

Essex@Ashland 2021
The Martin W. Essex School for the Gifted and Talented
Martha Holden Jennings Grant Review and Follow-up
and
CITE High Impact Teaching and Learning Grant Review and Follow-up
[Link to original submitted grant narrative budget](#)

Participants in July 12, 2021 MHJ grant review phone call

Jennifer Groman & Pat Farrenkopf	Co-Directors
Nicole Noteman	Internal Evaluator
James Powell	Executive Director, AU Professional Development Services, VirBELA support
Staci Stroeing	Virtual Learning Collaborative, VirBELA support
David Aune	Intensive Instructor “Be the Change”
Deb Logan	Intensive Instructor “Beyond the March
Erin O’Neil	Intensive Instructor “Telling Your Story”
Russell Weaver	Plenary Instructor “Poetry of Frost, Dickinson, Keats, and Stafford”
Rachel Dobney	Plenary Instructor “Letting Go of Perfect”
Raj Shah	Plenary Instructor “The Joy and Wonder of Pure Mathematics”
Paul Cynkar	Martha Holden Jennings Grant Facilitator



Essexers discover the VirBELA laser pointer feature.

Summary

Ohio recognizes the need to connect gifted students to educational opportunities that maximize their potential (*Operating Standards for Identifying and Serving Students Who Are Gifted*, Ohio Administrative Code 3301-51-15, adopted July 1, 2017), yet the absence of programming is problematic for students throughout the state. The Essex School at Ashland University seeks to broaden access to educational opportunities for diverse populations of Ohio's gifted students.

The 45-year history of Martin W. Essex School for the Gifted and Talented is important to note. Essex School began in 1976 at Ohio State University, moved to Otterbein University in 2011, and has now completed its move to Ashland University in 2021. It is a summer program for talented teenagers that allows them to study college level content with like-minded peers in a residential college setting. Due to COVID lock down and restrictions, Essex 2020 (at Otterbein) was fully online, and Essex 2021 (at Ashland) was also virtual.

Ashland University held the Summer Governor's Institute/Summer Honors Institute, a similar summer program from 1989 until 2009 for two weeks each summer on Ashland University's main campus.

Ashland University is proud to merge the best parts of these two excellent programs into the Essex@Ashland program. The week's theme centered around the program **Transforming** and **Transitioning** to support gifted students **Leadership** in a **Changing** world.

The Essex School target population is rising sophomores, juniors, and seniors who are identified gifted in Ohio in one or more of 10 possible areas outlined in the *Ohio Operating Standards for Identifying and Serving Students Who Are Gifted* (superior cognitive ability, specific academic ability in reading, mathematics, social studies, or science, creative thinking ability, and visual/performing arts ability in visual arts, theater, music, or dance).

The Essex School's overarching goals come from the [National Association for Gifted Children Gifted Programming Standards](#).

- 1) **Transform.** In what ways can the tools of my giftedness help me transform myself and my views? (Standard 1, Standard 4)
- 2) **Transition.** How can challenges, obstacles, and discomfort help me grow? (Standard 1)
- 3) **Change.** How can better understanding my giftedness change and develop my academic, social, and creative self? (Standards 4, Standard 5)
- 4) **Lead.** In what ways and in what areas can I use my giftedness to lead? (Standard 3, Standard 4)

Individual instructional goals were identified by each instructor.

Final Numbers and Details

People

11 Students	<p>2 full scholarships, 1 half-time student. 6 White, 1 Two or More Races, 2 Asian, 2 Black 6 female, 5 male. From Centerville, Columbus, Dayton, Westerville, Mentor, Findlay, Fredericktown, Worthington, Grandview Heights</p>
6 Plenary Faculty	<p>Topics: Environmental Science at Home, Letting Go of Perfect, Smart Consumer of Statistics, Poetry Discussions, The Joy and Wonder of Pure Mathematics, En-ROADS Climate Workshop</p> <p><i>1 AU faculty, 3 K-12 teachers or gifted coordinators, representative from Byrd Research Center, Education Director for the Richland Park District</i></p>
4 Intensive Faculty	<p>Topics: Singer-Songwriter Circle, The Story Inside (Identity Exploration), Be the Change: Influential Voices in World Religions, Beyond the March (Social Justice Advocacy)</p> <p><i>1 AU faculty, 1 AU adjunct/retired K-12 educator, 1 retired gifted coordinator, 1 media</i></p>

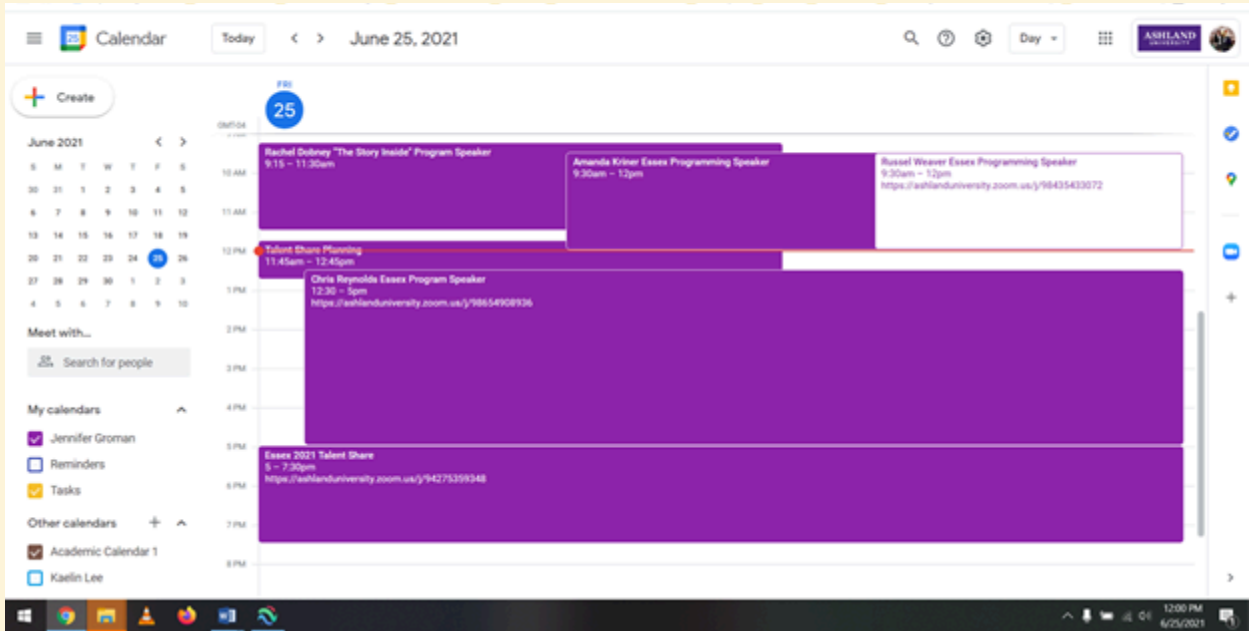
	<i>consultant/digital storyteller/author</i>
1 Intensive offered not selected/cancelled	No Holds Barred: Full Throttle Shakespeare <i>Cincinnati Shakespeare Company member</i>
3 Graduate Student Interns	<i>All middle school teachers enrolled in EDIS 650 and EDIS 651</i>
3 Essex Administration	<i>2 AU faculty, 1 middle grades teacher of the gifted</i>
3 Technical Support	<i>2 AU administrators, 1 consultant from the Virtual Learning Collaborative</i>

Time

- 22.5 hours of Intensives
- 5.5 hours of special programming specific to the needs of gifted
- 7.5 hours of social time and Talent Share planning
- 6 hours of Plenary sessions
- 2.5 hours for Parent Night & Talent Share

Place

2 Virtual Platforms (VirBELA and Zoom)



One of many busy Google calendars.

The Schedule

A full schedule of the week can be accessed [here](#).

A general overview of the week: Students arrived at the VirBELA campus on Sunday and were welcomed, with an introductory keynote from Essexer alumnus Sana Selemon. Nicole Noteman (Essex Admin) facilitated a “Breaking the Ice” activity.

Monday morning began on the VirBELA campus with a Morning Meeting, facilitated by Jennifer Groman and Pat Farrenkopf (Co-Directors) as a morning icebreaker and preparing students for the day’s activities, after which students moved into Zoom and participated in the keynote by Andrew Mahoney, “Creating your Leadership Identity for Change.” Students then attended a lunchtime meeting on VirBELA to socialize and plan the Talent Show, this planning continued throughout the week. The afternoon was spent in various chosen Intensives on both VirBELA and Zoom (as chosen by the instructor), to which students would return each afternoon for the rest of the week.

Tuesday through Friday started with Morning Meeting (VirBELA). The morning continued with Plenary sessions (VirBELA and Zoom, chosen by the instructor) selected by students the week prior to Essex week, and attended a different one each morning. The lunchtime meeting (VirBELA) was followed by the students’ chosen Intensives (VirBELA and Zoom).

Master Classes were offered two evenings. Wednesday’s Master Class (VirBELA) was Sana Selemon (Essex Alumni) presenting “Finding My Corner of the Sky”, in the VirBELA Theater, and Thursday’s class (Zoom) was Christopher Reynolds (Intensive Faculty), “Let the Beauty We Love Be What We Do: How to See through the End of your Childhood and Begin Adulthood.”

The final activity on Friday evening was a student-organized and facilitated Talent Show, with Staci Stroeng as their Technical Support. All Essex Administrators, Intensive Faculty, all students and 4 parents were in attendance.

For a detailed schedule of the week: A Google doc was available to students and staff (and is available to you!) which was kept updated with instructions and links to class meetings. It provides technology tips and tools, background information for faculty, descriptions of sessions and a clickable calendar for the week. It shows descriptions of the wide variety of Plenary sessions, Intensive sessions, and evening activities, and also links to the Essex 2021 Directory of students, faculty, staff, and administration. It can be accessed [here](#).

Lessons Learned

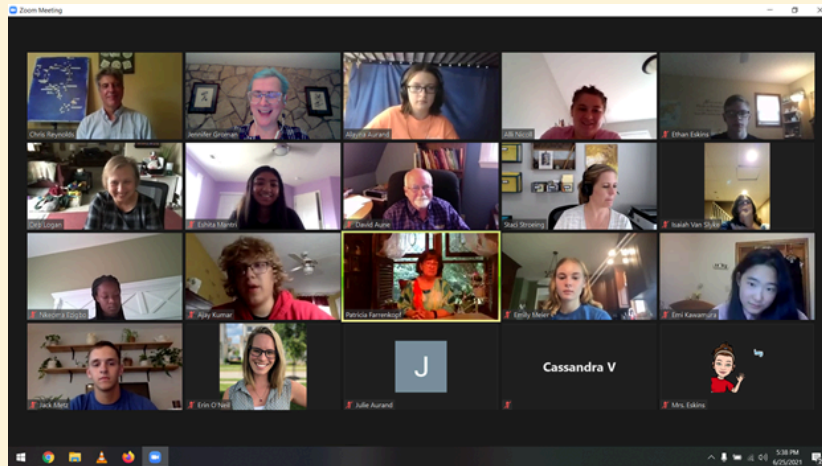
Essex at Ashland 2021 was successful in many ways. The experience of moving the school from Otterbein University to Ashland University while still dealing with a global Pandemic also taught us some valuable lessons.

The Pandemic had made its presence in 2020 when Essex was still at Otterbein University. We quickly made a decision to take the school to a completely virtual format by using Blackboard and a College Credit Plus shell Otterbein had created for high school students that was focused on Leadership. There were 14 Essexers who attended and half of them opted to receive college credit for the experience. The program was deemed successful while we still struggled to get our registration numbers up to at least 30.

Moving to Ashland University for 2021 Essex, Dr. Groman and I quickly formed a steering committee in September of 2020 to prepare for Essex at Ashland 2021. The structure of the committee provided an opportunity for individual members to join a subcommittee of focus that matched their strengths. We were transitioning to a new location and transforming the Essex experience to include the best of both the Summer Governor's Institute and the original Essex School from OSU days. Morning sessions similar to Essex offerings and afternoon weeklong intensives with an expert modeled after Governor's Summer Institute days provided the framework. We focused on getting the best instructors and created the budget to be supported through not only student tuition but also our Ashland High Impact Grant and the Martha Holden Jennings Deep Learning Award. The Pandemic was still an unwelcomed visitor so we planned a virtual experience by partnering with Ashland Professional Learning who had invested in the platform VirBELA and was willing to share this resource and tech support for a very discounted rate.

Here is where the lesson learned appears. We had everything in place – except the students. We had a steering committee group looking at recruitment. We connected with ESCs from across the state and the Center for Talent Development at Northwestern University to get the word out about Essex. We expanded the grade levels included to rising sophomores in addition to the usual juniors and seniors. Information was shared with our Talent Development graduate students who were teachers in Ohio school districts. We even made “cold calls” to get the word out to colleagues in gifted education. In the end we only had 12 students.

For 2022 planning, our steering committee will have a laser focus on recruitment. We already have two of the 2021 Steering Committee members working on social media connections for 2022. Information will be embedded in the Ashland University website as well as our own Essex website designed by one of our steering committee members who is in our Instructional Technology Department. Specific personal visits will be scheduled using our own Ashland University Recruitment Center as a link to get the word out to high schools. Our ultimate mission for Essex 2022 is to have at least 30 students as Essexers. We know how to build the program content. Now we need 100% focus to have them come.



Friday afternoon Parent Night and Talent Share

Future Considerations

- Recruitment materials need all specifics about classes as early as possible so students choose their Intensive when they apply
 - The online application needed to be followed up with an emailed application (from the school to attest to their giftedness) and some students thought the email application was enough. The process needs to be streamlined from application to acceptance to notification.
 - I think Intensives AND Plenaries are too much. Intensives work well because they have consistency, but having choice plenaries every day may be a logistical nightmare when we have more students.
 - The morning meeting needed more structure, like a ritual to begin the day
 - As we move into a longer day and residential Essex week, we have a lot to consider (dorms and dorm staff for students, interns, and visiting faculty, instructional rooms on campus, organizing meals, rec center, evening Master Classes and activities).
 - Is it possible to have a hybrid type of week? Either having virtual *and* residential students OR part of the week in person, part of it online later in the summer?
- In planning for next year, we have discussed some ideas which might make the camp even more responsive to the needs of our students and the talents and abilities of our instructors.
- One idea is to collect frequent “Exit Tickets” with shorter questions or “True/False” format. This may ease the challenge of collecting feedback and adapting sessions.
 - Another idea is to offer a pre and post assessment to instructors, so that they are able to reflect upon the experience as well. We have not done that in the past.
 - There were several ideas for technology applications which could further facilitate discussion and interaction in a virtual environment, such as PearDeck, JamBoard, and Padlet. We also discussed having a daily “awards” session, where students could nominate each other for silly awards, such as “Best T-Shirt”, “Wittiest Remark”, or “Best Insight”.

Support Data

In developing the reflection forms for the 2021 Essex summer camp experience, there were several areas of focus. Each of these areas relate to a standard outlined by the National Association of Gifted Children. (See below) These standards differ slightly from the standards for mathematics, science and reading, as they focus more on the development of a student's awareness of, and maximization of their talents and academic and creative aptitude.

We have worked to align our four ideas of transformation, transition, change and lead to the key standards identified by NAGC for gifted students. Session leaders selected from one of the four areas for their presentation. Intensive and plenary session leaders were given the opportunity to include questions specifically related to their content, but only one instructor chose to do so. In addition, students were asked to complete a pre assessment where they set goals for the week related to our four goals. We also solicited some feedback from participants about their area of giftedness, as well as their perceptions of themselves and any questions they may want answered over the week.

[Importance of Virbela](#)

Since a large part of our budget (\$4,000) was related to the use of Virbela (technical support, training sessions, etc.) there were several questions in both the pre and post assessment forms related to students' familiarity with this type of format and, also, their perceived benefit to the Essex experience.



Sunday afternoon welcome gathering in the boardroom.

[Changes to Assessment](#)

Due to the nature of the camp, student interns were not asked to participate in facilitating or running a session. They merely observed and, therefore, we did not collect any feedback from them.

[NAGC STANDARDS](#)

Our goals for the week are:

Transform-In what ways can the tools of my giftedness help me transform myself and my views? STANDARD 1/STANDARD 4

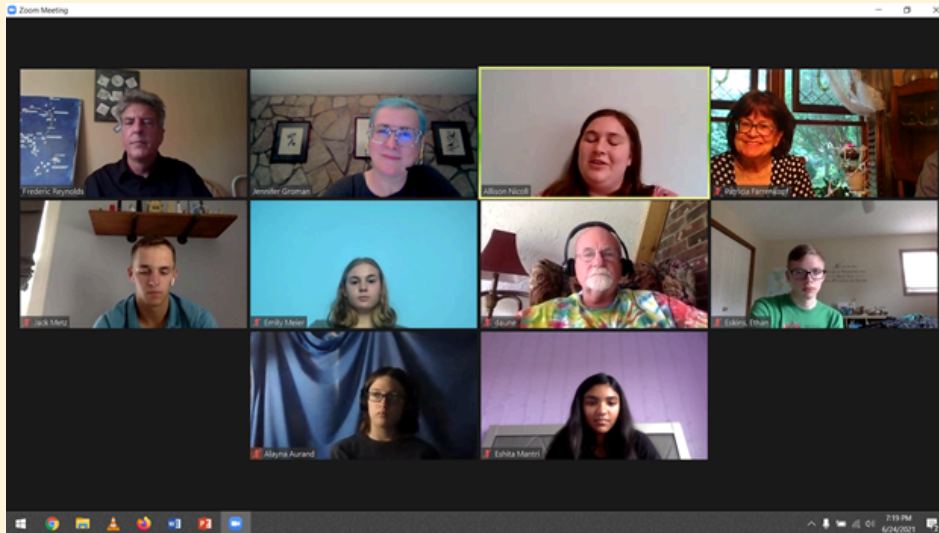
Transition-How can challenges, obstacles and discomfort help me grow? STANDARD 3/STANDARD 1

Change- How can better understanding my giftedness change and develop my academic, social, and creative self? STANDARD 4/STANDARD 5

Lead-In what ways and in what areas can I use my giftedness to lead? STANDARD 4/STANDARD 3

Final Budget Overview

Martha Holden Jennings Foundation Grant Budget						
BUDGET ITEM OR CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION / NARRATIVE	INDIVIDUAL ITEM COST	TOTAL BUDGET ITEM COST	IN-KIND / OTHER FUNDING AMOUNT	LIST ENTITY PROVIDING FUNDS	MHJF REQUESTED AMOUNT
5100015 5353500	Faculty teaching stipends: Plenary \$250 each session Intensive \$1,000 for week	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 8,000.00	\$ 4,000.00	AU including CITE	\$ 4,000.00
	Workshop Presenter – Keynote and Movie Night		\$ 600.00	\$ 600.00	AU including CITE	
	Faculty/staff/Student Benefits (internal evaluator)		\$ 400.00	\$ 400.00	AU including CITE	
	Camp G&T Coordinator Stipends			Not needed		
	VirBELA Platform					
	Founders Professional Learning, VirBELA Team suite for the Month of June		\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	In Kind Value	
	Founders Professional Learning VirBELA Large Conference Hall, 90 minutes for Sunday Opening		\$ 200.00	\$ 200.00	In Kind Value	
5353500	VirBELA Tech Support	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,000.00			\$ 3,000.00
	Virtual Learning Collaborative tech support for 30.5 hours	\$ 2,800.00	\$ 2,800.00			\$ 2,800.00
	VirBELA Training for presenters, students		\$ 200.00	\$ 200.00	In Kind Value	
	VirBELA tours \$18.50/hr X10	\$ 200.00	\$ 200.00			\$ 200.00
	VirBELA modules		\$ 250.00	\$ 250.00	In Kind Value	
	Social Activities and Intensive Packets: \$60 x 40 (35 st, 5 faculty)			Not needed		
	Workshop Supplies: \$30 x40 (35 students, 5 faculty)			Not needed		
	Common Book: \$40 x 39 (35 students + 4 peer mentors)			Not needed		
	Postage			Not needed		
	Copier			Not needed		
	Marketing Materials		\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00		
	Minus AU In Kind		\$ (1,150.00)	\$ (1,150.00)		
	TOTALS:		\$ 16,000.00	\$ 6,000.00		\$ 10,000.00



Evening Master Class via Zoom



Getting ready for students

Testimonials

“Each of the sessions was unique, however, observing Dr. Russell’s poetry discussion really struck a chord with me. One of our focuses in 8th grade ELA is answering questions using text evidence. With his masterful questioning, Dr. Weaver continually drew the two students back into the text before letting them draw their own conclusions. With “The Road Not Taken” (a poem both students were familiar with), the final conclusions were very different from the initial reactions and discussion of what the poem meant.” - Essex Intern

“All of the presenters had well-thought out sessions. They had an end result in mind from the very beginning and were able to facilitate the students' learning through thought-provoking techniques.” - Essex Intern

“I enjoyed discussing the poetry I had chosen with the students who signed up for my classes. Being allowed to use Zoom rather than Virbela was a blessing as it made my task incredibly easy, something I was used to and comfortable with.” - Plenary Faculty

“I was able to witness the Essex students in a less formal setting during lunch. They had been tasked with holding a talent show. Instead of being told when, where, and how the show would happen, the facilitators of Essex instead put those decisions into the hands of the students. It was very impressive how the students took this task and ran with it! They worked together in a collegial fashion and delegated responsibilities seamlessly. Their interpersonal skills were very high; Howard Gardner would be pleased.” - Essex Intern

“I appreciate how student centered the team is in everything they do. It was a joy working with this team.

I love the positive attitudes.

I enjoyed attending the group activities outside of my session.

I appreciated the excellent tech support and training.

I appreciated the opportunity to experience working with a student in a new environment.

I loved how engaged the student I worked with was and that at the end she was asking for ways to add to the content we discussed.” - Intensive Faculty

“Essex provides a lot of opportunities for gifted students to explore topics that interest them in authentic ways. It allows these highly gifted individuals to be among peers they can relate to while also developing leadership skills. I attended several camps for gifted students as a child and I can personally attest to how important these types of opportunities are for gifted children and teens.” - Essex Intern

“There is a spirit of resilience and hope that is woven into the whole of this effort as we join together as a community for the goal of learning. I feel we ‘walked the talk.’” - Intensive Faculty

“I thought that the Talent Share was a rousing success - especially after it was looking like a complete technical nightmare about 10 minutes before it started. Staci the DJ and Alli the Essexer together saved the day. I love seeing the various

talents and interests of these students, and hearing from each of the Intensive groups was important so that we could see what was gained.” - Essex Admin

“I do wish there had been a few more students. The workshop I led is very interactive, and it was a bit awkward with only 2-3 students.” - Plenary Faculty

“The structure of the lesson [Beyond the March] allowed the student to select the topic and the teacher acted as a guide. This set-up is similar to project based learning, or perhaps an apprenticeship, considering the expert level of the instructor and the student’s intuitive expression of understanding and expert research skills. This lesson qualifies as an example of an instructional style preferred by gifted students.” -Essex Intern

“I think having the session descriptions shared early on might attract more participants. While I liked experiencing Virbela, I wonder if it not being accessible on mobile devices might have been an issue for some possible participants.” - Intensive Faculty