



SUMMER GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAM

MEET THE FACULTY 2017



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SUMMER 2017

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MR. ADJOKATCHER, Jr Naturalists; Forensic Science; Lab Science: Chemistry

Mr. David Adjokatcher is a returning teacher in the *Summer Gifted and Talented Program* at Dominican University. He is a 7th grade Science teacher at Troy Middle School near Shorewood Illinois. With a Master's Degree in Curriculum Development and Instructional Technology from Lewis University, Illinois, he is also the coach for Troy's after-school Computer Club for 7th and 8th graders. He is always fascinated by emerging technology, new discoveries, and engineering marvels. He has taught lessons on many different science topics including environmental issues and wildlife conservation for 8 years at Troy. He has helped many students at different grade levels to create projects, artifacts, and multimedia presentations for various science expos and science fairs.

Creating a learning community where students can share in acquiring quality information and exchange ideas is the foundation in Mr. Adjokatcher's classroom. Students have a supportive environment in which to build relationships, be open-minded and creative, engage in diverse learning experiences, and use their imagination as bases to build new concepts and formulate useful ideas for understanding the world around us. Mr. Adjokatcher is always excited about the energy that students bring to class, and the things they are able to accomplish with that energy.

He likes to listen to music from all over the world, writes songs, and he loves to sing. He enjoys spending time with his family, and seeing new places. Whenever possible, he likes to learn from his students and people with diverse cultural backgrounds. Mr. Adjokatcher is looking forward to doing some exciting activities and cool projects during his fourth summer back at *Summer Gifted*, and can be contacted at dadjokatcher@dom.edu during the summer program.

MS. BASAK, Creative Writing; Young Authors Book Club

Ms. Jaclyn Basak has a passion for teaching and working with gifted and talented students. Being identified as gifted when she was in grade school, she understands the gifted mind and enjoys providing gifted students with enriched, differentiated instruction to fulfill their learning needs and potential. Ms. Basak teaches language arts in Schaumburg School District 54. Her goal is to foster and encourage students to become stronger readers, writers, and critical thinkers.

Ms. Basak has a degree in English Secondary Education from the University of Illinois

Urbana-Champaign. In addition, Ms. Basak has a Master of Arts in Education for Reading Specialist from Olivet Nazarene University and a Master of Arts in Education for Educational Administration from Concordia University Chicago. Ms. Basak is also endorsed in gifted education. In her spare time, Ms. Basak enjoys traveling, reading, cooking, and running.

She is returning for her second summer and can be reached at jbasak@dom.edu during the summer program.

MISS BUCCIERI,

Ms. Rachel Buccieri's career began in 2013, when she became a Non-fiction reading teacher at Julian Middle School in Oak Park. She now teaches History at Julian and is loving every minute of it! She is the sponsor for Best Buddies at the middle school level, and she has coached the volleyball team there for the last four years. She absolutely adores the Gifted and Talented program because she gets to teach something she normally doesn't teach!

Currently, she holds a Bachelor's degree in English Secondary Education with a minor in History from the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana. Ms. Buccieri resides in Chicago, and returns to the Summer Gifted and Talented learning community for her third summer. She can be reached at rbuccieri@dom.edu during the summer program.

MR. BULGER, Aerodynamics: How Airplanes Fly; Scratch that Code!

Mr. Bulger's professional teaching career has spanned 24 years. During that time he has taught 4th, 5th and 6th grade science/technology, and is currently in his 13th year as the gifted resource teacher at William Beye Elementary School in Oak Park, Illinois.

He spent four summers teaching aerodynamics and computer programming at the Center for Talent Development at Northwestern University, and returns to Dominican's *Summer Gifted and Talented Program* for his sixth summer. Currently, he holds a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Northern Illinois University, as well as a Master's degree in School Leadership from Concordia University. Mr. Bulger resides in Buffalo Grove with his wife and three daughters. During the summer program, he can be reached at mbulger@dom.edu.

MR. CHILDRESS, Oral His/Herstory: The Art of Spoken Word; Exploring Photojournalism; Stick to the Script; Advertising Agents

Mr. Marvin Childress has worked in education for more than 15 years in grades K-8. He has been teaching for the past ten years in a 1st/2nd grade multi-age classroom, as well as 4th grade at Abraham Lincoln Elementary School in Oak Park, Illinois. He holds a Bachelor's degree from Columbia College, and a Master's degree in Education from National-Louis University.

During his time in Oak Park, Mr. Childress has facilitated the Future Leaders of the World, a program designed to provide elementary students with the much needed tools to deal with peer pressure, academic investing, and decision making. He also created the Etiquette and Chivalry Program, designed to inform boys in grades 4 and 5 about proper manners and behavior, and he has worked as the Head Coach for the Chess Club for the past ten years. He works hard to teach the community that chess is so much more than a game; along with math, chess is a synonym for life-long learning. Mr. Childress returns to the *Summer Gifted and Talented* learning community for his fifth summer, and can be reached at mchildress@dom.edu during the summer program.

MISS COCHRANE, Invention Convention: Rube Goldberg; Scream Machine: The Need for Speed

Miss Rebecca Cochran is a returning instructor for the *Summer Gifted and Talented Program* at Dominican University. She holds a Master's degree in Educational Technology from Concordia University, endorsement in gifted education, and a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education. Ms. Cochran has been teaching middle school science in Schaumburg School District 54 for 13 years. She also coaches cheerleading and coordinates the school website.

In addition to teaching, Ms. Cochran loves to read and watch Chicago sports teams. This is her fifth year as an instructor for the *Summer Gifted and Talented Program* at Dominican University, and she is super excited to be involved! She can be reached at rcochrane@dom.edu during the summer program.

MS. DRESSEL, Monster Math; Architecture: How Buildings Stand

Ms. Jan Novak Dressel is a returning instructor for the *Summer Gifted and Talented Program* at Dominican University. Ms. Dressel has been teaching the gifted population for more than twenty-five years, grades 1-5, almost entirely in the Oak Park Elementary School system. Her BA degree in Education/American Studies is from Knox College and

her Masters in Gifted/Special Ed. is from National University. She holds a certification in Gifted Education.

Ms. Dressel often calls herself a "Brain Trainer" or "Sherpa" and tries to help students navigate their intellectual journeys. She hopes to ignite their passions to become life-long learners and problem-solvers. Having raised three gifted children of her own, she understands the importance of advocating for this unique group of students.

She has lead architectural tours in Chicago and Oak Park for three decades, and is currently restoring an 1898 Firehouse in Oak Park with the Oak Park Historical Society. Ms. Dressel is returning for her seventh summer with *Summer Gifted at Dominican* and can be contacted at jdressel@dom.edu during the summer program.

MR. HEDDEN, Science Olympiad: Engineering Seminar; Physics & Engineering: Space Academy; Rocket Science; Newton's Academy; Bridge Building

Mr. William Hedden is a returning science teacher for the *Summer Gifted and Talented Program* at Dominican University. Mr. Hedden has taught for 12 years as a physics teacher at Thornridge High School in Dolton, IL, in both Honors and co-taught special education classes. His Masters in Educational Administration was completed at Concordia University, and at Carthage College, he received his B.A. in Physics and Secondary Education, with a minor in Mathematics. Mr. Hedden's fellow teachers and administrators say that he is a creative, flexible, and easy to work with. Students say, "[he] is funny, knowledgeable, and is always willing to help."

Mr. Hedden is also experienced in how to meet students of any level to challenge them to grow. He enjoys reading about current advances in science, and when possible will share them with his students, friends, and family. It is his goal to use his intuitive knowledge of physics and math to explain concepts in a myriad of ways, to guide students until they understand and even enjoy learning about their world. Mr. Hedden is returning for his seventh summer at Dominican and can be reached at bhedden@dom.edu during the summer program.

MR. HOPPER, College Essay Writing; Writer's Workshop: the Art of Storytelling; Extra Extra! Read All About It!

Mr. Chris Hopper currently teaches English and writing at Moraine Valley Community College. He received his MFA in Creative Writing from Bowling Green State University

where he won the Devine Award for poetry. Mr. Hopper has had a lifelong love of stories, particularly young adult fiction, which was instilled in him from a very early age by his mother who was a writer. He loves to read so much that he once was grounded for two weeks in high school because he became so involved in the stories he was reading that he missed the school bus three days in a row.

Professionally, Mr. Hopper has been published in *The Black Bear Review*, *Poetry Motel*, *Array*, *The MacGuffin* and several other journals. He returns to *Summer Gifted at Dominican* for his fourth summer, and can be reached at chopper@dom.edu during the summer program.

MS. AMY MARIANI, Tessellations and Patterns in Math

Ms. Amy Mariani currently teaches the Gifted and Talented through Differentiation Program at Horace Mann Elementary school in Oak Park. She has completed 16 years of teaching at Mann Elementary, 6 of which have been in the Gifted and Talented classroom.

She holds a Bachelor of Science Degree from DePaul University and a Master of Science degree in Elementary Education from St. Xavier University. She also holds a middle school endorsement in Language Arts. Ms. Mariani returns for her second summer at DU's *Summer Gifted*, and can be reached at amarianicortez@dom.edu.

MRS. McCOLE, Physical Education

Mrs. Jane McCole is one of the Physical Education teachers for the *Summer Gifted and Talented Program* at Dominican University. This will be her sixth year working with the program. She has a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Illinois-Urbana, where she played on the tennis team. She earned a Master's in Gifted Education from Northeastern Illinois University, and a Master's in Teaching from Concordia University.

Mrs. McCole previously taught at the Science and Arts Academy, a private school for gifted students in Des Plaines. Currently, she teaches third grade at Lincoln School in River Forest. She can be contacted at jmccole@dom.edu during the summer program.

MS. MORRISON, The Great Debate

Ms. Julie Morrison is a returning instructor for the *Summer Gifted and Talented Program* at Dominican University. She holds Master's degrees in Curriculum & Instruction and Education Administration from Northern Illinois University, and a Bachelor's Degree in History Education from Illinois State University. Ms. Morrison has been teaching middle

school social studies in Schaumburg School District 54 for seventeen years. She is also the yearbook advisor. In addition to teaching, Julie loves to read and boating with her family. This is her third year as an instructor for the *Summer Gifted and Talented Program* at Dominican University, and she is really excited to be involved! She can be reached at juliemorrison@dom.edu during the summer program.

MS. NELSON, Best of Roald Dahl; Word Power Challenge

Ms. Alison Nelson, instructor for *Best of Roald Dahl* and *Word Power Challenge*, is a teacher of gifted and talented elementary students and a lover of literature, poetry, spelling and words. This is her seventh summer teaching at the DU *Summer Gifted and Talented Program*. She has held gifted teaching positions at public and private elementary schools, including Elmwood Park District 401 and Oak Park District 97.

Ms. Nelson holds an English degree from the University of Virginia and a Master of Arts in Teaching from Dominican University. By August of this year she will have completed her Master of Arts in Gifted Education degree from Northeastern Illinois University, and earned the Gifted Endorsement from the State of Illinois.

Ms. Nelson founded and ran student spelling bees at Mann School in Oak Park and Roosevelt Middle School in River Forest, where she won the Parent/Teacher Spelling Bee in 2007. In her spare time she enjoys reading, live music and theater, and bar trivia.

She can be reached at anelson@dom.edu during the summer program.

MRS. PANG, Physical Education

Ms. Lisa Pang is one of the Physical Education teachers for the *Summer Gifted and Talented Program* at Dominican University. This will be her twelfth year working with the program. Each year, she looks forward to meeting new and returning students.

She holds a Bachelor of Arts and minor in psychology from Concordia University. Mrs. Pang also holds a Masters in Gifted Education from Northeastern Illinois University. Currently she is going into her eleventh year of teaching first and second grade gifted at a private gifted school. In the past, she presented and attended the Illinois Association for Gifted conference in Chicago. Outside of the classroom, Mrs. Pang enjoys spending time with her family and traveling. She can be emailed at lpang@dom.edu during the summer program.

MR. RICKS, Physical Education

Mr. Andrew Ricks earned his undergraduate degree in Spanish Education from Illinois State University. He enjoyed college so much that he stayed 2 more years and received his Master's Degree in Peninsular Spanish Literature with a minor in Latin American Literature. His passion, however, is soccer. In college, he walked on to the soccer team at ISU and played for 2 years.

Currently, he's completed his 17th year teaching Spanish at Lane Tech College Prep High School in Chicago. He is also the boys' varsity soccer coach at Lane. As you can see, his passion truly is soccer and he has been to the World Cup Final in Tokyo, Paris, and Pasadena. He is married to Lucy, who teaches AP Spanish Language and Literature at Lane Tech, and they have a lovely toddler, Luna. Mr. Ricks can be emailed at aricks@dom.edu during the summer program.

MR. ROCCO, Physical Education

Mr. Tom Rocco's professional teaching career has spanned 15 years. During that time he has taught Physical Education 14 years at William Beye Elementary School in Oak Park, Illinois. He has served as the PE Teacher Leader for District 97 in Oak Park, and was recognized by the Northeastern District of PE teachers as a Highlight Physical Education program winner for Cook County in the 2012-2013 school year. He is also currently coaching basketball and badminton at Riverside Brookfield High School, while coaching football and tennis in past years as well.

Currently, he holds a Bachelor's degree in Kinesiology (K-12 teaching) from the University of Illinois at Chicago, as well as a Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Concordia University. Mr. Rocco resides in Chicago with his wife, and returns to the *Summer Gifted and Talented* learning community for his fifth summer. He can be reached at trocco@dom.edu during the summer program.

MRS. SMITH, Political Science: Model U.N; Math Games, Puzzles & Problems; Mathletes; The Number Devil ; Mathopoly & Economics

Mrs. Elizabeth Smith has a passion for math, and helping children discover how numbers and sing and dance. She enjoys introducing children to the ideas of math and

teaming up with them to discover the patterns and rules that give math meaning. Mrs. Smith is a fifth grade teacher at Lincoln School in Oak Park. She teaches the fifth grade curriculum with a twist: 2 hours of her students' day are taught completely in Spanish.

Mrs. Smith holds a Bachelor's of Arts in French and Political Science from Illinois Wesleyan University and a Master's of Arts in Political Science from Northwestern University. After a 20 year career in data and policy analysis, Mrs. Smith changed direction to pursue her interest for working with you children. This change of direction led Mrs. Smith to earn a Master's of Education from Northern Illinois University. She has been teaching now for 10 years.

Mrs. Smith is thrilled to return to the *Summer Gifted and Talented Program* at Dominican for her third summer. She can be contacted via email at esmith@dom.edu during the summer program.

MR. STERN, Math and Philosophy: Language of Logic; Pi and the Great Pyramid; SketchUp Architecture; Genius of Geometry

Mr. Joshua Stern is a returning teacher at the *Summer Gifted and Talented Program*. He is a graduate of DePaul University with a BA in Secondary Education in Math and a minor in History. He is excited to combine his background studies and classroom experience for a dynamic and engaging survey of math history and contemporary proofs in *Pi and the Great Pyramid*, *Genius of Geometry* and *SketchUp Architecture*.

Mr. Stern has served as a TA for both remedial and advanced mathematics courses at DePaul. He also tutored at DePaul in their lab for the past two years; provided private one-on-one tutoring for middle school and high school students; and student taught at Alcott College Prep under the guidance of fellow Summer Gifted instructor, Mr. Michael Kolody (*Genius in Geometry, Introduction to Python & Pi, Star Wars Fan Fiction*). Originally from St. Louis, Missouri, Mr. Stern has been living in Chicago for almost 8 years. He is returning for his fourth summer and can be contacted at jstern@dom.edu during the summer program.

MS. STONE, Fairy Tale Trials: Legal Eagles

Ms. Donna Stone (Drama Donna) has more than 30 years of experience in various class settings with students from pre-school to college level. She has degrees in Business Administration (marketing & communications), Education, Guidance & Counseling, and

Theatre. Ms. Stone has more than 20 hours in Gifted Education coursework, including the Illinois Gifted Institute and ISBE Gifted Verification, and has taught gifted education for over 20 years. She has presented at professional conferences on local, state, & national levels, including the American Alliance for Theatre & Education (AATE), the Illinois Theatre Association (ITA), and the Illinois Reading Council (IRC). Currently, her "retirement" jobs include teaching Speech and Theatre at Illinois Valley Community College as well as teaching enrichment in various gifted programs. In her spare time, she volunteers as a docent at the Field Museum.

Since 2000, Ms. Stone has taught enrichment classes at Northwestern University's Center for Talent Development. She is excited to join the Summer Gifted and Talented Program at Dominican University this year to offer her signature course, *Fairy Tale Trials*.

She can be reached at tbd@dom.edu during the summer program.

MR. WIZA, Physical Education, instructor bio pending.

MRS. WHALEN, Introduction to Zoology; Hunger Games: Intro to Genetics

Mrs. Erin Whalen has been teaching for 17 years. She began teaching third and fifth grades, but has been teaching science to junior high students for 14 years. She is currently employed at Margaret Mead Junior High where she teaches science to the gifted students in the Magnet program. Additionally she coaches Mead's Science Olympiad team and has done that for 10 years.

This is her sixth year teaching at Dominican University's gifted program and she looks forward to another great summer! She can be reached at ewhalen@dom.edu during the summer program.

MR. WOYNA, Improv Sketch Comedy

Mr. Pat Woyna, instructor for *Improv Sketch Comedy*, is an honors and regular track English teacher at Lisle High School. This is his first summer teaching at the DU Summer Gifted and Talented Program, having assisted the previous summer in *The*

Best of Roald Dahl with Ms. Nelson. An avid runner, he always stays involved with his high school as both an Assistant Cross Country Coach and as a Head Track Coach.

Mr. Woyna holds an English degree from the DePaul University and a Master of Arts in Gifted Education from Northeastern Illinois University. He is a recovering class clown who has found his niche in improv at Westside Improv Studio in Wheaton, where he can be frequently found putting on shows and practicing his craft. He is a world traveler, frequenting roughly 20 countries and five continents so far, and he will return from Asia this summer just in time for class. Like a moth to a flame, if it's something new, he's there!

Mr. Woyna can be reached at tbd@dom.edu during the summer program.

MR. ZACHARIAS, ACT Prep, Chess Masters; Introduction to Philosophy; Chess Academy; Logic & Critical Thinking

Mr. Matthew Zacharias received his B.A. in philosophy from the University of Iowa in 2006. He is the co-founder and program director of Kids Think, Inc. Since 2008, Mr. Zacharias has been committed to bringing quality instruction to enrichment programs in Chicago and its suburbs in areas of critical thinking, problem solving, and language arts. He has taught with Dominican's *Summer Gifted and Talented Program* since 2012, and can be reached at mzacharias@dom.edu during the summer program.

MS. WU, Program Director

Ms. Janie Wu is the Program Director for the *Summer Gifted and Talented Program* at Dominican University. She holds a Master's degree in Educational Policy Studies from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and has thirteen years' experience coordinating and directing academic enrichment programs for gifted and talented students, including at Northwestern University's *Center for Talent Development* and the Latin School of Chicago's *High Jump Program*. Ms. Wu joined Dominican University in 2011 to serve as a visionary and results-driven leader for the *Summer Gifted and Talented Program*.

Ms. Wu has a vested interest advocating for the needs of gifted/talented learners and their families, providing both resources and opportunities for the gifted/talented community, and creating an environment where a sense of identity, achievement, and



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confidence can be developed. As an educator, she is grateful for creative C&I opportunities that can be explored within academic enrichment programs such as the *Summer Gifted and Talented Program*, which allow instructors to teach to their passions in an environment that supports the love of learning.

She can be contacted via email at jwu@dom.edu throughout the year.