

Using Their Words to Support Our Advocacy Efforts

It is not difficult in today's political climate to understand that good campaigning is redefining the common language of the times for your own political benefits. There are common threads that weave through political arguments. These common threads are the terms and phrases that take on different meaning for each candidate. They entice the populace because the rhetoric is familiar. They also direct attention to the candidates and their platform. This process is working for politicians, and it can work for educators of the gifted, too. We can build our advocacy efforts on the common language used by policymakers in general education to the advantage of gifted education.

They are talking about "social justice." We can use their term to advocate on behalf of gifted students. Currently, the literature is replete with the need to make decisions for students and design educational opportunities that are founded on the concept of social justice. The opportunities for gifted students need to be underscored by the same ethic. The application of social justice cannot be used to justify educational opportunities for some students without also being applied as a criterion to support the education of gifted students and the programs that serve them.

They are talking about "the achievement gap." We can use their term to advocate on behalf of gifted students. Educators of the gifted can describe the existence of the achievement gap within the gifted population as a consequence of the academic, linguistic, economic, and culture diversity in the group. We can address the issue that the achievement gap within the gifted population has the same deleterious consequences as the achievement gap between successful

and unsuccessful students in the general education population. Most importantly, we need to emphasize that the achievement gap within the gifted population is a result of students who do and do not have access to a well-defined set of services that support the recognition and translation of their potential into performance. The achievement gap within the gifted population is the outcome of a lack of gifted programs and the insufficient professional development to provide teachers with the understanding and competencies that promote appropriate and quality educational services for gifted students.

They are talking about "the democratic classroom." We can use their term to advocate on behalf of gifted students. The democratic classroom is the setting where students live, so to speak, and are taught the percepts of democracy as they learn and work together. A democratic classroom setting is one where students are taught to respect individual differences. A

continued on page 65

Au Contraire

continued from page 15

antigifted policymakers who are always looking for ways of minimizing or eliminating services to students with special needs” (Renzulli, 2004, p. 67).

“Research” can lead us anywhere, and one’s interpretation of specific findings seems as legitimate as another person’s view. It’s time to recognize this and

return to the basics: educating gifted children in ways that would make Leta Stetter Hollingworth applaud in praise, rather than shake her head in disappointment.

Q: Any last thoughts?

Just one: When you find the emperor is naked, say so. [GCT](#)

Multicultural

continued from page 27

Amazing Grace; White Socks Only; Yang the Youngest and His Terrible Ear; Another Way to Dance).

- Share personal experiences with your child about how you overcame social injustices. Your objective is to instill hope in your child.
- Talk to your child about the true meaning of friendship. Many students are so eager to have companionship that they affiliate with classmates without regard to their character, integrity, and goals.
- Be forthright in acknowledging that diverse students may exert negative

peer pressures on your child (e.g. accuse your child of “acting White”). This is another form of discrimination that cannot be ignored.

- Talk with your child about being assertive at initiating discussions with classmates.
- Above all else, don’t lose hope or faith. Be conscious, deliberate, consistent, and systematic in advocating for your child.

Not much has been written about “parenting culturally diverse gifted students.” However, some scholars have written books on parenting diverse chil-

dren that might be a helpful resource. Books on helping children cope with peer pressures may also offer insights and suggestions. Several of the above suggestions were borrowed from strategies my mother adopted as she faced the forced choice of placing me in schools where I did not have to sacrifice achievement or social relationships.

All of us—parents, educators, and others—must take a vested interest in and be proactive in nurturing culturally diverse gifted students. We must work together as if our collective future depends on it—because it does. [GCT](#)

Advocacy

continued from page 59

democratic classroom environment is one where all students are provided with the right to learn. Such a classroom must consider the unique and differential needs, interests, and abilities of all students, and this includes the needs, interests, and abilities of gifted students.

They are talking about “accountability.” We can use their term to advocate on behalf of gifted students. While the major emphasis of the discussion related to accountability focuses on the outcomes of teaching and learning, we need to redefine the term so it includes moral accountability or the need to make educators and policymakers

accountable for their decisions and the outcomes commensurate to these decisions. Provocative questions that ask why and how decisions are made concerning the education of the gifted is a form of moral accountability that we, as advocates for the gifted, must bring to the attention of others.

They are talking about “academic rigor.” We can use their term to advocate on behalf of gifted students. Historically, the drive to identify the dimensions of academic rigor and implement academically rigorous curricula have been associated with educators of the gifted and gifted education. We need to provide the background and the direction for acade-

mic rigor as the topic is addressed among educators and policymakers. Others need to understand how gifted education can and does contribute to general education.

There always has been discussion about the negatives and positives of educationese, the language coined by educators to describe and promote intentions and directions in education. Advocates of gifted education need to use the current educational jargon to draft their advocacy efforts. Redefining the common language for the common good of gifted students is the challenge and demand of today’s educational political climate. [GCT](#)

References

- Renzulli, J. (2004). Expanding the umbrella: An interview with Joseph Renzulli. *Roeper Review*, 26, 65–67.
- Silverman, L. S. (2001). This issue honors Annemarie Roeper—a gifted teacher and teacher of the gifted. *Roeper Review*, 23, 188.