



MEET OUR TEAM



Megan Miller is starting her second year as a Gifted Consultative Teacher in St. Johns County. Ms. Miller currently serves Bartram Trail High School, Pacetti Bay and Switzerland Point Middle Schools. Prior to this position, Megan taught middle school students in St. Johns County for five years. As a graduate of the St. Johns County School District, she is proud to serve her home district and contribute to the gifted program that she participated in as a student. Megan

welcomed her second child in January, who joins a two year-old big brother. When she's not teaching, you can find Megan with her husband, chasing her boys.

Erin Arnold has been teaching gifted students in St. Johns County for six years, and has worked specifically as a Gifted Consultative Teacher for two years. Erin's favorite part about working as an itinerant teacher is being able to collaborate with all kinds of interesting students and teachers at her nine different schools. Erin currently serves Webster, Crookshank, Osceola, Wards Creek, South Woods, R. B. Hunt, Hartley, Ketterlinus, and Otis Mason Elementary Schools. In her free time, Erin likes to play beach volleyball with her family and run obstacle races with her best friend.



THERESA STEVENS has been with the high school gifted program since 2013. She previously taught elementary gifted students. Ms. Stevens also facilitates SJCS teachers' gifted endorsement classes. Ms. Stevens has three grown children: a son still in college, a daughter who also teaches, and another daughter who works with dolphins as a marine biologist. Ms. Stevens states, *"The best thing about this job is getting to know the students as they grow up, since many of them I originally met when they were 10. I'm so proud of them!"*

Jaci Racano has served gifted students at the middle school level in St. Johns County for the last 11 years. This is her second year as a Gifted Consultative Teacher for the district. She currently serves Menendez and Ponte Vedra High Schools, as well as Gamble Rogers and Murray Middle Schools. Jaci truly enjoys the uniqueness of this position. *"..being able to serve students in middle school and see them transition to high school is one of the best parts of this job-it allows for relationships to build and continue."*

Jaci has two boys who go to school in St. Johns County. She enjoys reading and playing baseball with her kids when not working.



Beth Upchurch currently serves students at St. Augustine and Nease High Schools, and Sebastian Middle School. This is Beth's third year as a Gifted Consultative Teacher, and considers it a privilege to have served students at elementary, middle and high school levels. Beth has over 15 years in the classroom, and served her school as an Instructional Literacy Coach.



Beth loves her students' uniqueness, challenges, and talents. The best thing about this position is,

"...the relationships I build with my students and families, and the opportunity to teach them about themselves so they not only understand themselves better, but find their inner potential to reach their goals."

When not at school, Beth loves spending time with her husband, 4 children, and 6 grandchildren.



Christina Milton is a former science teacher with a passion for all things science as well as challenging and differentiated curriculum. This is her second year serving Creekside High School, as the Gifted Consultative Teacher.

"I am blessed to be a part of the gifted team. We are able to work with students so that they can realize and reach their dreams, confront and solve challenges, and be happy and effective citizens of their academic environments. I love being in a position to support students with all aspects of their high school life, from academics, to college, and beyond."

Amy Brim, native to Northeast Florida, is beginning her twentieth year as a Gifted Education teacher, where she has a passion for inspiring children to be life-long learners. She graduated with her Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education from Georgia Southern University and earned her Gifted Endorsement from the College of Charleston.

Mrs. Brim proudly serves as a gifted itinerant teacher at Ocean Palms, Valley Ridge Academy, Palencia, Cunningham Creek, and PV/Rawlings Schools, teaching children in Kindergarten to 8th grade. Mrs. Brim enjoys spending family time with her supportive husband and awesome twins in the 10th grade and their toy poodle. Their family loves spending time at the beach, playing soccer, and salt-water fishing.



"It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge."-Albert Einstein

Mary Anne Dunn is our newest addition to the Gifted Itinerant Team and is excited to begin serving seven of the Northern county schools: Julington Creek, Durbin Creek, Hickory Creek, Mill Creek, Timberlin Creek, Patriot Oaks and Liberty Pines Schools. She has been teaching elementary school for fourteen years and for the last five years, she's



been teaching gifted students in St. John's County. *"Empowering students through their gifts and talents" is Mary Anne's personal mission statement and she finds it very rewarding to be working with our creative future leaders!*

Mary Anne and her husband have two college age kids. Their son, Trey attends UCF and is currently studying Computer Science. Their daughter, Lindsay attends FSU and is currently studying Marketing. Mary Anne's blood runneth **orange**. Go Tigers! That is, CLEMSON TIGERS!

BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES

Children who are gifted form a diverse group with a variety of needs and, therefore, require a range of service options.

Children who are gifted learn at a faster rate than other children of their age, experience and environment and, therefore, can often move through the curriculum at a more rapid pace (which is developmentally appropriate for them).

Children who are gifted share the ability to think with more complexity and abstraction than other children of their same age, experience and environment and, therefore, require differentiation in the curriculum.

Children who are gifted have some unique social needs and may feel "different" from other children of their age, experience and environment; they, therefore, may need access to appropriate counseling and support to ensure their effective well-being.

Because of their different learning and social needs, children who are gifted require time with others, who are similar to them in order to establish cognitive relationships and to facilitate their academic and social growth.

Because the learning needs of children who are gifted are different from other children of their age, experience or environment, teachers responsible for these students must have an appropriate base of knowledge and skills to meet these needs, and should enjoy working with these students. When an appropriate differentiated education is not provided, children who are gifted do not thrive in school and may even suffer cognitive or affective harm.

Services for children who are gifted must be part of an overall educational program that supports excellence for all students; this "excellence" must include opportunities for advanced learners. The early educational experiences of potentially gifted students help to shape their learning habits; therefore, it is essential that young people with high abilities have access to an appropriately stimulating and challenging education to help ensure that their potential is developed.

When given appropriate educational opportunities, children who are gifted will become knowledgeable and, therefore, their needs for differentiation increase as well, as compared to others of their age, experience, and environment.

Sources: Mary Ruth Coleman and James L. Gallagher. *Appropriate Differentiated Services: Guides for best practices in the education of gifted children.* Gifted Child Today, 85 (5), 32-33. (adapted)

ON THE HORIZON...

Parent Training at Liberty Pines on Thursday, October 20, 6:30-8:00 on Gifted Characteristics, Goal Setting and Mindset.

National Association for Gifted Children NAGC Annual Convention & Exhibition

November 03 - 06
Walt Disney World® Resort

Florida Association for the Gifted (FLAG) Annual Meeting

November 5
Disney's Coronado Springs
Orlando, FL

"THE RESPECT THAT LEADERSHIP MUST HAVE REQUIRES THAT ONE'S ETHICS BE WITHOUT QUESTION. A LEADER NOT ONLY STAYS ABOVE THE LINE BETWEEN RIGHT AND WRONG, HE STAYS WELL CLEAR OF THE GRAY AREAS."

— G. ALAN BERNARD

Character Counts Connection

By Erin Arnold

Most of us know what it means to be fair. We learn it at an early age: Cut the slices of the cake equally so everyone gets their fair share. Don't cut in line. Don't cheat on assignments or while playing games. Learning to be fair with others is reinforced as often as possible, especially in school. However, sometimes we forget how to be fair to ourselves. Gifted students (and PARENTS!) tend to forget this important detail.

What does it mean to be fair to yourself?

Don't compare yourself to others. Theodore Roosevelt said: "Comparison is the thief of joy". We are not all the same. It isn't fair to compare yourself to someone based on their looks, accomplishments, or motivation in life. Everyone has their own struggles that we can't see and probably wouldn't want to trade with! Being fair to yourself is accepting who you are and making the most of it each day.

Being fair to yourself is knowing that it is okay to make mistakes. Would you tell someone else they should quit something if they didn't do it right the first time? Give yourself a fair shot at trying new things and allow yourself to make mistakes along the way.

Give yourself some positive reinforcement and turn off the negative voice. We all know it isn't fair to shout negative things about another team on the sidelines. It distracts the players and throws them off. Why let your inner voice shout mean things at you when you are taking a test, playing a sport, or anything else? Give yourself a fair chance and shout some good things from the sidelines like, "You got this!"

Being fair to yourself is leveling the playing field. Is it fair to play a game with a team missing half its players? Your ability to succeed depends on key players like food, water, sleep, and love. If you are missing or running low on any of these elements, you are not going to be at your best. Give yourself a fighting chance and make sure

you keep yourself balanced. It isn't fair to be mad at yourself for forgetting your planner when you only slept for 3 hours the night before. Take care of yourself and the little mistakes that make you so angry won't happen quite so often.

Most of all being fair to yourself means showing yourself the same respect and patience that you would show others and doing the best you can every day.

