

Dear Pinewood and Little Mountain families,

It is no secret that the COVID-19 pandemic has forced a number of changes to the way we educate our children. There are areas of education in which we can't wait to get back to the old ways (hugs, for example!), but there are also a number of areas in which we want to use this opportunity to improve our past ways.

One such area is with our Gifted and Talented programming at the elementary level. In order to meet our classroom needs at Little Mountain, our Gifted and Talented instructor Stacey Rosa has been moved to a classroom teacher. Therefore, Jenine Severson, the Gifted and Talented instructor at Pinewood, will be moving to the role of Gifted and Talented Coordinator for ISD 882. In this role, Mrs. Severson will provide resources and support to teachers so that they can reach students at both elementary schools that need extension and enrichment.

With this system change, we are also excited to debut a new way of doing programming for our Gifted and Talented students.

The first step of this process will be the debut of Kids Talk, virtual Gifted and Talented programming, that will begin at the end of this month for our fifth grade students. Kids Talk uses individualized and research based projects to meet both the academic and affective needs of our Gifted and Talented students. While we are starting with fifth grade students, we plan to add fourth graders then third graders later this semester when the district secures individual devices for these grade levels. This program will be available to kids that have been previously identified in our elementary cluster programs, and Mrs. Severson will reach out to individual students in the near future with details.

In addition to Kids Talk, Monticello School District is excited to bring other virtual opportunities to third through fifth grade students after the new year. Beginning in January, we will start implementing an after school Gifted and Talented program that will resemble past programming. The biggest difference is that the offerings will be virtual, which we believe will make it even more accessible with all students having access to a district device. Programs will include challenge math, literature enrichment, and stem opportunities.

We believe these changes represent a way to open new avenues for our Gifted and Talented students as we move into a new era of education. We look forward to continuing to build new ways of serving and supporting all students, just as this new structure will best serve our Gifted and Talented students.

If families have questions about Gifted and Talented programming, they are asked to contact Mrs. Severson at jenine.severson@monticello.k12.mn.us.

Sincerely,

Linda Borgerding, Pinewood Elementary Principal
Gabe Hackett, Little Mountain Elementary Principal