



NAGC receives similar questions from teachers and parents; however, rarely is there an opportunity to explore how the “other side” might be facing the issue. Interestingly, both groups benefit from the same information even though they look at it from different perspectives and have different roles to play in helping gifted children reach their potential. Our ongoing goal is for teachers and parents to develop a broader understanding of children’s potential and thus create stimulating learning environments.

Topic for this issue: “Finding a Program or Advocating for One that Works”

A Teacher’s View

I am about to finish up my first year in the classroom and throughout this time have learned so much! I received little exposure to the field of gifted and talented education when I graduated from a Teacher Preparation Program but was lucky enough to attend a great summer conference which introduced me to the basics of identification, curriculum modification techniques, and a variety of resources. I never thought that teaching could be so rewarding and, honestly, it wasn’t that hard to accomplish. I wish every teacher could share my perspective and understanding.

I’ve been teaching in a gifted and talented program for the past 7 years. Everything was going great until the budget cuts came. Our gifted program was eliminated and so was my Coordinator position. Even though I still have a job, I have gone back to the regular classroom. I’m finding it difficult to transition into this new role. How am I supposed to serve the students requiring more than the regular curriculum? What can I say to let parents know that their children are in good hands?

A Parent’s View

My husband’s job is transferring to another state. We don’t want to move, but in this economy we have no other choice but to move to keep his job. Apart from having to sell our house and move away from family and friends, we have hit a big problem. Our children, an eight-year-old daughter and seven-year-old son, are in a gifted program, having been tested in first grade. They do very well in this program, and we would expect them to continue to participate in similar programs.

However, in investigating where we should live in our new state, we were in for a rude awakening. We are having a hard time finding a school district with gifted services. It turns out the state does not have any laws about gifted and talented education, so most districts do not have programs. We did find one district with a program, but they have their own testing protocol. They won’t accept our children’s current test results, yet they won’t test our children unless they attend school in the district. That means we would have to buy a house in a community that might not even admit our children to programming. Other districts don’t have testing, but say they meet the needs of “advanced” learners in the classroom. We are at a loss as to what to do for our children.

Perhaps the one thing more difficult than defining giftedness is finding a program to meet a gifted child’s needs. Without a federal mandate, it is up to individual states to determine what, if anything, they require schools to provide for these learners. NAGC’s *State of the States in Gifted Education* report reflects a wide range of policies on educating advanced learners, from states with legislation and funding to those without either, and many combinations in between. Programs offered may include magnet schools, separate classrooms, cross-grade groupings, pullout services, after-school offerings, and more. Additionally, many states leave it up to local districts to decide how to apply state policies. It can be a challenge to find the right academic fit for exceptional learners.

Educators who are just becoming aware and interested in the needs of gifted children or looking to stave off cuts to their gifted programs may not know if they have school or district support. Parents can feel they don’t have the information they need to encourage their school to provide an appropriate education for their children. Because gifted education is a largely a local issue and often misunderstood, both teachers and parents need to know how to advocate for their students with administration, teachers, and policy makers. Whether you are a teacher or parent, there are many ways you can think critically and plan creatively to share information with key stakeholder to effect changes in programs and services to benefit exceptional learners.



1. Programs - The Right Fit

AT SCHOOL

- Whether you are seeking a new position, looking to enhance the one you are in, or find yourself faced with a changing environment, brushing up on the basics of identification and gifted education strategies will be useful. NAGC has a series of web pages dedicated to “the what” of gifted and talented education. Browse the ABC’s of gifted or familiarize yourself with terminology from the field
<http://www.nagc.org/abcgifted.aspx>
<http://www.nagc.org/GlossaryofTerms.aspx>
- Discover what experts in the field have determined makes for exceptional programming. NAGC’s Pre-K-12 Gifted Programming Standards are available for download. For what strategies to utilize in the classroom, check out the What Works in Gifted Education webpages.
<http://www.nagc.org/ProgrammingStandards.aspx>
<http://www.nagc.org/giftededucationworks.aspx>
- Knowing your students’ interests and learning styles can enhance gifted education teaching. The March 2013 edition of **Connecting for High Potential** provides an in-depth look at how to gather the information and then what to do with it.
<http://www.nagc.org/chp.aspx>

AT HOME

- Consider your child’s profile using test results and her interests to determine what she needs. Is she academically advanced? An innovative thinker? Talented in the arts or leadership? Investigate Giftedness and the Gifted: What’s it all about? and The Role of Assessments in the Identification of Gifted Students. Then research the opportunities available for your child according to the profile you’ve developed. For example, academic needs should be met within the context of a school day, but advanced dance training is likely only available through a magnet school or outside coaching. Your child might benefit from doing his own research or joining and eventually leading a club or service project.
<http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=121>
<http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=4022>
- Research the different kinds of proven gifted education programming and strategies to know what might fit your child’s academic needs.
<http://www.nagc.org/giftededucationworks.aspx>

2. Advocacy - Starting and Maintaining Programs

AT SCHOOL

- If your program is healthy and is led by a supportive leader, praise their efforts. Letting administrators and coordinators know that you appreciate what they do for you goes a long way.
- It is important to showcase the success of your program and students. Try connecting with the local media. Invite the local education reporter to your classroom or on a field trip or submit or encourage others to submit letters to the editor. You can find detailed advice in The NAGC Advocacy Toolbox. Working with the Media is just one section to discover.
<http://www.nagc.org/index2.aspx?id=1004>
- Educating colleagues who are not familiar with how to find and educate high-ability learners can start with a few well-placed brochures and casual conversation. NAGC has several brochures written for principals and school staff who are new to gifted education that can be placed in the teachers’ room or hung on your bulletin board. Addressing the myths surrounding gifted students is a good place to start the conversation. Check out the NAGC Myths brochure.
<http://www.nagc.org/myths.aspx>

AT HOME

If you determine that your child needs services that should be available at school, but are not offered, you will need to become an advocate. To be an effective advocate:

1. Know your facts. Investigate not only what is and is not offered, but also the local, state, and national laws. Start with key contact information and data via NAGC’s Gifted by State map
<http://www.nagc.org/DataMapbyState.aspx>
1. Know your audience. Understand your schools operational constraints. Gifted education does not have to be expensive or complicated, but it does require administrators and teachers dedicated to serve their high-ability students. NAGC has materials to share in their Administrator Toolbox.
<http://www.nagc.org/administratortoolbox.aspx>
1. Find allies. Chances are there are other parents in the same position. Coming together helps to foster systemic and lasting changes. Access NAGC’s free eBook on *Starting & Sustaining a Parent Group to Support Gifted Children*.
<https://www.nagc.org/uploadedFiles/Publications/startingaparentgroup.pdf>

3. Forging a Pathway

AT SCHOOL AND AT HOME

- There is strength in numbers - as well as a valuable sense of community. A parent group, supported by the school community, is a great way for parents to come together around common issues, engaging activities, and important advocacy initiatives. Your state's gifted education association can help connect you to teachers and educators interested in gifted education. Provide a bridge between the home and the classroom. Students thrive when educators and parents work together. Utilize previous issues of *Connecting for High Potential* and make them work for you.

<http://www.nagc.org/chp.aspx>

- To support change at the local level it is important to advocate for it at the federal level as well. Visit NAGC's Advocacy & Legislation - Advocacy Toolkit for strategies on how to effect sustainable change.

<http://www.nagc.org/toolkit.aspx>

"Start with what is right rather than what is acceptable."

--Franz Kafka

Please print or share this via email with other parents and teachers in your community who may find this useful.

This issue of *Connecting for High Potential* was compiled by Jeff Danielian, NAGC Teacher Resource Specialist, and Susan Dulong Langley, Parent Representative to the NAGC Board of Directors.



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