

IGNYTE!3



MENSA® YOUTH RG

HOSTED BY NORTHERN NEW JERSEY MENSA

Nov. 7-8-9, 2025 at County College of Morris, NJ



Join us for our third annual IGNYTE! RG

See the latest information below:

<https://nnjmensa.org/nnjm-ignite/>

NNJ Mensa IGNYTE 2025

Registration

Our registration counter is the main hallway of the Student Center behind Davidson, the three rooms we'll be using.

You will be greeted by our wonderful supporting volunteers. It will open early on Saturday.

Friday (also in the Davidson rooms)
Pizza party, games and an astronomy show

Let's get together on the evening before Saturday to get a head start on getting to know each other. While enjoying pizza and board games (you can also bring your own), we'll have an astronomy session led by Brian Scott! (see pg. 5)

Saturday

If you have already registered on Friday, please bring your badges, and just confirm your presence at the registration desk.

If you have not registered on Friday, go to the registration counter indicated above.

Please send any photos of IGNYTE! for IMprint to editor@nnjmensa.org

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Chairman's Welcome

We are very excited to welcome you to IGNYTE!2025 (or IGNYTE!3), our third incarnation of a weekend dedicated to learning and fun. It's great to see those of you that have returned and to see so many new faces as well! IGNYTE! Is the largest gathering of young Mensans at American Mensa, and we strive to make it better every year. In order for an event this big to be successful, it requires contributions from a host of people, including the IGNYTE! Committee, the visual artists who designed the logo, the printing of this brochure, our hosts CCM and the volunteers who will be assisting us in making sure that today goes smoothly and everyone can relax and enjoy the day. There's always a lot that goes on behind the scenes.

We're especially thankful for our roster of speakers, all of whom are leaders in their fields and have generously volunteered to give their time to inform and educate us on a wide variety of subjects. One of our goals for 2025 was to increase the range of subjects. We have everything from guide dogs to planets, from quantum computing, math and biochemistry to writing and financial literacy. We've also included activities that will make you think while getting to know your peers. Intelligence comes in many forms and fields and we want to nurture our young Mensans wherever their strengths lie. I'm as excited as any of you to see the what could be... ignited by something experienced today.

This event isn't only informative, it's also social. Mensa brings people from all walks of life together, and IGNYTE! Is an incredible chance to spend time with someone new or someone you've had the pleasure of meeting in the past. Also if you see me or a committee member wandering the halls come up, say hi and let us know your thoughts about today's activities NNJ Mensa or Young Mensan programs in general. We're always open to new suggestions... and of course appreciation where it's warranted. I'm looking forward to a fun day of active learning!

Art Thomas

Northern NJ Gifted Youth Coordinator, IGNYTE Chair

Health Notes: We have no special health protocols in place at this time. However, it is fall in the northeast US. We are all aware of Covid, flu, RSV, and other respiratory illnesses and viruses. As much as we are looking forward to seeing you, if you are showing symptoms of illness and/or feeling unwell, please think about whether it makes sense to attend.

Also, please respect the choices the attendees make, such as using hand sanitizer (it will be available) and wearing masks if they choose to.

Games

Please be gentle with the games. Treat them like they belong to someone you know (since they probably do). Use of the games and tables is first come, first serve. There will be one table reserved for Jigsaw Puzzles. Please use only this table for Jigsaw Puzzles. When you are done with a game, please ensure you put it back carefully, ready for the next players.

Speakers

We are very grateful that some members have decided to share their knowledge and entertain the rest of us. Please treat them all with respect and don't hesitate to express your gratitude if you feel like it. See page 5 and onward for their bio/talk info.

IGNYTE 2025 Organizational Committee

Art Thomas – RG Chair

Rohan Raghu – Program Editor and

Webmaster

Greg Hoffman – NNJ Mensa President

Melissa Starr – Treasurer

Laurie Thomas

Keith Thompson

Swathi Pradeep

Deborah Munoz

Richard A. Schaefer

Code of Conduct

We aim at having a great event together, respecting this Code of Conduct will help. Thank you in advance for your cooperation. Our contract with the venue requires us to enforce certain regulations and codes of conduct while at IGNUYTE!, so we ask that you observe these few rules:

1. Please wear your badge at all times with no exceptions. Please note that kid's badges will be a different color than adult badges. Anyone who is not wearing an IGNUYTE! name-tag won't be allowed in our program rooms. Please be kind and cooperate.
2. Do not engage in the use of any illegal substances (or violate any other laws) on the premises.
3. The games in our game room belong to someone. Please don't take any of them out of this room, even for a little while, and be cautious as if it was yours.
4. No smoking or vaping anywhere in the venue. This includes any form of tobacco and tobacco-less e-cigarettes.
5. Any direction regarding food safety must be followed. Please clean up after yourself by tossing your paper plates, cups, etc. in the trash.
6. Each member is a representative of Mensa. Your conduct reflects on our group. Anyone causing a problem at IGNUYTE! with the venue or another member will be asked to leave the gathering without refund and not welcomed back.
7. Harassment: IGNUYTE! is a friendly and safe environment for our attendees. Unwelcome physical contact and other forms of harassment will not be tolerated. Failure to comply with this policy may result in removal from the event without a refund, and police intervention if warranted. If you have concerns or need to report misconduct, find a member of the organization (see left). If you need immediate and direct intervention for your personal safety, request assistance from security at the front desk.

Parking Information

IGNYTE registrants should park in Lot 6, and overflow into lot 7. There is no fee for parking at CCM.



IGNYTE! Saturday Schedule

6-9 Track	Cafeteria	Davidson A	Davidson B	Davidson C	6-9 Track
10-13 Track					10-13 Track
14-17 Track					14-17 Track
Parents					Parents
All					All
8:00- 9:00AM	Registration and networking				8:00- 9:00AM
9:00- 9:30AM	Opening session				9:00- 9:30AM
9:45- 10:30AM	The Seeing Eye: Raising and training Seeing Eye Dogs				9:45- 10:30AM
10:45- 11:30AM	Yoga/Writing/ networking	Yoga	Creating fictional characters and building a storytelling plot	Creating fictional characters and building a storytelling plot	10:45- 11:30AM
11:30- 12:30PM	LUNCH				11:30- 12:30PM
12:45- 1:30PM	Understanding the Whole Gifted Child: Social and Emotional Needs	Biochemistry literacy for kids	Biochemistry literacy for kids	Interactive challenges	12:45- 1:30PM
1:45- 2:30PM	Trying to Carry Water in a Colander: Supporting Execu- tive Functioning Needs in Neurodi- vergent Kids	Interactive fun	Demystifying math	Quantum physics and quantum computing	1:45- 2:30PM
2:45- 3:30PM	Help your child grow beautiful	Demystifying math	Quantum physics and quantum	<i>Numeraldo:</i> Financial Literacy	2:45- 3:30PM
3:30- 5:00PM	Messengers of Time & Space Longo Planetarium (Cohen Hall)				3:30- 5:00PM
5:00- 5:30PM	Closing session				5:00- 5:30PM
5:30- 6:30PM	DINNER				5:30- 6:30PM
6:30- 7:00PM	Open time for networking				6:30- 7:00PM

Program Content

Name	Session title	Session Description	Bio
EVERYONE			
Don MacGowan	The Seeing Eye	<p>Don and other outreach volunteers are pleased to visit organizations and groups of all kinds to tell The Seeing Eye's story from several perspectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He talks about the causes of blindness that can occur at different stages of people's lives and explains how they get around in their daily lives. • He discusses the breeds of dogs The Seeing Eye works with and explains what makes them particularly suited to the work they do. • He talks about The Seeing Eye's training program, which begins in the Breeding Station (in Chester, NJ), continues with puppy raising, where each puppy lives with a family for 14-15 months while they are growing up, and is followed by four months of formal training at The Seeing Eye's campus in Morris Township. • He tells about the all-important matching process that precedes people who are blind coming to The Seeing Eye to receive and learn to work with their guide dogs. <p>Questions and answers are always an important part of a visit. We know people are curious about what they see in and around Morristown as trainers work with dogs to teach them the skills they need to work successfully with a blind person. We are happy to discuss all this in as much detail as people would like to hear.</p>	<p>Don is a volunteer at The Seeing Eye, working in the Development and Donor & Public Relations side of the organization. He schedules and coordinates outreach visits to hundreds of organizations reaching thousands of people each year. He also coordinates the Pennies for Puppies/Dollars for Dogs program which raises over \$100,000 for the organization each year. Don and his wife live in Denville. He spent forty-plus years in the Information Technology in the insurance industry. He is now pleased to be able to give some of his time to The Seeing Eye and other worthy organizations.</p> <p>The Seeing Eye is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to enhance the independence, dignity, and self-confidence of people who are blind and visually impaired through the use of Seeing Eye dogs. The Seeing Eye breeds and raises puppies to become Seeing Eye dogs, trains the dogs to guide blind people, and instructs blind people in the proper use, handling, and care of the dogs. It also conducts and supports research on canine health and development.</p> <p>It is The Seeing Eye's intent to be recognized for sustained excellence and continuous improvement as the best guide dog school to attend and to support as a donor, volunteer, puppy raiser, or employee. https://seeingeye.org/</p>
Brian Scott	Friday night astronomy	<p>Brian will be sharing details about SHAA and their observatory, including photos of the observatory and of various celestial objects taken from the observatory. That will be followed by an interactive talk with planet models and a solar system demo (you can be a planet!). Questions are welcomed throughout the entire presentation.</p>	<p>Brian is an amateur astronomer with the Sheep Hill Astronomical Association (SHAA) in Boonton (sheephillastronomy.com). He has recently retired from a career in math and software engineering though his involvement in astronomy has gone on for much longer. Brian enjoys many aspects of astronomy but has a particular interest in observing variable stars (stars whose brightness varies over time).</p>

Name	Session title	Session Description	Bio
PARENTS			
Lynne Henwood	<p>Understanding the Whole Gifted Child: Social and Emotional Needs of Gifted Children</p>	<p>“Gifted students, by their very advanced cognitive abilities and intensity of feelings, deal with issues about self and others in ways that are different from those of the general population and therefore require specialized understanding.” — Nicholas Colangelo and Gary Davis, 2003</p> <p>Parenting a gifted child often means parenting a child who feels everything more deeply and thinks everything more intensely. Their curiosity, empathy, and sense of justice can be inspiring—but also exhausting and confusing when emotions run high or perfectionism takes hold. In this session, we’ll unpack what Colangelo and Davis describe as the need for “specialized understanding.” Together, we’ll explore how asynchronous development, emotional intensity, and social sensitivity shape a gifted child’s behavior and self-concept. Parents will gain insight into how to support balance, resilience, and connection—helping their children thrive not just academically, but emotionally and socially.</p>	<p>Lynne Henwood is the Head of FlexSchool’s Cloud Campus, which champions gifted and twice-exceptional learners. Former NJAGC President, she’s a decorated educator with awards from Mensa and NAGC, holding advanced degrees in educational psychology and gifted education. Recently, Lynne was awarded a seat on the Cleveland State University 2e Teacher Education Advisory Board. Prior to her current role, she served as a gifted teacher and program coordinator for Washington Township Schools in Morris County, New Jersey. https://www.flexschool.net/</p>
Dr. Matthew Zakreski, PsyD	<p>Trying to Carry Water in a Colander: Supporting Executive Functioning Needs in Neurodivergent Kids</p>	<p>Can’t you just focus?? Many neurodivergent people struggle with executive functioning skills (time management, organization, task initiation, response inhibition, etc.). There is a lot of misinformation around executive functioning skills, especially in why they occur and how to help remediate them. This presentation will establish the neuroscience behind executive functioning and how to use the realities of the neurodivergent brain to shape and build skills that help people develop executive functioning.</p> <p>Learning Objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Participants will learn about the neuropsychological underpinnings of executive functioning challenges and how they show up in different conditions, disorders, and profiles. 2) Participants will practice strategies to adapt their leadership, teaching, and/or parenting styles to accommodate the needs of a person with executive dysfunction. 3) Participants will workshop how to adapt their environments to be more affirming to people with executive functioning challenges. 	<p>Matthew “Dr. Matt” Zakreski, PsyD is a high energy, creative clinical psychologist and professional speaker who utilizes an eclectic approach to meet the specific needs of his neurodivergent clients. He is proud to serve the Gifted community as a consultant, a professor, an author, and a researcher. He has spoken nearly a thousand times all over the world about supporting neurodivergent clients, organizational wellness, and mental health. Dr. Zakreski is a member of Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG), the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC), the New Jersey Association for Gifted Children (NJAGC), and Pennsylvania Association for Gifted Education (PAGE). Dr. Zakreski graduated from Widener University’s Institute for Graduate Clinical Psychology (IGCP) in 2016. He is the co-founder of The Neurodiversity Collective, LLC, co-host of the podcast “Nerding out on Neurodiversity,” and the author of the Neurodiversity Playbook: How Neurodivergent People Can Crack the Code of Living in a Neurotypical World. https://www.drmatzakreski.com/</p>
Laurie Thomas	<p>Help your child grow beautiful</p>		

Name	Session title	Session Description	Bio
MENSA YOUTH			
Dr. Daniel Fried	Biochemistry literacy or kids	<p>In this session, Dr. Fried will demonstrate some of the most popular lessons from his Biochemistry Literacy program. Students will learn basic patterns about how atoms bond to one another to form molecules, and then will build and explore flavor molecules. This lesson immerses students in the rich world of organic chemistry, and we will discuss some interesting aspects of the 3-dimensional nature of molecules. Students will also be introduced to a free 3D modeling software that allows us to view the structure of the first odor receptor protein—which was only solved by scientists a few months ago. We will see for the first time, how odor molecules elicit a biological response that we call our sense of smell. The session will also cover the polymerization concept, and the class will work together to assemble a large plastic polymer model that will stretch across the room. Finally, we will introduce another topic that students love, the creation of new elements inside stars. We will look at some of the most important pathways that occur inside stars that help us understand why certain isotopes are common in our universe and others are not. We may also cover other topics based on student interest, so if your student has questions that have been difficult for them to answer, come to this session! that have been difficult for them to answer, come to this session!</p>	<p>Dr. Fried currently teaches chemistry and biology at the upper school at Pingry. Previously, he was a tenured assistant professor of chemistry at Saint Peter's University, where he began combining ideas about K-12 education with college STEM learning. He also has a B.S. in Biochemistry from Binghamton University, a Ph.D. in Chemistry from Yale University, and a postdoc in microbiology from the Weizmann Institute of Science. https://biochemistryliteracyforkids.com/</p>
Tanvi Gopalan	Quantum physics and quantum computing	<p>In "Introducing Quantum Physics and Quantum Computing" Tanvi Gopalan explains quantum computing by contrasting classical bits with quantum qubits, focusing on the core principles of superposition and entanglement. It also addresses the primary challenges of Quantum Computing using Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, and simple at-home experiments like the double-slit test to visualize these complex theories to understand how it connects with real-world applications like MRI and GPS.</p>	<p>Tanvi Gopalan is a 12-year-old Young Mensan and a Youth Science Communicator demystifying the world of quantum physics for audiences of all ages. Tanvi hosts the podcast "Quantum Physics for Kids by Subatomic Tanvi", turning complicated ideas into simple, engaging talks. She is also the Ambassador for New York and New Jersey at "Girls in Quantum" (an organization devoted to inspiring and empowering girls globally by enabling them on quantum science) and was a featured Keynote Speaker at the Q-Volution 2025 conference. Tanvi's message is: the amazing world of quantum science is never too big or confusing for any curious mind. In "Introducing Quantum Physics and Quantum Computing"</p>

Name	Session title	Session Description	Bio
<p>Bill Jackson</p>	<p>MENSA YOUTH</p>	<p>Lesson 1: Geometric Patterns (Ages 6–9) In this hands-on lesson inspired by Japanese origami activities, students will explore geometry and pattern recognition through paper folding. By folding and cutting square sheets in different ways, they'll observe how new shapes and symmetrical patterns emerge. As the number of folds increases, students will predict outcomes, describe relationships, and develop their spatial reasoning and logical thinking skills—all while having fun with creative exploration.</p>	<p>Owner and Consultant, Enjoy Math LLC Bill Jackson is a highly experienced educator with over 30 years of experience the classroom. He has worked as a teacher, trainer, and academic director, and is known for his expertise in implementing Singapore Math, Japanese mathematics, Lesson Study in the United States. Bill is also the author of math textbooks and trains teachers in Singapore and Japanese teaching methods in the United States and around the world.</p>
		<p>Demystifying math</p>	<p>Lesson 2: Nets of Cubes (Ages 10–13) This session challenges students to investigate the geometry of cubes by constructing them from square papers. Through guided exploration, they will design and test different “nets” that can be folded into a cube—discovering how many unique nets exist. The activity strengthens visualization, spatial reasoning, and logical thinking, encouraging students to look for patterns and think systematically like mathematicians.</p>
<p>Judith Lindbergh</p>	<p>Creating fictional characters and building plot</p>	<p>In this session Judith will share creative writing exercises to help create characters and plots for fiction. There will be time for writing, sharing, and brief discussion of students' work.</p>	<p>Judith is the founder and director of The Writers Circle (https://writerscircleworkshops.com/), who has spoken and published for the Smithsonian Institution and provided commentary for The History Channel documentaries, among other engagements. Her award-winning new novel <i>Akmaral</i>, about a nomad warrior on the ancient Central Asian steppes, was called "cracking" by Publishers Weekly and "a gripping saga" by #1 NY Times bestselling novelist Christina Baker Kline. Her debut novel, <i>The Thrall's Tale</i>, about three women in the first Viking Age settlement in Greenland, was praised by Geraldine Brooks and Robert Olen Butler. She has mentored adult writers since 2006 and led creative writing workshops for children and adults since 2009. https://writerscircleworkshops.com/instructors/#judithL, https://judithlindbergh.com/</p>

Name	Session title	Session Description	Bio
MENSA YOUTH			
Chelsea Clarke	Interactive fun	Students will develop essential skills such as collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, and perseverance by engaging in a variety of hands-on station activities. These include solving pentomino puzzles and tackling STEAM challenges like building bridges and designing mazes.	Chelsea Clarke has been an educator for over 10 years and currently serves as the Gifted & Talented teacher in Roseland, NJ. She works with students in grades K-6, as well as collaborating with teachers and families to support student growth. In 2023, Chelsea was honored with the NJAGC Educator of the Year Award. She is also the chair of the Essex County Gifted & Talented Steering Committee, where she leads bi-monthly meetings with gifted educators from across the county and organizes various competitions for G&T students. Additionally, Chelsea serves on the board of trustees for the NJAGC, where she focuses on supporting parents in advocating for their gifted and 2E children. Chelsea is deeply passionate about empowering students, families, and teachers within the gifted education community. www.njagc.org
Karen Cristalli	Interactive challenges	Join other bright minds for an afternoon of critical thinking, teamwork, and deep discussion! Participants will first explore thought-provoking philosophical puzzles—debating questions about truth, freedom, and ethics in a lively, age-appropriate discussion. Then, the group will put those thinking skills to the test in an Escape Room Challenge, where logic, collaboration, and creative reasoning are the keys to success.	Karen Cristalli, M.Ed., is the District Instructional Supervisor for middle school and District Supervisor of Gifted Services in Kearny, NJ, and co-president of the Hudson County Gifted and Talented Consortium. Karen is the chair of professional development for the New Jersey Association of gifted children and in 2024, she received the NJAGC Administrator Award. www.njagc.org
Kevin Conod	Messengers of Time & Space	An in-depth look at how the twin Gemini Observatories are working together with the new Rubin Observatory and other astronomical instruments to map the universe and monitor the night sky for fleeting astronomical events such as supernovas, pulsating stars, comets and asteroids. This 45-minute program also includes a guided tour of the sky and planets.	Kevin Conod is an astronomer, educator and planetarium expert who will be guiding attendees through the show. Kevin has been at CCM since 2022 and served previously as the planetarium manager at The Newark Museum for 31 years.
Rohan Raghu	Numeraldo: Financial Literacy	Join Numeraldo for an engaging Financial Literacy Workshop designed to help teens build a strong foundation for financial success. Attendees will learn how to open a custodial bank account, read a W-2 statement, and open and fund a Roth IRA. Whether teens are just starting your financial journey or looking to boost money management skills, this session will give the tools and confidence to make smart financial decisions.	Rohan Raghu is the Founder of Numeraldo (a numeracy non-profit, https://numeraldo.org) and a senior at Stanford University Online High School, He has been the Editor/Webmaster of Northern NJ Mensa since 2021. He is a teaching assistant at his school for Calculus, Statistics, Logic, and Number Theory. He is deeply passionate about mathematics and helping teens be financially literate.

Meals

Lunch

- Sub sandwiches:
- Italian (provolone, salami, capicola, prosciutto)
- Vegetable (provolone, eggplant, broccoli rabe, peppers)
- Ham and cheese
- Turkey and cheese
- Chips (hoagie, sour cream and onion, pub style pretzels, popcorn)
- Coleslaw
- Potato salad
- Assorted cookies
- Canned soda and bottled water



Dinner

- Chicken francaise
- Chicken florentine
- Sausage and peppers
- Grilled salmon
- Penne alla vodka
- Cheese tortellini in red sauce
- Broccoli rabe
- Steamed mixed vegetables
- Rice pilaf
- Jasmine rice
- Caesar salad
- Tossed salad

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To all participants: the people who have put together this innovative event have spent a lot of time and energy to make it work. We know that despite all our care, some glitches might happen during IGNYTE! Please be tolerant and try to be part of the solution. Thank you!



