



Mark Hess

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Mark Hess is in his 37th year in K-12 public education and is a Teacher on Special

Assignment, Gifted Programs Specialist, in Colorado Springs School District 11. He is a National Association for Gifted Children Board Member and president of the Colorado Association for Gifted and Talented. Mark is a former member of SENG's Board of Directors as well as the editor of the SENG Library. Mark presents for parent groups, regional associations, school districts, and at national and state gifted conferences throughout the west. His articles have appeared in SENG and NAGC publications. As *Portable Gifted and Talented*, he leads in-services, has published 215+ units specifically designed for gifted learners, and has shared over 50,000 free resources with teachers. He has published nine books (Routledge, Prufrock Press, and Gifted Unlimited) including 4th, 5th, and 6th grade Gifted Social-Emotional curriculum books, a 4-6th grade Math Projects book for gifted learners, 4th, 5th, and 6th grade Hands-on Literacy, and *I Used to Be Gifted*, which as a #1 new release in gifted education on Amazon.

Teacher Training, Parent, and “Kid” Talks

While I have an ever-evolving line-up of in-services and presentations, I prefer to refine specific content to meet a school district's needs and budget. With over 215 lessons and units designed specifically for gifted learners, I match presentations with lessons and units that teachers can use the very next day. These lessons are part of the presentation package—not stand-alone purchases at an additional cost.

With that in mind, the content listed below can be excellent jumping-off points and can be adapted from one-hour talks to half and full day in-services to multi-day trainings.



Hope, What We Lost, and How to Get Found: Engaging Social-Emotional Lessons for Gifted Learners

Teachers working with gifted children are in a unique position to understand what we have lost since the spring of 2020. Feelings of languishing . . . anticipatory grief . . . let's help students (and ourselves) get found again. In this presentation, attendees will explore the connections—both academic and social-emotional—through which gifted learners build hope. Our gifted kids, prone to anxiety and an existential doubt brought to life through idealism, living intense pathways in the world, and carrying a strong sense of justice, may need help in building a hopeful outlook. We seek to understand the components of building hope through interactive SEL activities: to foster connections and relationships, to encourage students through self-expression and individuality, to process moments of perfectionism in healthy ways, and to generate agency and resilience through targeted lessons in creativity, metaphors, and interactive activities. Our shared activities are standards-driven and part of a robust academic experience for gifted learners. Four hands-on lessons and units (ready use in the classroom tomorrow) both help guide our teachers and students and comprise the components of building hope.

I Just Fell Off the Wave of Wonderfulness: Learning How to Thrive

From hitting the ground running like a to falling off the wave of wonderfulness, living intensities, and feeling “othered,” we will explore the social and emotional aspects of gifted learners. How can we understand self-oriented and socially-oriented perfectionists, nurture virtuosity and authenticity, and help guide gifted learners who take their perceived shortcomings straight to their hearts? What does it mean for individuals to truly thrive—to combine virtuosities and vulnerabilities to express brilliance? What hurdles must gifted boys and girls leap? How do we guide gifted learners who sometimes feel like they are moving through a world with their shoes on the wrong feet, not only run and keep running, but learn how to fly? Together we explore causes and equip ourselves with practical interventions—including lessons and tools you can easily adapt to your classroom.



I Used to be Gifted

Yes, you were gifted. You still are. There is no used to be in any definition. Giftedness does not run out; it doesn't have a border; giftedness is a way of being. All of your life you have been thinking things other people did not typically think about, making connections others did not easily make, feeling the world more intensely than others. To you, it just seemed normal . . . because the only head you could see inside of was your own. Have you or your kids ever missed out on a challenge because you were surfing a wave of wonderfulness? Fallen victim to bomb cyclone perfectionism? Tried to win the award for “best normal?” Apologized for doing well?

Do you need to slow down, stop feeling so much, stop caring so much? Do you still feel, speak, and touch a poetry of the world that is beautiful and abundant? Join me for a chat about gifted kids, teaching gifted kids, gifted parenting, and ultimately ourselves.

[Understanding the Vast Potential of Nonverbal and General Intellectual Talent, Part One](#), and

[Nurturing Nonverbal Expressions of Brilliance: Gifted Kids Shining in the Classroom, Part Two](#) -- *the Nonverbal Brilliance sessions are the most requested presentations throughout Colorado and the West and have twice been an abbreviated NAGC session at national conferences.*



Are you sure that kid is gifted? Many of our underserved populations' strengths lie outside of words or numbers, and many of our most talented future scientists, artists, and mechanical wizards express their brilliance in ways apart from language . . . yet up to 80% of school instruction centers around reading and writing. In this professional development session, we learn ways to nurture critical thinking through visual and spatial approaches. Together we learn about the gifts of our future engineers, surgeons, choreographers, software designers, artists, and teachers by unpacking the strengths and abilities of nonverbal talent through the lens of equitable identification and understanding.

[Oh Yes, they Can! Nonverbal Expressions of Brilliance in the ELA Classroom:](#)

[Zoom In with Metaphors, Close Reading, Literacy, Phonological Loops, and the Visuo-Spatial Sketchpad](#)

Pairs wonderfully with the nonverbal ability in-services or stands strong on its own.

Working memory is activated by combining our brain's formation of phonological loops (words) and our visuo-spatial sketchpad (images), and working memory is a stronger predictor of academic success in kindergarten than IQ. Similarly, metaphors combine referent sources (usually pictures or words) and emotional connections to depth of understanding and critical thinking. The combination of working memory and metaphors is one of the most engaging and powerful ways to teach gifted learners. From graphic design to graphic novels and picture books, from fine art to physical art to STEAM projects, and from metaphors to videos to simulations and poetry, we'll explore powerful connections between what we see and what we hear or read through language. As always, participants walk away with lessons and units they can use tomorrow!.

[Nurturing Nonverbal Brilliance in English Language Gifted Learners \(with Nisia Patalan of Spark Education\)](#)

Students who are both linguistically diverse AND gifted have unique characteristics and needs. Tapping into their non-verbal abilities develops potential, increases understanding, and provides social and emotional support without over-reliance on words. What does nonverbal brilliance look like, and how do we nurture it in our EL students?

*Workshop hours may be counted towards the CLDE licensure requirement in Colorado.

[Stretching Gifted Math Minds with Projects and Simulations \(Grades 2-6\)](#)

Let's stretch the curriculum, dig deeper, and add excitement with hands-on experiences for our gifted and advanced learners. This half or full day workshop is highly participatory and engaging for teachers who will then take full lessons and units straight to the classroom. Get ready to use a T-square, compass, build ramps, and drop mini smokejumpers into a wildfire!

[Generation Z and Alpha Superpowers Activated: Critical Thinking Through Videos](#)

One of our current generation's superpowers is their visual orientation, and we can use this talent to engage gifted learners in critical thinking through short videos. With nearly 60% of our students citing Youtube as their preferred way to learn, we sneaky teachers can guide students to love lessons across the curriculum, engage in analytical thought, and exchange discourse through short videos. Challenge accepted!

Participants will practice three video analysis frameworks, take home to their classroom tools and lesson plans that can be used tomorrow (including a library of mini-lessons and projects), and engage students with videos from launches to quick-hitting objectives-based mini-lessons to full units.

[Of Grizzly Bears and Yellow Labs: A Practical Guide to Teaching Social-emotional Lessons to Gifted Boys](#)

How do we invite boys into social-emotional classroom lessons in a non-threatening way? This session will examine the wonderful (and conflicted) world of "boyiness" and suggest ways we can use humor, hands-on learning, mystery, and activities to engage boys in social-emotional lessons. Each participant will receive a fully developed lesson plan.



[Tailwinds: A Practical Guide to Teaching Social-Emotional Lessons to Gifted Girls](#)

Let's find practical and engaging social-emotional lessons to help girls recognize their own amazing abilities and understand their vast potential. In this session, participants will understand some of the societal pressures which place girls in an under-represented population of gifted and talented and will receive a fully developed lesson plan to take back to the classroom.

[Gifted Kids and Programming in the Middle: Secretly Smart](#)

This isn't just for middle school teachers! Whereas gifted third graders are often freely expressive and confident about whom they are, the most cited drawback to being identified a gifted learner by middle school students is being identified as a gifted learner in the first place. At no other time than this tipping point in the middle is it more important to build safe and accepting environments in a gifted child's academic and social-emotional life. Let's understand strategies to build relationships, affiliation, and affinity with our students—the key components to developing a strong sense of belonging, identity, and acceptance.

[Beyond Discussion: Relevant, Engaging Social-Emotional Lessons](#)

Bolster your understanding of the social emotional needs of gifted learners, and help gifted learners put together the pieces of their own giftedness with relevant, engaging lessons. Elevate social-emotional lessons, enhance creativity, and add excitement to your gifted and talented classroom with methods and resources which draw creative, critical responses from your K-5 students. Participants will learn methods for creating physical metaphors, making connections to academic standards, and creating hands-on learning opportunities for their gifted students. Each participant will receive a fully developed social-emotional lesson ready to use on Monday for their K-5 students.



[Zoom Out to Zoom In: Close Reading and Constructing Metaphors for Gifted Learners](#)

Let's take gifted learners outside the text with primary sources, personal connections, and extended metaphors to help find their way to a closer reading of the text. We'll make literacy both hands-on and personal on our pathway to finding deeper meaning in language.

[Precocious Rapsallions: Fostering Talent Development in Primary Grades Gifted Learners](#)

In this session, we seek to understand and nurture our youngest gifted learners (Pre-K through 2nd) through best practices in fostering talent development. We will sharpen our lens around key characteristics and zero in on meeting these needs through engaging lessons. All participants will receive a fully developed lesson they can use tomorrow!

Reaching and Teaching Advanced and Gifted Learners: Starting Strong for Regular Classroom Teacher

Giftedness is a vivid, complex, and penetrating state of being. Our gifted students - sometimes misunderstood and misdiagnosed - require unique supports in the educational system. Advanced ability students test the top end of the system and need additional enrichment and challenges. In this course, participants will better understand the multi-faceted aspects of giftedness, discover and share practical classroom strategies for meeting the need of gifted and advanced learners, and collaborate to both understand gifted and advanced learners and to lead enriched activities in all classrooms.



Preparing for Competitive, Merit-Based Scholarships – for Students and their Parents

This one-hour presentation details the five key areas needed to submit competitive scholarship applications: scholarship, leadership, service and participation, recommendations, and essays. This presentation is brought to you through the Boettcher Foundation's Ambassador Program and comes as a free community service.

This One Goes to 11 – for Parents and Teachers (and kids, too!)

Gifted children experience the world in a more vivid and intense way than others. Gifted children make connections others do not, and they often absorb interactions with people, ideas, and the physical world in very personal and meaningful ways. In understanding gifted learners, we label these emotional, physical, and intellectual tendencies as *overexcitabilities*. Let's work together to understand and nurture the sensitivity, intensity, and development potential of gifted children.

You are Not Alone – for Gifted Students, Grades 6-12

What does it mean to be gifted, and what challenges do we share with other gifted learners? How do we address our own high expectations? What do we do with the myriad of possibilities our future offers?

How can we turn our vivid and interconnected life experiences into positive exchanges with the world around us? Together we laugh, tell stories, take comfort, understand, and dig a little deeper.

Getting Started with Advocacy – for Parents

What are the basic principals to guide you as you support your gifted child, and what is the best way to make connections with teachers? How can parents develop a positive rapport with school personnel and advocate for a positive, strength-based experience for their child?

So Your Child has been Identified for the Gifted and Talented Program . . . What Does that Mean? -- for Parents

What is giftedness, and how can parents best support their gifted children. From intensities to asynchronicity, neurodiversity to precocity, and from perfectionism to achievement, let's get to know our children from the inside out.

Pricing

Pricing is based on preparation time, travel, presentation length, and follow-ups. Presentations for educators come with digitized/printable lessons and units that can be used with gifted learners the very next day.

I have a true passion for sharing my understanding and experience with others, and I want to work with school districts and organizations to meets their needs for costs within their budget.

Understanding the general principals above, I have a working price of \$2,000 for a full-day 7.5 hour in-service. Limited budget? Less time available? More time needed? Let's work together to find the most appropriate price and service!