our gifted learners to provide information about the work in Bexley and resources to support you as you raise your family. Additionally, we will be hosting a series of family workshops with topics important to you to help you find resources and make connections with others along the way. More information about that is below.

So, with that, I say thank you for welcoming me to Bexley. If you see me, please introduce yourself. If I can be of help, be sure to reach out to me at colleen.boyle@bexley.us.

What to Expect with Online Learning

By now, you have received many emails and other communications about the start of the school year. We realize that starting a new school year in a distance learning environment is unusual, and our staff is committed to making the transition as smooth as possible for all. Rest assured, your students will have access to the learning experiences appropriate to their needs whether we are digital, hybrid, or all on site. If your child is enrolled in any of the gifted classes, has been accelerated in math, or is slated to take an honors or our Advanced Placement courses, they will still be able to do that in the digital or hybrid environments. Please refer back to communications from your principals and teachers for more details about how those classes will function.

Supporting Gifted Students As They Transition Back to School

It is hard to believe that it has already been five months since students have been physically present in school. And, even though there was a form of distance education last spring after the unexpected building closure, the structures in place for distance learning are more intentional with a goal of making sure students remain on or above grade level this year and moving forward. Gifted children have some unique social emotional characteristics that may require different types of supports during the transition back to school than other children might need.

Consider the following needs that may arise during these next few weeks:

- Gifted learners tend to be thinkers, often asking questions aloud or inside their head. These questions may be deep and may spiral into more questions. That can cause challenges when trying to redirect children to different topics or tasks, may lead to sleeping problems, or may result in the child becoming intensely focused on finding the answers. The novel coronavirus may be a “novel”ty to a gifted learner, and they may try to access more information than they really need or are able to process and understand. The same is true about other major community and world events happening around us. Consider providing an outlet for your child to ask their questions and find answers while creating boundaries on that exploration so they don’t become fixated on the topic.
- Gifted learners may also be intense with their emotional experiences and sense of right or wrong. Their advanced understanding of complex situations, such as the variety of health, social, and political events we have experienced these past few months, may lead them to process things in ways that are atypical for other children their age. They may react with a strong sense of justice, which can be a wonderful motivation to advocate for important causes but can also lead to tunnel vision that limits their ability to consider multiple perspectives before forming an opinion or gameplan. Other times, gifted children may develop anxiety as they ponder all the possible “what ifs?” surrounding a situation. Provide them safe and

appropriate outlets for their emotions. Then, during times of calm, engage in reflective conversations about alternative perspectives or outcomes to help them look beyond their emotion. Next, help them sort out aspects of the situation that are out of their control from those that are within their control and guide them to identify one action within their control that may help make a difference. This last step is important to empower the gifted child in situations that are much larger than them. ([Find more ideas here.](#))

- Some gifted students are naturally organized and intuitively create their own systems and structures for their day and life. Other gifted students are overwhelmed by all the ideas and thoughts running through their minds and struggle with organization of both their thoughts and their environment. Help both types of learners create a visual schedule for their school day that is posted near their learning space. That schedule should include class times for the school day, lunch and snack breaks, time to move around and be active, and unstructured time after school to let their mind do what it will. Guide your child to set up their learning space so it is free of distractions and is supplied with the books and materials needed for class. Help them begin to time their meals and limited snacks plus restroom breaks to mimic a day at school. This will ensure they don't miss live learning activities and will help ease the transition back into school buildings when that time comes. It may take some trial and error to find organizational strategies that work for your child, and those strategies may not be the ones that would work for you. But the effort will be well worth it in the end.

Resources for Supporting Gifted Learners During COVID-19

- [NAGC Supporting Your Gifted Child During COVID-19](#)
- [NAGC at Home Resources for Educators and Parents During COVID-19](#) (includes webinars)
- [SENG Gifted School-at-Home During COVID-19 webinar](#)
- [SENG Parenting During the COVID-19 Pandemic webinar](#)
- [Ohio Association for Gifted Children COVID-19 Resource Links](#)

Upcoming Family Engagement Opportunities

We are excited to offer a series of workshops for parents, guardians, and caregivers of Bexley students who are gifted. The dates and times are listed below. We will meet via Zoom in September and will talk about a variety of resources available to support your child and family. Details about future meetings will be shared shortly before they occur. In order to plan sessions throughout the year that are relevant to the community, we need your input about possible topics. [Please complete this survey](#) by August 31 to indicate your interest in proposed topics and to share ideas for other topics that are not listed.

- September 17 - Resources to Support Gifted Learners - 6:30-7:30pm - [join via Zoom](#)
- November 12 - Topic TBD - 6:30-7:30pm - location TBD
- January 14 - Topic TBD - 6:30-7:30pm - location TBD

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- April 8 - Topic TBD - 6:30-7:30pm - location TBD

You are also invited to (virtually) attend the Ohio Association for Gifted Children's Parent Day on Sunday, October 18. National and state speakers will talk about social emotional development of gifted children and how giftedness impacts families. For more information and to register for this event, [download the registration form here](#).