

## Get to Know Ian Byrd, giftED18 presenter and founder of Byrdseed.com

### How did you get your start in gifted education?

I owe my start in gifted education to luck and the kindness of others! As a student teacher, I was randomly placed into a gifted classroom at a magnet school. I received an incredible education there. The next year, a teacher in that gifted program moved into an admin position. I was hired to take her spot. I think a few people in high places at that district were very supportive of me and pulled some strings to get me that spot. The next year, we shrank by one classroom so (as the new guy) I was first to move schools out of gifted ed, but another teacher decided to leave the gifted program and I got to keep my spot! Plus, this was all in 2007, during California's economic crisis, so I was fortunate to have a teaching job at all. Many events beyond my control landed me in gifted education and many events beyond my control have made Byrdseed a success.

### Why did you decide to move into sharing your work online?

As a brand-new teacher who was also learning to work with gifted students, I scoured the web for resources. There was nothing specifically for gifted education. So, I started documenting my own experiences. While they ended up helping others, writing these reflections helped me to become a better teacher much faster. It made me think hard about yesterday's teaching, not just the next day's planning. I noticed that I was repeating the same mistakes in lessons every day. I spotted patterns that lead to success and learned to use those patterns in other lessons. People started emailing me with ideas that pushed my thinking. Dan Meyer, who was my initial blogging inspiration, says he doubled a year's teaching experience by writing online ([blog.mrmeyer.com/2012/get-a-blog-already-okay/](http://blog.mrmeyer.com/2012/get-a-blog-already-okay/)). I'd agree. It's amazing how much faster I improved once I took the time to seriously think about my teaching. Sharing online helps other people realize those same benefits as well.

### What was it like putting yourself “out there” through Byrdseed?

It was easy at first! No one read what I was writing, so there was no pressure. Now, when I press "Publish," I know thousands of people might read it. It definitely affects how I write, but that too has helped me get better. The feedback I get is incredibly valuable since I get to learn about gifted ed all over the world. Plus, I've met lots of online friends, some of whom have even become real life friends.

### You've been to Texas and TAGT many times—what do you enjoy most about coming to Texas?

No one has supported me as much as the teachers of Texas. Byrdseed wouldn't be a success without (ahem) y'all. Back in 2011, TAGT was the first conference to invite me to travel and lead a workshop. This was a milestone for me (apologies if you were there, though. I know I've gotten much better!). But beyond personal appreciation, I most enjoy eating barbecue when I'm in Texas! Please send me your favorite spots.

## What energizes you?

Total teacher answer: I love learning! There is nothing like the experience of discovering something I didn't know and then jumping in with both feet to learn more. Byrdseed gives me an outlet to write about my learning, which energizes me further. Related to learning, I read constantly. If I don't have a couple books I'm working through I feel empty. And, in a former life, I was a musician, so I often have a guitar (or a ukulele) in my hands. Baby Henry loves listening!

## As a new dad, what's been the biggest challenge so far in juggling parenthood, speaking gigs, and your own business? Do you think it's changed your perspectives on what you do and why?

My wife, Mary, has been enormously supportive in figuring all of this out. We quickly learned that working from home with Baby Henry was impossible. I now rent a desk in downtown Portland and ride my bike to work each day. Much like teaching, my business tends to spread into nights and weekends if left unchecked, so this physical separation has helped. When I get home, I can just be with Henry and give Mary a break. Having a baby has definitely motivated me to put hard limits on how much I'm traveling. He changes so much every day!