

# REDEFINING GIFTED: UNDERSTANDING THAT ALL STUDENTS ARE SPECIAL

RAYTOWN AND RAYTOWN SOUTH HS

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**REIMAGINE REDESIGN REBUILD REENGAGE**

# RETHINK YOUTH

## CONFERENCE PROJECT BRIEFS

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### Project Brief

Reforming the gifted program is a common passion our team shares. We've all been involved in this program throughout our academic careers, so we've seen the effects on ourselves and our peers. The biggest things this project will require are advocacy and encouragement. With these we will be able to change how students are perceived as gifted, and we will be able to recognize an array of talents and abilities that fall under the gifted label. As a team, we've determined that our goal is to recognize that all students are special and have their own unique talents that should be celebrated. The main budget opportunities will come from reallocating funds from programs to reshape the current model. The biggest factor of this project will be advocating for a shift in how we determine if students are gifted. Not only will members of administration throughout our district be included, but also the parents and students involved in our district. During this project we are determined to spread out the workload evenly amongst ourselves, so it doesn't become overwhelming. We are able to use our administration to send out mass surveys to help complete research and reach the parents in our district. The majority of our tasks will be able to be completed through zoom meetings to help encourage the shift in mindsets.

The Rethink Youth conference task force initially collaborated in mid-November through late-February while meeting weekly to discuss the status of our presentation. It will take place virtually over four days in the middle of February. Our project will be displayed through a presentation by the students behind the idea. The project will be carried out during the conference starting off with an introduction by several members of our team, followed by the recorded presentation and an outro, ending with a live Q&A session with our team.

Raytown's student group intends to educate and offer attendees solutions to improve the current gifted education mode during the presentation. Our group wants to encourage people to rethink how gifted students and their talents appear. Students who are vocationally, artistically, musically, and even militarily inclined deserve programs to support them. If they have accelerated course options similar to those of the math and science courses, they'll be capable of reaching their full potential. By providing a supportive platform to these aspects of education, we hope to eliminate stigmas often associated with students who excel in these areas.

We are aiming to improve education, starting with the effects of the gifted programs and who are directly affected by the gifted programs in primary and

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in primary and secondary school. This focuses on students ages nine through fourteen to put them on a more advanced route when it comes to courses because of their “natural” abilities. The quota that a nine year old should score at least a 130 IQ score to get more opportunities is not only unfair but it also puts kids that aren't as talented at an extreme disadvantage. We want to target the American education system to reform the gifted programs and the idea of “giftedness” to create some equality within our learning spaces. For teachers, parents, and students to understand that every student has an ability to grasp learning in a different way with their unique abilities as well.

### Key Elements

Located within Kansas City limits, Raytown school district is made up of a diverse collective of people both demographically and socioeconomically, this feeds into the makeup and culture of the high schools. Raytown Schools motto is: A unified learning community leading individuals to achieve the exceptional. Raytown schools are made up of 47% Black, 30% White, 13% Hispanic, 8% mixed race, 1% Asian and 1% Hawaiian and less than 1% Native American. Raytown prides itself on being a community that rallies behind it's students' learning and extracurricular advance, constantly looking for ways to enhance all around educational experience.

This group of students had conversations surrounding opportunity and equity for all students within their high schools and landed on the gifted program as that opportunity for enhancement and reform. The team's topic can be described as, expanding the criteria for gifted classification in high school. Current gifted models exclude students who are not gifted in ways traditionally seen as academic. The team asserts that schools should recognize students who are on technical, artistic, and/or military tracts and pathways. The team will offer alternative structures to the current gifted models being used today.

The target audience for this session and solutions posed are educators, administrators and parents. This audience was chosen due to targeted change. This team believes that partnering with these entities will help evoke change and provide an even more enriched experience for students as they move from high school into the workforce, college and their prospective careers.

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### Rethinking What Gifted Education Means, and Whom It Should Serve:

- “The district now gives less weight to the Cognitive Abilities Test, a common assessment for admission to gifted programs, and more to class performance. Parents can no longer submit private evaluations attesting that their children are gifted — statements that can be secured by paying hundreds of dollars to a psychologist. Teacher recommendations, too, now play a smaller role.”
- “The county also changed its paradigm about whom the special schools should serve: not the students with the highest abilities across the county, but rather, those students who are outliers at their neighborhood schools, with fewer than 20 peers with similar abilities.”
- “The idea was to label the program, not the students.”

### Stanford Magazine “The Effort Effect” :

- “British soccer culture held that star players are born, not made. If you buy into that view, and are told you’ve got immense talent, what’s the point of practice? If anything, training hard would tell you and others that you’re merely good, not great.”
- “Students for whom performance is paramount want to look smart even if it means not learning a thing in the process. For them, each task is a challenge to their self-image, and each setback becomes a personal threat.”
- “ People with performance goals, she reasoned, think intelligence is fixed from birth. People with learning goals have a growth mind-set about intelligence, believing it can be developed.”
- “ many people who believe in fixed intelligence also think you shouldn’t need hard work to do well. This belief isn’t entirely irrational, she says. A student who finishes a problem set in 10 minutes is indeed better at math than someone who takes four hours to solve the problems. And a soccer player who scores effortlessly probably is more talented than someone who’s always practicing. “The fallacy comes when people generalize it to the belief that effort on any task, even very hard ones, implies low ability,”
- “Tests, Dweck notes, are notoriously poor at measuring potential.”

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