

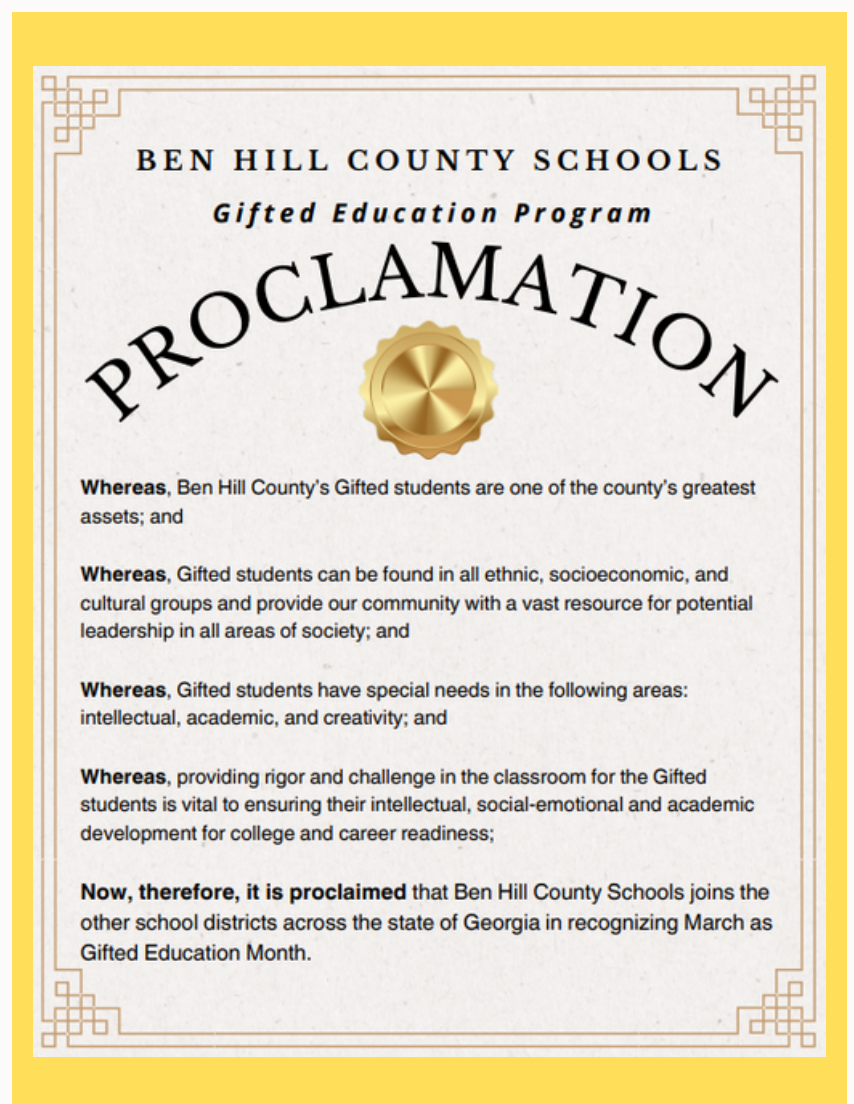
# GIFTED GAZETTE

## Ben Hill County Schools

### A Note from the Gifted Coordinator

March is Gifted Month across the state of Georgia. We celebrate the students who continue to display their talents and abilities as they course their educational voyage. We thank the teachers who inspire these students in the classroom and beyond. We also thank the parents and community who encourage the students to give their best as they pursue their dreams.

Susan Henry  
Gifted Coordinator  
Ben Hill County Schools  
susan.henry@benhillschools.org  
229-409-5500 Ext. 5811



# *Celebrating Gifted Education Month*

## **BHCS Gifted Certified Staff**



**Ben Hill County Preschool**



**Ben Hill Primary School**

not pictured: Rose Grimes, David Ray



**Ben Hill Elementary School**



**Ben Hill Middle School**



**Fitzgerald High School  
College & Career Academy**

*Thank you for your hard work  
and dedication to the students  
of Ben Hill County Schools.*





**TEACHERS...****INTERESTED IN  
GETTING YOUR  
GIFTED ENDORSEMENT?****PLEASE CONTACT ME****[susan.henry@benhillschools.org](mailto:susan.henry@benhillschools.org)****The Times | Games**

Since the launch of The Crossword in 1942, The Times has captivated solvers by providing engaging word and logic games. In 2014, we introduced The Mini Crossword — followed by Spelling Bee, Letter Boxed, Tiles and Vertex. In early 2022, we proudly added Wordle to our collection.

**[nytimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com)**

## BHCS Headlines



### Rubber Band Powered Cars at BHES

Students in Susan Spivey's 4th and 5th grade classes designed and built rubber band powered cars through the 2024 Science Buddies Engineering Challenge. Students were scored on how far the car traveled and the number of materials they used in the building. The farther the car went and the fewer materials used, resulted in a higher score. The students were given a list of approved materials to be used and could only use clear tape, masking tape, or painters' tape to put the car together. The car had to be completely powered by a rubber band. Students learned many concepts for this challenge, including how wheels and axles work and the function of potential and kinetic energy. The pair that scored the highest at BHES was **Tripp Bagwell** and **Ronnie Hamrick**. Their car traveled 744 centimeters. They had a final score of 1457 points which was over 500 points higher than 2nd place in our school.



## More BHCS Headlines



### BHMS Future Problem Solvers State Bowl

Six teams from Ben Hill Middle School (three 6th grade students and three 7th/8th grade students) qualified for the Future Problem Solvers State Bowl that will be taking place at Ben Hill Middle School on March 12th, 2024. The teams will be given two hours total to read a Future Scene, collaborate, and apply the six-step problem solving process to an agreed upon future issue. Research will begin shortly on the topic of Autonomous Vehicles, and ultimately the students will integrate this research into their project. The last step of this process is an Action Plan to solve the major issue that the students came up with, and each group will create a presentation of their Action Plan to present to Future Problem Solving Staff on March 20th, 2024. Good luck!



**Front Row:** Daisy Francis, Lexie Clemons, Kylie Howell, Myla Heitzman, Morgan Wilson, River Fussell

**Middle Row:** Jace Heitzman, Colton McCurdy, Auden Nguyen, Gauresh Patel, Jaidyn Lundy, Aleighya Jackson, Karly Powell, Clayton Boxey

**Back Row:** Briana Araiza, Kimberly Easom, Carter Snowden, Justus Merchant, Alan Mercier, Ryan Hamilton, Gavin Mills, Kolby Smith



**FPSPI**  
FUTURE PROBLEM SOLVING PROGRAM  
INTERNATIONAL



## More BHCS Headlines



### BHMS Future Problem Solvers State Bowl continued...



**Ryan Hamilton, Colton McCurdy, Lexie Clemons, Kylie Howell**



**Kimberly Easom, Daisy Francis, Savannah Washington**



**Myla Heitzman, Morgan Wilson**



**Karly Powell, Aleighya Jackson, River Fussell, Clayton Boxey**



**Jace Heitzman, Justus Merchant, Carter Snowden, Alan Mercier**



**Jaidyn Lundy, Gavin Mills, Gauresh Patel, Auden Nguyen**



**Kolby Smith, Briana Araiza**

## Understanding Self-Taught Reading

by Carol Bainbridge

If your toddler or preschooler has started reading books on their own with very little instruction from you—aside from reading to them regularly—you may have a self-taught reader. Self-taught reading, also known as spontaneous reading, is when a child figures out how to read without any formal reading instruction.

This can be a sign of giftedness or of neurodivergence, but not always. Self-taught readers have broken the reading code (the alphabet as a symbol system of sounds and words). But they still need your guidance and encouragement to enjoy a lifetime of reading.

**[Read full article.](#)**



FEATURED GIFTED  
TEACHER*Sabitha Menon*

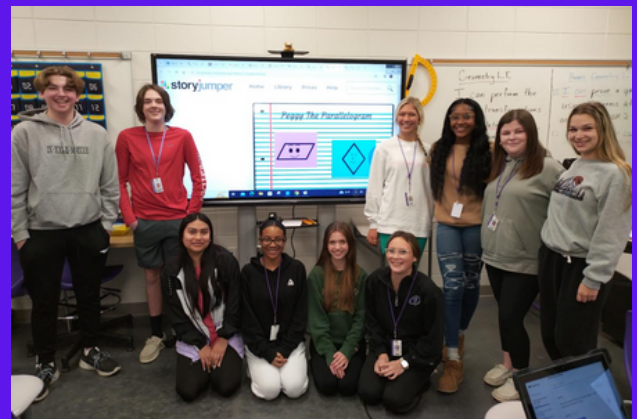
Sabitha Menon joined Fitzgerald High School in 2006 where she currently teaches math. She taught math in India for ten years before coming to the United States. She earned a Bachelors Degree in Mathematics with a minor in Physics and Statistics. She went on to earn a Masters Degree in Secondary Education with a focus in Mathematics Education from Georgia Southern University. Sabitha was selected as Star Teacher for the 2019-2020 and the 2023-2024 school years. She was also selected as Teacher of the Year for FHSCCA for the 2021-2022 school year. Sabitha says, "I love math and enjoy teaching math. I think I owe it all to the great teachers who taught me math. It gives me immense energy when any student tells me that they feel more confident and comfortable doing math in my class." She is married with two sons. She loves spending time with her family and enjoys going to the beach. Sabitha enjoys playing sudoku and board games in her free time. She also enjoys yoga and meditation.

## More BHCS Headlines



## StoryJumper...A Creative Way to Learn Geometry

Collaborative groups in Mr. Yarbrough Honors Geometry class at FHSCCA used StoryJumper to create and present stories about special mathematical shapes. Each group was tasked with creating a cast, developing a plot, and designing a math problem highlighting the properties of special quadrilaterals and triangles.



Pictured from Left: Ethan McCrimmon, Grant Sanders, Kimberly Torres, Zionee Pitts, Cassidy Peavy, McKenzie Branch, Miley Young, Amy Young, Emma Jo Roberts, Aubree Henry



[storyjumper.com](https://storyjumper.com)



## Famous Inventors

BHPS students in Kelly Kight's Gifted Education classes researched and created presentations centered around famous inventors. Some of the famous inventors included Mark Zuckerberg, Benjamin Franklin, Hedy Lamarr, Levi Strauss, John Deere, Louis Braille, Alexander Graham Bell, Steve Chen, Henry Ford, and Eleanor Abbott. The presentations included facts about the inventors as well as timelines of the inventor's lives. Dressed in costume, students presented their projects to their parents, teachers, and classmates at the FHSCCA Performing Arts Center. We are so proud of these students!



## More BHCS Headlines



**Front Row:** Kemple McMillian, Amelia Lewis, Jacey Pendergrass, Rylee Roberson, Sullivan Gunter, Arlie Lott, Kelly Kight

**Back Row:** Collin Floyd, Kyran Lewis, Levi Cobb, Gael Aguazul, Elliot Reaves, Ja'Kobi Ford, Erin Andrews



**Front Row:** Kelly Kight, Adam Thorpe, Luna Perez, Morgan Washington, Foster Blackstock, Paisleigh Stanford, Eva Grace Pierce, Marshall Boxey

**Back Row:** Eli Johnson, Isaac McCrimmon, Joshua Garcia-Meza, Aubrey Cowart, Nicholas Avila, Anslee Watkins, Gracie Bryan, Cade Glass, P.J. Ford

**Not Pictured:** Mason Boxey, Drew Johnson

*"Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out."*

-Robert Collier



## More BHCS Headlines

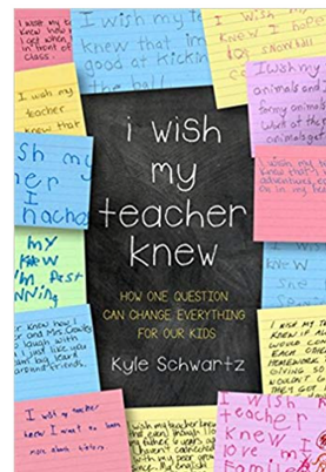


### Famous Inventors continued...



Pictured in the group photos



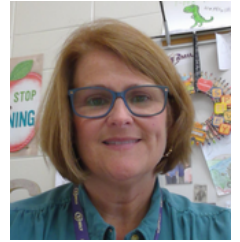
PROFESSIONAL LEARNING  
OPPORTUNITY**FREE****FROM THE REZULLI CENTER FOR  
CREATIVITY, GIFTED EDUCATION, AND  
TALENT DEVELOPMENT**May 11 @ 11 am, Dina Brulles - Building  
and Supporting Inclusive Gifted Services[Register Here](#)*Great  
read!***Purchase  
here.**

One day, third-grade teacher Kyle Schwartz asked her students to fill-in-the-blank in this sentence: "I wish my teacher knew \_\_\_\_." The results astounded her. Some answers were humorous, others were heartbreaking-all were profoundly moving and enlightening. The results opened her eyes to the need for educators to understand the unique realities their students face in order to create an open, safe and supportive place in the classroom. When Schwartz shared her experience online, #IWishMyTeacherKnew became an immediate worldwide viral phenomenon. Schwartz's book tells the story of #IWishMyTeacherKnew, including many students' emotional and insightful responses, and ultimately provides an invaluable guide for teachers, parents, and communities.

**AP SESSIONS  
AVAILABLE**[US History Help Session](#)  
[English Language Help Session](#)**TEACHER  
HUMOR****YOU KNOW YOU'RE A TEACHER  
IF THIS IGNITES A FEELING  
OF RAGE INSIDE YOU****BORED  
TEACHERS****BHCS Spring referrals for  
Gifted Education began on  
February 26.****Please see your RTI  
Coordinator or lead Gifted  
teacher for more details.**

# INTERVIEW

## With a Gifted Education Teacher...Susan Spivey



### How did you decide to enter the field of education?

I actually fell into teaching. I was not planning on a career in teaching, but I had a degree in Music Performance and needed a job. I started out as a music teacher and then moved into the regular classroom. I had always had gifted students in my room, and I loved the hands-on approach with students. The best place to be able to have a student-centered classroom for me was in the gifted resource room. I loved my gifted classes growing up and wanted to help students love a space that they could be themselves in.

### What do you think all GT students need the most?

They need for teachers and other people to realize that they are not always going to love academics. They may not be your most behaved student, or the one that makes the best grades. Many times your gifted students do behave and make great grades, but on the whole they like to talk and they get bored easily. They move around a lot and they don't like to be still. They are going to question everything and think they have an answer for everything as well. They also like to push the limits, but they need parameters and they need expectations.

### What is the greatest reward of being a GT teacher?

Being able to see my students grow from 3rd grade to 5th grade is a big reward. Most teachers get one year with their students, but I am able to teach them for 3 years. I see them start my class with a certain set of skills, and then by the time they finish 5th grade, I am able to see these skills mature and grow. Not all gifted students are the same. In fact, they are all quite different. They don't necessarily love school and they aren't always motivated, but if you can find their niche and get them involved with something they love, you will see the person that they can become. I try to find that spark that makes them tick, and then I love to see their confidence when they excel in that area.

### What qualities should a GT teacher possess?

Teachers of gifted students need to realize that each student is different. It really doesn't take a unique teacher just someone who will let gifted students be themselves. They are still children, and they need direction, but they also need to be allowed to be quirky and different.

### What advice do you have to offer someone who is considering entering the field of education for GT students?

Be ready to provide gifted students with an environment that lets them experience something different outside of the regular classroom if you are teaching a resource gifted class. These students need hands-on activities, not just worksheets, and they need to be able to approach problems through many different avenues.



# INTERVIEW

## With a Gifted Education Teacher...Kelly Kight



### **How did you decide to enter the field of education?**

I have always been drawn to children. I always spent lots of time babysitting, working with children in church, teaching VBS each summer, and working in the childcare center at Georgia Southwestern during my undergraduate work. Once it was time to choose a major in college, choosing education was the most natural choice for myself. It wasn't really a decision I had to think about, it was something I always knew would happen.

### **What do you think all GT students need the most?**

Understanding!! GT students learn in different ways and think in different ways. Sometimes it is not always the same ways their teachers and peers may think. That can be frustrating for everyone. When teaching GT students, I have learned it is important to be as understanding as possible. There are times when I may not understand their thinking or rationale, but they do. I have to continue to try and understand them and their thinking so they know how important they are to me.

### **What is the greatest reward of being a GT teacher?**

As with teaching all of my students through the years, I love it when they come back to visit and say "I loved your class", or "I remember when we did.....". When my GT students come back to visit, they love to reminisce about the cool projects, field trips, or different areas of study that made my class a little bit different or special. I love having that connection with my students and it is something that makes being a GT teacher special.

### **What qualities should a GT teacher possess?**

Patience!! GT students are very special students. These students are hard-working, motivated, and mostly self-starters. They are often working faster than I am, and their brains are ALWAYS working faster than their bodies! This requires a great deal of patience from their teachers when delivering instruction, and in everyday conversation.

### **What advice do you have to offer someone who is considering entering the field of education for GT students?**

Be prepared to answer MANY questions every single day! Their minds seek knowledge and they will ask questions constantly. Be prepared for GT students to talk a lot! Most of these students have lots to say and many things to share, and they are going to share no matter what. Have a BIG heart and be prepared to give LOTS of LOVE!! These very special students have so much to offer and deserve as much understanding, patience, and love as all students. They are an absolute joy to teach!

## More BHCS Headlines



### Learning Stations Promote Growth

One goal of education is to provide experiences which facilitate a student's total growth toward independence. Educators can do much to guide and encourage this growth by the kinds of learning experiences they provide. To facilitate independent thought and action, opportunities for exploration, inquiry, expression, discovery, collaboration and creativity should be provided. One way to provide these opportunities is to implement stations or centers in the classroom. Kelly Kight, at Ben Hill Primary School is doing just that with her Gifted students.



Top: Elliot Reaves, Collin Floyd  
Bottom: Jacey Pendergrass,  
Amelia Lewis



Gael Aguazul  
Levi Cobb



Kyran Lewis



Arlie Lott



Erin Andrews



Rylee Roberson  
Sullivan Gunter



Aubrey Cowart  
Isaac McCrimmon



Marshall Boxey  
Cade Glass



P.J. Ford



Foster Blackstock



Top: Drew Johnson, Eva Grace Pierce  
Bottom: Nicholas Avila, Paisley Stanford



Gracie Bryan



## How do I support my Gifted child at home?

- Collect resources on your child's topics of interests, such as books, videos, and websites. Make time to talk to your child every day and encourage her active questioning. Find peers or groups who share similar interests.
- It can be easy to forget your child is just a child because he may be able to have adult conversations about advanced topics. Allow your child the freedoms or responsibilities appropriate for his individual emotional or social development.
- Gifted children are often highly observant and sensitive to social issues and fairness. Model the behavior and respect of others you expect of your child. Find opportunities for him to participate in acts of service that can make a difference.
- Provide challenge outside of school. Enrichment is incredibly beneficial whether it supplements school content or explores interests or passions. This could be in any area, whether that be through music, sports, or academic camps.
- Encourage your child to take risks. Celebrate mistakes as learning opportunities. When you make mistakes, model positive ways to problem-solve and grow

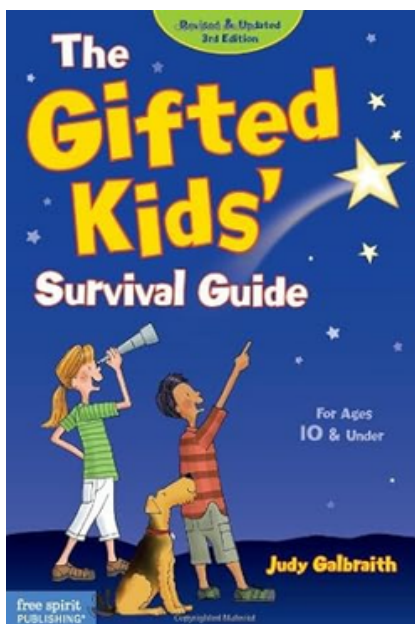


## IS MY CHILD GIFTED?

Determining whether or not your child is gifted is no easy task. As you have likely already discovered, there are a plethora of definitions, characteristics, assessments, theories – a virtual abundance of information. To help parents unravel some of the conflicting information, the Davidson Institute has put together this article summarizing gifted characteristics, the difference between tests and assessments, points to consider in having your child tested or assessed, different types of tests that can be utilized, and tips for locating a professional if you decide to seek a full assessment.



[Find out more.](#)



## The Gifted Kids' Survival Guide: for Ages 10 & Under

by Judy Galbraith M.A.

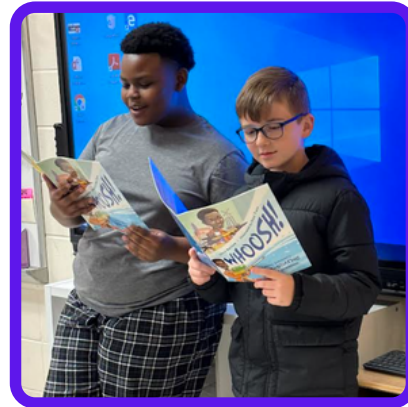
An updated, informative book examines the problems of gifted and talented students and explains how they can make the best use of their educational opportunities, get along better with parents and friends, and better understand themselves. The book surveyed more than 1000 gifted kids who had a lot to say about growing up gifted.

## More BHCS Headlines



### Read Across America Day with BHES Students

Fifth graders from Susan Spivey's class read to several 3rd grade classes on Dr. Seuss Day. They read the book "Whoosh: Lonnie Johnson's Super-Soaking Stream of Inventions" about the life of Lonnie Johnson, an American inventor, who lives in Atlanta. He worked as a rocket scientist for NASA, created the Super Soaker water gun, and continues to work on solving engineering problems. These students did a great job reading to other students.



Shadon Johnson & Thomas Howell



Alexis Glass & Elizabeth Rojo



**From Left:** Hunter Ruis, Alexis Glass, Gage Griner, Shadon Johnson, Maddyn Smith, Miley Bivens, Elizabeth Rojo, Thomas Howell



## Portrait of a Gifted Learner



*"Education is for improving the lives of others and for leaving your community and world better than you found it."*

-Marian Wright Edelman

## HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT...



**Gifted students represent a vital resource that has unlimited potential.**

**-Chuck Grassley**

## More BHCS Headlines



### Invention Challenge: Toys for Pets

Students at BHES in Susan Spivey's class are working on creating new pet toys for a challenge through Future Engineers. This year's theme for the invention challenge is to design a new pet toy for a cat or dog. Students must design a toy that could be sold for \$20 or less, no electricity or batteries can be used, it should be an original idea, and it should have an original name. Students have brainstormed ideas for toys that would entertain a dog or cat, and they have read about the best materials to use for pet toys. Along with a sketch of the toy, students must submit a document, in 200 words or less, detailing the aspects of the toy. They must describe the purpose of the toy, what it is made of, how it works, how it is different from all other toys, and why an animal would enjoy playing with it. Students are also creating prototypes of the toy they design. These 3D models will be photographed and sent in with the student's submission.



Holly Ferguson



Yahairy Avila, Bryan Hernandez



Codiee Sliger

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### What is the Purpose of Gifted Education?

Gifted students need gifted educational programs that meet their abilities and needs so that they can make continuous progress in school. They should be appropriately challenged in an academic environment that can help maximize their potential. Gifted education focuses on these three primary components: enrichment, acceleration and an advanced curriculum.

