



php

parenting for high potential

a note from the editor

The beginning of a new year also brings new beginnings for *PHP*. With this issue, I assume the reins of editorship from Jennifer Jolly, who artfully served *PHP* for many years and leaves with enormous shoes to fill. I'm thrilled and honored to serve as your new editor, and look forward to joining you on your journey in the world of giftedness. My own gifted parenting journey started 8 years ago, and from day one, my passions were ignited to re-focus my own talents and skills on advocating for the gifted.

With the recent release of the biannual NAGC *State of the States in Gifted Education* Report, the timing seemed right to build an issue around the many flavors of advocacy. In addition to the states report summary, the issue brings tips on how to become an advocate (while making friends along the way) and an article on how to build confidence and self-sufficiency in our children by teaching them to self-advocate.

Even though much of the country has been in a recent deep freeze, it's not too early to think about hot, sunny days ahead as registration for summer camps and programs starts soon. Be sure to check out the in-depth look at summer learning opportunities for gifted kids of all ages.

Lastly, I understand how isolating it sometimes feels as the parent of a gifted child. Hopefully, the article on parent support groups will provide you some new ideas—or inspire you to invent new ones. Thanks for the warm welcome!

Kathleen Nilles
 Editor-in-Chief
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A Warm Welcome Goes a Long Way

By Susan Dulong Langley, NAGC Board of Directors, Parent Representative

Over the past decade, I've worn many hats related to advocacy for gifted and talented learners. I served in many roles at the state level, ultimately serving as president and then chairperson for my state affiliate, the Massachusetts Association for Gifted Education (MAGE). It was at this stage I met my mentor, Diana Reeves—a tireless advocate, former NAGC board member, and 30-year member of MAGE—who supported my first tentative steps into national service.

Thanks to her guidance, I attended my first NAGC Affiliate Convention and served as a delegate to lobby Capitol Hill. My work then grew to participating in NAGC networks by editing the Arts newsletter, being appointed to the Membership Committee and, eventually, its chairperson, and most recently running for election to the NAGC Board of Directors as the Parent Representative, the position I hold now.

Each step of the way, I've earned a reputation that might at first seem unfortunate: Newcomers are warned about the “danger” of sitting next to me at any meeting. More often than not, after we've had a chance to chat, colleagues who sit next to me inevitably walk away with action items or a project to complete!

This teasing compliment from my peers is one in which I take pride. I think back to my first steps into service and the wonderful advantage I had in having Diana's supportive guid-



ance. It can be difficult for newcomers to take the plunge into advocacy, so personally reaching out to others has proven to be a successful way to thoughtfully and warmly engage them in becoming empowered leaders—to the benefit of not just the organization, but to them as well.

My philosophies on talent development include:

- 1. Diversity of voices is vital in accurately representing the gifted and talented population.** There are many ways we are different, just as there are many ways we are the same. Including those voices is essential in thoughtfully meeting our goals to support every gifted and talented learner.

2. Outreach to talent strengthens the organization. Although it is natural to include professionals from within the field of gifted and talented education, it is also important to seek those with expertise outside the field.

3. Volunteering should be a win-win. Leadership should provide the opportunity not only for service to the organization, but also for individual growth of the volunteer.

4. Potential leaders need and deserve support. What might seem like a readily apparent task may be unfamiliar to even the most accomplished professional who is new to the group. It's imperative to not only clearly define expectations, but also to provide direction and support.

5. Camaraderie counts for a lot. Maintaining a thriving organization requires ongoing work and attention to detail, which can become overwhelming in its scope. It's

important to make time to get to know each other and socialize beyond the work. The resulting friendships are a special benefit of being a contributing member in advocacy and serve to strengthen the organization.

Who is sitting in the chair beside you? Is it someone who would benefit from your welcoming support? If so, consider being the one to make a difference for that person. Or, perhaps, you are the newcomer. If so, please consider this your virtual seat hearty welcome. We welcome and encourage you to become part of the parent advocacy team, and there are many ways to do so. Check out the links below for state affiliate and NAGC opportunities.

State Opportunities

Find out what is happening in your state and how to get more involved by visiting the NAGC State Affiliates at <http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=609&gbs>.

NAGC Opportunities

Spring is an important time, as it's when NAGC appointments are made and elections are held. Find out more about:

- Network Elections at <http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=2506>
- Committee Appointments at <http://www.nagc.org/index2.aspx?id=8006>
- Board of Directors Elections at <http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=1122>

As the gifted young poet Mattie Stepanek said, "Unity is strength...when there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved." ☺

Author's Note

Susan Dulong Langley is the Parent Representative on the NAGC Board of Directors, as well as a teacher for the Sage Program of Gifted & Talented for Framingham Public Schools, Massachusetts.

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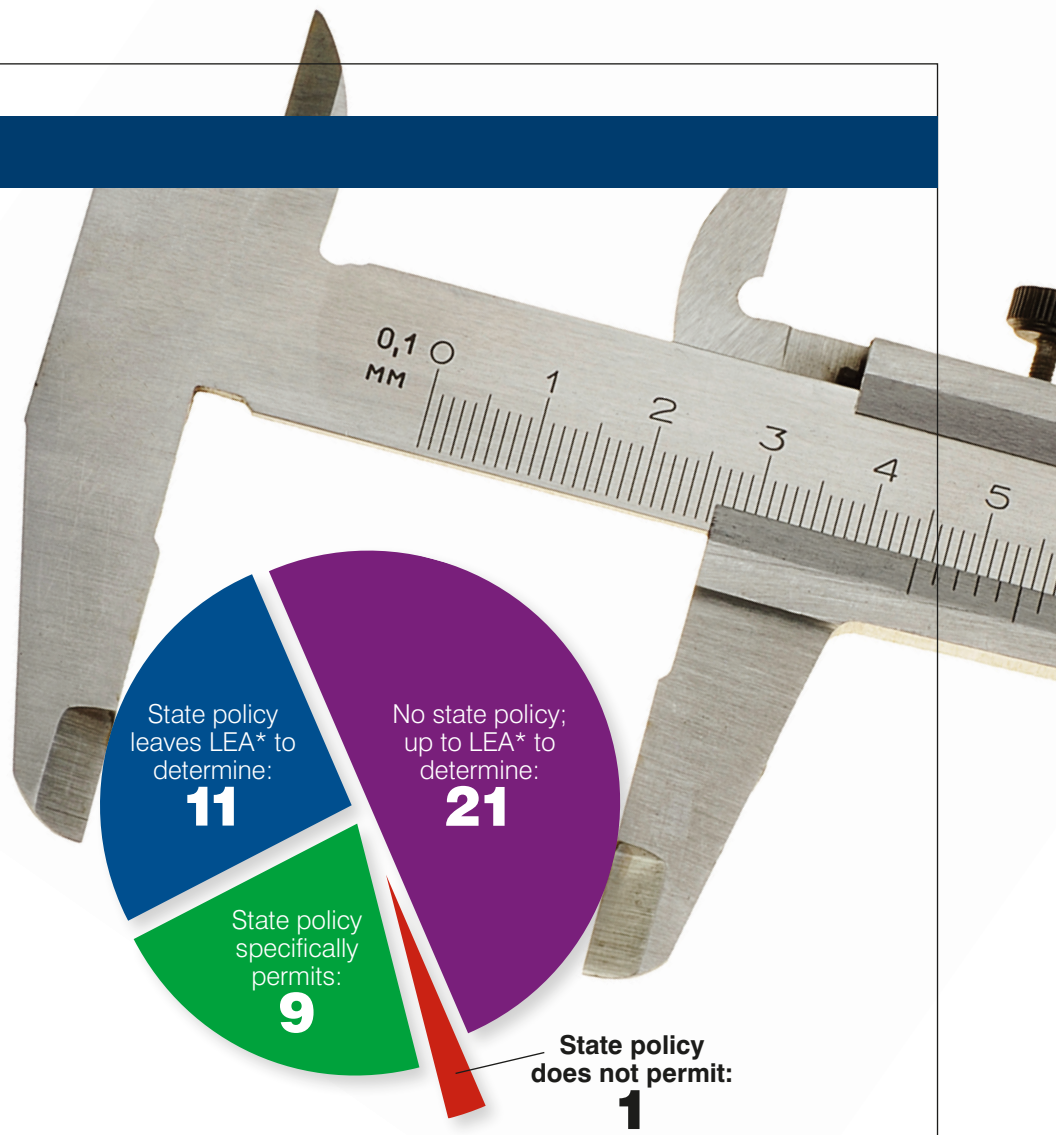
Measuring Progress in Gifted Policies and Practices



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**NAGC Releases
2012–2013 State of
the States in Gifted
Education Report**

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State Acceleration Policies

*Chart values reflect the different types of acceleration policies and the number of states implementing those policies. Total states reflected is 42. *LEA stands for "Local Education Agency."*

Biannually, the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) conducts an extensive survey in partnership with the Council of State Directors for Programs of the Gifted (CSDPG) to assess the current state of gifted policies, practices, funding, and programming across the nation. The survey is the only national compilation of data about gifted and talented education and provides opportunities to compare state policies, models for replication, and areas of need.

NAGC recently released its newest report, *2012–2013 State of the States in Gifted Education*, which offers insight into key elements of gifted education programs, including service delivery, programming options, personnel, professional learning, budget, laws, and preservice programs. Forty-two states, the District of Columbia, and Guam responded to the survey.

Why Should Parents Care?

Because there is no federal mandate for gifted education, gifted policies and programming are made at the state and district levels. It's imperative that parents understand what's happening within their own state and others in order to make informed decisions and to be effective advocates for their gifted children. Studies have shown that knowledge is a key characteristic of successful champions of gifted education (Robinson & Moon, 2003), and well-informed parents increase their credibility and effectiveness when talking with policymakers, administrators, teachers, and others.

Report Highlights

Following are highlights of the findings in the 2012–2013 report:

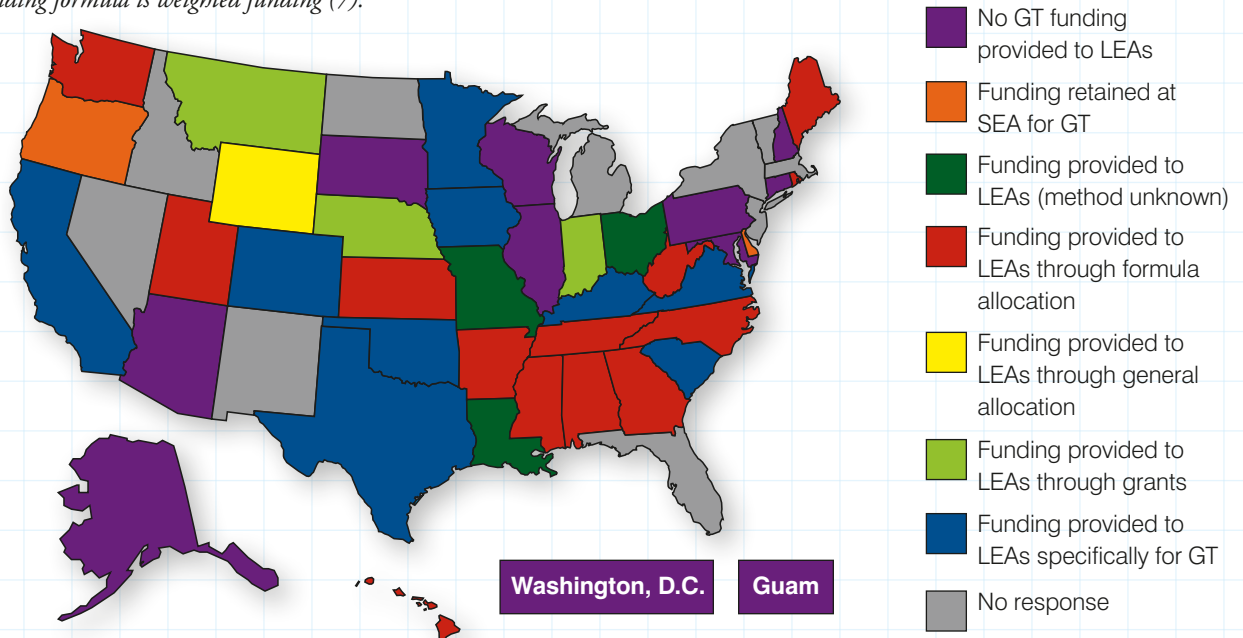
- Because the federal government does not require identification and services for gifted students, nor does it provide resources to states or school districts to support identification of these learners, decisions about whether high-ability students receive specialized curriculum and services—in which courses, and in which grades—are left to states, districts, and schools.
 - State- and district-level advanced learner policies continue to remain inconsistent and disparate across the country and within states. Most states leave key decisions about identification, curriculum and instruction, teacher training, and supportive policies affecting gifted students to local school districts.
 - State oversight of local district activities is uneven, with approximately half of the states monitoring or auditing local gifted programs and fewer requiring districts to submit their gifted education plans to the state education agency. Taken together, the evidence shows that few states are employing strategic plans regarding the education of their advanced learners.
 - Although the majority of states have laws and policies that require districts
- (Continued on p.7)*

State of the States at a Glance

- Forty states have a state definition of gifted/talented.
- Thirty-two states have a mandate related to gifted and talented education, for identification, services, or both.
- Eleven states have no mandate, and eight states that have mandates do not provide any funding for them.
- Schools in 38 states are *required to use* specific criteria and/or methods to identify gifted and talented students, however, the criteria/methods are fully or partially *determined* at the local level in 22 states.
- A range of criteria/methods is required to identify gifted and talented students, including multiple criteria model (25), IQ scores (18), and achievement data (16).
- Two states require Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to accept gifted identifications from other states. Families that relocate may have to repeat the identification process in order to obtain services for their gifted children. Thirteen states require LEAs to accept identifications from other LEAs in the same state.
- Twenty-two states reported having one or more full-time staff members at the state level dedicated to gifted education. Twenty states have less than one full-time staff person assigned to gifted education. Two states do not have any staff members for gifted education. In 24 states, including 16 without a full-time person dedicated to gifted education, personnel also have responsibilities for one or more programs or projects not specific to gifted education.
- Eleven states reported that data are not collected or not available on the number of students in the state who are identified as gifted and talented.
- Twenty-six states require some form of program or service for gifted and talented students in their state mandates. These required services fall under a variety of categories, including intellectual (18), specific academic areas (14), general academic (9), visual or performing arts (8), creativity (7), and leadership (4).
- Seventeen states require services starting in kindergarten through grade 12. Another four start service requirements later, and two of those states also end service requirements earlier.
- Few states have developed state policy to specify gifted program components such as differentiated instruction (12), contact time (10), social-emotional support (7), academic guidance and counseling (6), or content-based acceleration (6).

Funding Mechanisms

Out of 28 responding states in which funding is available, the majority (12) make funds available through formula allocation or specifically for gifted education services (9), with a smaller number (3) making it available through grants. The most commonly used funding formula is weighted funding (7).



(Continued from p.5)

to identify and/or serve their high-ability students, most of the policies are partially or totally unfunded. Fourteen states provide no funding, and of those states that provide some funding but do not fully fund the obligation, the level of support varies greatly.

- Only four states fully funded their gifted education obligations in 2012–2013.
- Beyond funding, states set policies on teacher training, student access to services, and reporting and public accountability.
- Even though the regular classroom is one of the most common service settings for gifted students, only one state (Kentucky) requires that all teachers be exposed to the nature and needs of gifted students before they enter the classroom.

On a positive note, there have been some improvements since the last report, such as:

- Twenty-five states are making changes in teacher training and/or their curriculum for high-achieving students to align with the Common Core State Standards.
- Academic performance and learning gains of identified gifted students are now being included on some state report cards.
- There are increased accelerated and other curricular opportunities in some states.

In terms of student access to services, only nine states have policies specifically permitting students to accelerate or move ahead by a grade or course if they are academically prepared to do so. Eleven others leave it up to the school district to decide. Three states have policies that prohibit advanced students from being promoted to a higher grade based on demonstrated proficiency of a subject.

Many states have no policies and procedures for how to access programming and

services, punting these decisions to local districts and creating high variability in qualifications and processes on these issues across districts and even within communities.

State monitoring and reporting of local districts' gifted education activity also varies considerably. According to *State of the States*, 17 states do not collect data about their gifted student population, while nine states report on the learning gains or the performance of gifted students as a separate group on district report cards or other reporting forms. Only 10 states publish an annual report on gifted education.

Want specific information about your state or a particular subject? The 264-page report is available via flash drive, and may be purchased from NAGC for \$15. ☎

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“Because there is no federal mandate for gifted education, gifted policies are made at the state level.”

Parents Need Support, Too!

By Kathleen Nilles, Parent Services & Communications Manager, NAGC

Parenting a gifted child is like living in a theme park full of thrill rides. Sometimes you smile. Sometimes you gasp. Sometimes you scream. Sometimes you laugh. Sometimes you gaze in wonder and astonishment. Sometimes you're frozen in your seat. Sometimes you're proud. And sometimes the ride is so nerve-racking you can't do anything but cry.

—Whitney and Hirsch (2011, p. 3)

Cry is exactly what my husband and I did upon learning that our then 5-year-old son was gifted. After fully exhausting a box of tissues and dusting ourselves off, we mobilized and embarked on a weekend-long crash course to digest everything we could about giftedness. We scoured information from the library, websites, local affiliates, and the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC). Then, when we finally came up for air, we were eager to speak with others in the same boat. We needed support, guidance, and reassurance. But, who could we talk to? Who would understand?

Parenting a gifted child can sometimes be a lonely journey. Relatives may be empathetic. Friends may listen politely. Neighbors may not understand at all. It's tough to find those who actually “get it”—those who experience the same joys and frustrations of raising a gifted child every day. That's why parent groups can be an important way for parents and caregivers to receive support, information, tools, and tips for navigating the world of giftedness.

Parent groups come in all shapes and sizes. They range from the informal—a few like-minded friends sharing stories over coffee—to the more formal, with a mission, purpose, and actionable goals. Some groups are just for adults; others provide friendship and connections for families and kids with playgroups, picnics, field trips, and other entertaining activities.

There are district-based Parent Teacher Association gifted subgroups, homeschooler meetings, gifted social media networks, and special interest groups for virtually every hobby, passion, or religious af-



Parenting a gifted child can sometimes be a lonely journey. Relatives may be empathetic. Friends may listen politely. Neighbors may not understand at all.

filiation. Meetups are also becoming popular, with more than 4,000 members in 47 groups in 42 cities and three countries connecting gifted individuals and their families (for more information, visit www.gifted.meetup.com).

There are formal support groups, too. Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG) has an extensive SENG-Model Parent Support Group (SMPG) system, which brings together 10–20 interested parents of gifted and talented children to discuss topics such as motivation, discipline, peer, sibling and parent relations, stress management, communications, and depression. The groups meet locally for 8–10 weeks, led by trained facilitators in a nonjudgmental atmosphere. To date, more than 300 leaders have been trained in 11 states and four countries. In Chicago, SMPGs are also being conducted in other languages. For more information, visit www.sengifted.org.

Other groups are formed with an advocacy goal in mind. In fact, if it weren't for the advocacy of parents, gifted education would not be where it is today. Many of the gifted programs and services that exist in schools are the results of small groups of parents who banded together and campaigned for gifted education (Smutny, 2003).

Steps to Setting Up a Parent Group

Although it may seem daunting at first, it's not hard to set up a support group if you have a few interested parents who share a common interest or goal. You'll be quickly

on your way if you follow the six main steps (NAGC, 2011) outlined below.

Clarify Your Purpose

Parent groups vary across the country, partly because each state operates its educational system and budget process differently. Although one group can serve multiple functions, the main reason for your group will help determine how it can best be organized. Parent groups commonly address the following needs:

- *Celebrating giftedness.* Parents and those involved with the day-to-day support of gifted children can discuss the wonders and pleasures of listening to, talking with, and dealing with extraordinary children.
- *Teaching parents, educators, and the public about giftedness.* Parent group meetings outline how best to support gifted children, not only for the children's sake, but for the greater good of the world.
- *Providing social and cultural interaction.* Family Fun Nights, cultural outings, athletic games, and other social events help attach members emotionally to each other.
- *Developing effective advocates.* As a support group grows in membership and/or state influence, parent group members can become local, state, and national advocates for the rights and needs of gifted youth in our society.

Review Your Objectives

Joining with others who share your enthusiasm for gifted education can be

exciting; however, don't let that tempt you to take on too many things at once. At the outset, ask these important questions:

- What is the primary purpose of your group?
- Who are you trying to reach?
- How will you find members?
- How will you work with other organizations (schools, groups, etc.)?
- Where will you meet?

Start small. Find one, two, or a handful of individuals who share your vision. Set up clear expectations and common goals to ensure success of the group.

Establish the Structure

Your new group can be formal or informal, depending on your members' needs and wants:

- *Informal.* Most local groups are formed to address a short-term need or because a small group of like-minded families shares a common interest. Many informal groups support enrichment activities, create fact sheets and brochures about giftedness, raise funds for classroom and teacher scholarships, run online discussion boards, and have an officer/committee structure.
- *Formal.* Often more formal models (e.g., a legally recognized 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization) can boost credibility with certain officials and the media. Formal organizations must have bylaws and articles of incorporation that establish an overarching purpose and leadership

framework. Each state has regulations as to how groups incorporate; the NAGC website has more information about lobbying restrictions.

Be sure to choose the organizational structure most comfortable to you and your members, and hold yourselves accountable. At minimum, the group should set goals, assign responsibilities, and craft a to-do list or work plan.

Organize for Action

What is right for your group depends on many variables, including the geographic location of your members, time constraints, and your group's purpose. Meetings can be conducted in person, online, or a hybrid of the two.

Consider topics of interest to your members. It's helpful to create a meeting committee of two to four members who can scout out possibilities and suggest a

list of topics for the year ahead. Consider how different topics can be approached in a variety of formats: debates, panels, conversations, expert presenters, discussions of readings, webinars, and field trips.

Keep the School Informed

Finding the right balance of involvement at a school can be a delicate issue because teachers can easily misinterpret the "one-two" forceful combination of strong inter-

Tips for New Parent Groups

Organizational Tips

- Start small, think big. Set realistic goals and prioritize activities.
- Look for holes, weaknesses, or inconsistencies in services and curricula—a great way to focus your group's activities.
- Help dispel the myths about gifted learners.
- Include parents of able learners who may not have been identified as gifted; they are also looking for high-end curriculum and enrichment activities for their children.
- Invite teachers or teacher representatives to join the group.
- Learn as much as you can about the nature and needs of gifted students and what the research says about them.
- Divide tasks into small, manageable parts so no one is carrying too big of a load.
- Send your newsletter to school board members, legislators, media, and other influential people.
- Develop and distribute a brochure about your organization; place at preschools, psychologists' offices, children's museums, libraries, public and private school events, chess competitions, and other places gifted parents might congregate.
- Make meetings meaningful—not personal storytelling time.
- Keep bylaws simple and flexible.
- Celebrate successes!

Implementation Tips

- Determine your nonnegotiables for educational programming in the district and choose your battles carefully. Stay polite and persistent, but understand that compromise sometimes is the only way forward.
- Remember that gifted students have varying abilities and needs; what is right for your child may not be in the best interest of another student.
- Consider asking the superintendent to form a task force with parents, teachers, administrators, and community leaders.
- Learn consensus building.
- Piggyback speakers and programs with chambers of commerce, school systems, and state gifted organizations.
- Learn your district's and school's chain of command.
- Learn to practice "quiet lobbying." Much is decided outside of formal meetings, and a lot of positive change can be created over a few cups of coffee.
- Know the school district calendar and process for decision making (e.g., budget hearings, public hearings on program changes).
- Serve on relevant school district committees.
- Only have the president or designee speak publicly on behalf of the group.
- Seek common ground with those who appear opposed to gifted education services.
- Be sensitive to the pressures school district personnel are dealing with; gifted education is only one piece of the educational pie.
- Remember that schools and school districts are unique—find your niche!

est and solid information coming from parents. Aim to establish a team approach with your school or district. It helps if the group is organized and functioning before reacting to any school problems, such as a proposed cut in programming. Keep to a prepared program or agenda, no matter how simple.

Parent groups need to encourage positive attitudes and discourage adversarial interactions. The most successful groups recognize what school districts are facing today, and work in cooperation with their school and/or district.

Transform Support to Advocacy

Advocacy from the perspective of a parent group simply means speaking or writing (or creating a website, video, or social media page) to promote improved education for gifted and talented students at the local, state, or national levels. Although the concept of advocacy is simple, being an effective advocate is not. NAGC has articles and resources available to help parent groups craft appropriate messages, communicate effectively, build bridges to administrators, and network appropriately when they are ready to extend their reach.

Regardless of the size, format, or the goals of your parent support group, one thing is for certain: You, as the parent of a gifted child, will feel less isolated and enjoy the company of others who support you, understand your family, and are walking the gifted journey with you. Most likely, you will also experience a sense of gratification and accomplishment in knowing that you are channeling your energy in a positive way, taking care of yourself and your family, and helping raise awareness for not only your child, but the millions of gifted children in the country who deserve an education that meets their potential. ☺

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2012-13 State of the States in Gifted Education Report

The report on a flash drive provides a bi-annual snapshot of how states regulate and support programs and services for gifted and talented learners. The report, developed in collaboration with the Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted, provides data covering questions about funding, state education agency support, mandates, identification, programs and services, personnel preparation, accountability, and other key policies and practices related to advanced learners for the school year 2012-2013.



order online at www.nagc.org

The Importance of Teaching Children Self-Advocacy

By Nancy Arey Cohen, Chair, Parent and Community Network

Advocacy is “the act of arguing in favor of something—an idea, cause, or policy” (National Association for Gifted Children [NAGC], n.d., para. 1). Each of us, then, is an advocate every time we stand up for our beliefs, hold our ground in a discussion, or express a point of view in defense of an issue. So why is advocacy, in general, important for parents of gifted children, and why is it important to teach our children to be advocates?

As indicated in the recently published *State of the States in Gifted Education* (NAGC, 2013), with the absence of a federal mandate, there is still

significant disparity among the states and local districts in identification, support, programming, and funding for gifted. There is little public accountability for delivery of gifted education services.

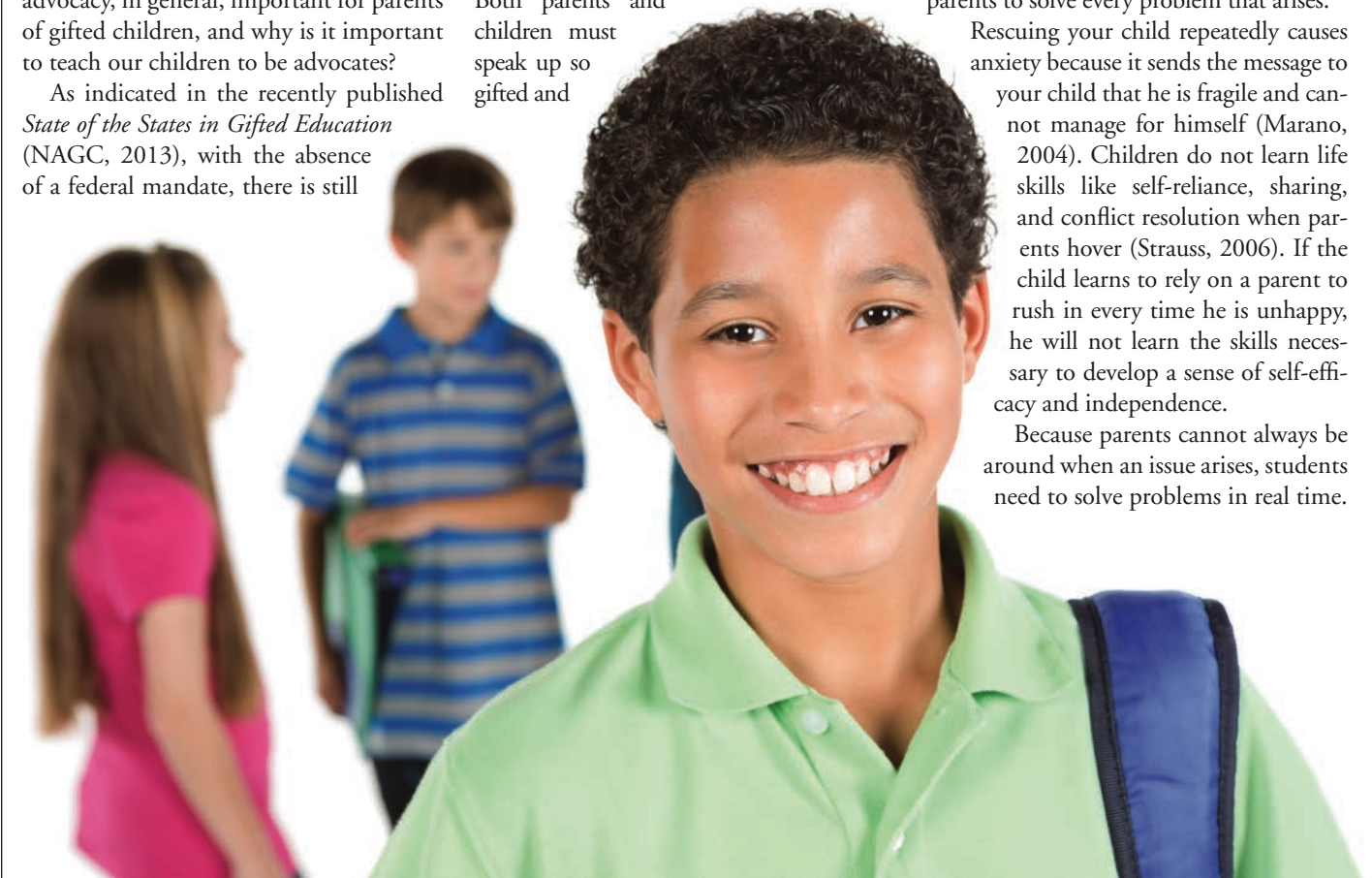
Given these facts, it is clear that gifted children are not guaranteed an educational environment in which they can flourish. Both parents and children must speak up so gifted and

high-ability children receive an education commensurate with their abilities in a safe and nurturing environment.

When it comes to advocating for gifted education, parents may advocate for programs and services for their gifted child. However, children also need to learn to self-advocate rather than relying solely on their parents to solve every problem that arises.

Rescuing your child repeatedly causes anxiety because it sends the message to your child that he is fragile and cannot manage for himself (Marano, 2004). Children do not learn life skills like self-reliance, sharing, and conflict resolution when parents hover (Strauss, 2006). If the child learns to rely on a parent to rush in every time he is unhappy, he will not learn the skills necessary to develop a sense of self-efficacy and independence.

Because parents cannot always be around when an issue arises, students need to solve problems in real time.



Knowing the appropriate way to request a different book, for example, and to explain what they know and understand will likely make them more successful.

These skills can be employed in myriad situations throughout their lives. How many adults are unable to approach an employer to discuss a promotion? How many adults are hesitant to tell a friend that something he or she is doing is hurtful? How many young adults frequently call mom and dad asking for advice on issues they should be able to handle themselves? Teaching children while they are young to know what is important to them and to respectfully fight for it is critical.

Teaching gifted children to distinguish what is worth fighting for is not always easy. Their sense of justice, their propensity toward overexcitability, and their ability to synthesize facts, analyze a situation, and arrive at a logical solution (often before the decision maker) can be stumbling blocks. Additionally, all successful advocacy depends, in part, on relationships built on trust created over time. Sometimes built-in credibility speeds the process, but generally it takes time to develop a trusting relationship between advocates and decision makers (NAGC, 2011). If children are to advocate for themselves, then, in academic or social situations, they first need to

establish a trusting relationship with those involved. They can do this by:

- knowing their facts,
- knowing their audience,
- knowing their preferred outcome, and
- maintaining a respectful attitude.

If we are going to teach our young children to advocate for themselves, we need to first teach them what that means. It does not mean whining about homework because they already know how to do the work, or complaining about an assigned project being too simplistic. This means knowing what they want, assessing the situation to ascertain whether or not the

Tips for Student Self-Advocacy

It's important that adolescents and teens develop the skills and confidence to self-advocate with teachers and administrators. Share these suggestions with your child to help make the experience easier and more productive.

1. Make an appointment. This shows the teacher you are serious and understanding of his or her busy schedule. Tell the teacher how much time you'll need, be flexible, and be on time.

2. If you know other students who feel the same way, consider approaching the teacher together. There's strength in numbers. If the teacher hears the same thing from four or five people, there's a chance he or she will do something about it.

3. Think through what you want to say before going into your meeting. Write down your questions or concerns. Make a list of the topics you want to cover; copy it for the teacher so you both have something to refer to during the meeting.

4. Choose your words carefully. Instead of saying, "I hate doing reports; they're boring and a waste of time," try, "Is there some other way I could satisfy this requirement?" Use a different word other than *boring*. It's a meaningless buzzword to teachers.

5. Don't expect the teacher to do all of the work or propose the answers. Be prepared to make suggestions. The teacher will appreciate your initiative.

6. Be diplomatic, tactful, and respectful. Teachers have feelings, too. Be conversational, not confrontational.

7. Focus on what you need, not what you think the teacher is doing wrong. The more the teacher knows about you, the more he or she will be able to help. If the teacher feels criticized, he or she will want to help less.

8. Don't forget to listen. Many students need to practice this skill. Remember, the purpose of your meeting is not to just hear yourself talk.

9. Bring your sense of humor. Don't tell jokes, but rather have a sense of humor that allows you to laugh at yourself and your own misunderstandings or mistakes.

10. If your meeting isn't successful, get help from another adult. Even if the teacher denies your request, the meeting can still be considered successful. If you had a real conversation—communicated openly, listened carefully, and respected each other's point of view—it was a great meeting! If the meeting was tense or you felt disrespected (or acted disrespectful), then it's time to bring in a guidance counselor, the gifted program coordinator, or another teacher you know and trust. Then, approach your teacher and try again.

Adapted from Galbraith, J. & Delisle, J. (2011). *The gifted teen survival guide: Smart, sharp, and ready for almost anything* (4th ed.). Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit.

desired outcome is feasible, thinking about the best way to approach the person who can make the decision, and arming themselves with evidence to support their position. It means being careful not to let extraneous issues become a distraction. It means choosing issues wisely rather than railing against every perceived injustice.

Complain or Self-Advocate?

As a parent, it is important to practice role-playing situations in which a child would have a choice whether to simply complain or to self-advocate for a desired outcome. These situations can include both academic and social settings. The following four examples show various situations that children may encounter.

Scenario 1

The class is studying pilgrims and the first Thanksgiving. The teacher has assigned The First Thanksgiving by Jean Craighead George. Johnny has a real interest in pilgrims and has already read that book.

Complaint

“I’ve already read that book.”

Self-Advocacy

“I’ve already read that book. May I please go to the library and find another book to read on the pilgrims?”

Scenario 2

The teacher begins a lesson on the basic needs of farm animals, including shelter and living spaces. Susie has visited her uncle’s farm every summer since she was born.

Complaint

“I know all about this already.”

Self-Advocacy

“I know all about this already from visiting my uncle’s farm. Would you like me to bring in some pictures and video to share with the class? I could interview my uncle and ask him for some fun facts that aren’t in our textbook.”

Scenario 3

David played baseball last season but wasn’t very good. Wanting to get better, he attended a summer camp and practiced. The next season, disappointed to have him on the team, his new coach decided to bench him for the first game.

Complaint

“I hate baseball and never want to play again.”

Self-Advocacy

“Coach, I know that I didn’t play very well last season but I went to summer baseball camp and I’ve been practicing really hard. Can I show you what I can do now? I want to help the team to win, not sit on the bench.”

Scenario 4

Julie’s younger sister is playing with a fragile toy, and Julie doesn’t want her to damage it.

Complaint

“Give it to me!” yells Julie as she grabs the toy, making her sister cry.

Self-Advocacy

“You don’t want to play with that old toy. Here’s another one that is way more fun. Let’s play with it together.” Julie then gently replaces the fragile toy with something more robust and plays for a few minutes with her sister.

These examples are just a handful of ways to help gifted children self-advocate. If we diligently model behaviors for our children that show them how to respectfully and politely express their needs, we will be leading them down the path to independence with the ability to achieve their goals and fulfill their potential—academically, socially, and emotionally. ☺

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Author’s Note

Nancy Arey Cohen, M.A.Ed., is a lifelong advocate for gifted children. As the proud (but not hovering) parent of two adult gifted sons, she spent many years advocating in schools in Massachusetts, Texas, and Minnesota for the needs of gifted children, providing hundreds of hours of enrichment opportunities, and counseling parents on ways to work collaboratively with teachers. Nancy currently chairs the NAGC Parent and Community Network.



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Summer Enrichment or Just Hanging Out?

What Parents Should Know About Extended Learning Opportunities

By Dr. J. Denise Drain & Melissa Hasan

Summer program registration typically starts in January or February—it's not too soon to think about summer!

As parents, we often worry about our overscheduled children. How much is too much? Should they have time off during their breaks from school? Should they attend academic, music, or sport camps? Hang out with friends? Vacation on Grandpa's farm? Go to the beach? Of course, children and adolescents need time alone to just be themselves, but how many of us have heard, "I'm bored. I don't have anything to do," after a week of downtime? This article provides an overview of current research and a look at the sampling of available enrichment pro-

grams for gifted children and adolescents.

Research has shown that summer learning based in family and community activities increases students' school achievement. Students who participate in summer learning activities—whether camp-based, community-based, or family-based—score higher on their fall achievement tests than students who are left to their own devices during their free time (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olsen, 2007). This research suggests that the achievement gap is substantially linked to unequal learning opportunities in children's home and community environments, especially during summer months.

Although learning gains during the school year for students who participate in out-of-school activi-





ties is nearly equal for those who do not, students who do not participate in learning activities often lose more than 2 months of reading achievement during a typical summer vacation. The authors also found that *all* students lost more than 2 months grade-level equivalency in math over the summer, even those participating in learning activities. Finally, Alexander et al. (2007) found that as much as two thirds of test score differences could be traced to summer learning differences during elementary school and that these differences continued into high school and even college.

Note that studies do not suggest we should put our children into the traditional school setting year-round (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Activities during school vacations should include games, field trips, enrichment, and *fun*. These activities should connect to academics, while not necessarily resembling a typical classroom setting. Successful out-of-school learning experiences combine new ideas, places, relationships, hands-on opportunities, application of knowledge, and encouragement for students (Quinn, 2002). Many of the summer programs available for gifted students combine content acquisition with creative and critical thinking processes and authentic encounters. They may also provide significant social experiences with an academic peer group not available in the student's school environment. Students often come away from these programs having made lifelong friends who share their deepest interests.

Summer programs should build on children's interests and expertise. They may give children and adolescents an opportunity to develop expertise in areas such as sports, visual and performing arts, music, and academics. Being engaged in their own learning increases motivation and helps children to develop goals and positive attitudes toward their abilities (Miller, 2007). Programs specifically

designed for gifted students require sustained attention, flexibility, and persistence—all of which are important executive functions that gifted students may not utilize throughout the regular academic year (Hasan, 2013). Time spent doing high-interest work with other gifted students also offers opportunities for greater intellectual challenge and stimulation, as well as peer support for academic excellence (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2007).

A child's social competence may also be developed through participation in summer programs of sufficient length (2 weeks for residential, 3 weeks for commuter; Olszewski-Kubilius, 2007). Social competence and emotional well-being are intertwined with cognitive abilities, and have been shown to provide a strong foundation for cognitive learning. Summer programs provide students with opportunities to meet and work with peers who have many of the same interests and abilities. Through interactions with these peers, social competence is developed.

Although traditional summer school learning has been shown to provide small gains (especially in math; Sunmonu, Larson, Van Horn, Cooper-Martin, & Nielsen, 2002), those gains seem to disappear by the end of the next school year. For gifted students, there are programs available that delve deeply into math concepts in order to promote *understanding* as opposed to *memorization*. These programs, which are vastly different from traditional school math programs, may be enrichment or acceleration programs. In enrichment classes, students may be introduced to advanced topics, such as calculus, at early ages



in a manner that moves students from concrete perceptions to abstract understandings. Acceleration programs allow students to master a module of mathematics that typically is completed over the course of a school year.

Studies also suggest summer academic camps that are carefully designed and implemented can make a difference in preventing summer learning loss and promoting lasting learning gains (Miller, 2007). A number of universities have specialized camps for gifted students—some are commuter camps, some are residential camps, and some are a blend of the two. Nonprofit organizations and for-profit organizations provide camps as well, although some have scant research to validate the effectiveness of their programs.

In order to be successful, VanTassel-Baska (2007) suggested a number of nonnegotiables that programs for the gifted must include. First, personnel must be a trained team of leaders with an understanding of the subject matter and the characteristics and needs of gifted children and/or adolescents. Second, a high-quality differentiated curriculum should be based on best practices in gifted education as well as the interests of the students. Third, the program should include an evaluation system of the students' growth and the program overall.

Summer Opportunities

Summer activities can vary widely by location, type, focus, and duration. Many private studios offer day camps for dance, gymnastics, music appreciation, or art. These are often in the week-to-week format, where students may or may not have the same peers each week. Colleges and universities often offer 1–2-week sports camps that tend to be residential. Museums and zoos also offer some day camp opportunities. Although none of the above offerings specifically target the gifted, they may provide the gifted learner with positive peer interaction and an opportunity to develop expertise in less traditionally academic realms. Hands-on science and technology camps are also cropping up nationwide (such as Camp Invention and Mad Science), although these generally group students by age and grade level rather than ability.

Parents are fortunate that today there are many more camps and opportunities designed especially for gifted students. These programs have the added benefit of allowing children and adolescents to meet others with their same interests and ability level. So, whether you decide to have your child attend a camp or create your own “summer intensive,” gifted children and adolescents need opportunity to engage in intellectual challenge, to develop friendships with intellectual peers, to support and nurture intense interests, and to explore other fields and cultivate new interests. ☺

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Resources

- National Association for Gifted Children,
<http://giftedandtalentedresourcesdirectory.com/>

Author’s Note

Dr. J. Denise Drain has recently retired from her position as Director of Gifted Education from Lebanon Community School District in Indiana. During her career she taught gifted students in inclusion settings, pull-out programs, and self-contained classrooms. She now consults on gifted programming strategies, professional development, and program review.

Melissa Hasan currently resides in California with her husband and two children. She is a reading specialist for Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes.

Extended Learning Opportunities

The list is a sampling of programs available and is not intended to be exhaustive.

Program	Site and Contact Information	Description of Program*	Ages or Grades
Center for Talent Development	Northwestern University; Northern Illinois; http://www.ctd.northwestern.edu/summer/about/	CTD offers summer programming for children in grades pre-K to 12. All classes are located in Northern Illinois, many on the Northwestern University campus.	Pre-K–grade 12
Camp Summit Residential Summer Program for Gifted, Talented, and Creative Kids	Marin, CA; http://www.campsummitforthegifted.com/	Located in the picturesque Marin Headlands, in the heart of the San Francisco Bay Area, Camp Summit provides the perfect setting for gifted, talented, and creative youth to gather together for a very special summer camp.	Ages 9–14
Center for Talented Youth (CTY)	Johns Hopkins University — CA, HI, MA, MD, NY, PA, RI, VA; http://cty.jhu.edu	Offers eligible students the opportunity to engage in challenging academic work in the company of peers who share their exceptional abilities and love of learning. The social experience that results from bringing these students together is an integral part of the program.	Grades 2–12
Concordia Language Villages	Various Sites in Minnesota; http://www.concordialanguagevillages.org/newsite	Summer Villages are a powerful combination of world language immersion, new cultural experiences, and summer camp fun.	Ages 7–18
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University	Daytona Beach, FL; http://daytonabeach.erau.edu/degrees/summer-camps/residential/index.html	Summer residential programs at the Daytona Beach Campus introduce the technology of today to the aviators and astronauts of tomorrow. Students live in on-campus dormitories—under the supervision of approved counselors—and share their initial experience of university living with other young people their age. Strands include aviation, aeronautics, and robotics.	Ages 12–18
EPGY (Education Program for Gifted Youth) Summer Institutes	Stanford University, Stanford, CA; http://epgy.stanford.edu/summer	The EPGY Summer Institutes are 2–4-week residential programs for academically talented and motivated middle and high school students. Participants are enrolled in a single intensive-study course, taught by a Stanford instructor, and covering topics not typically presented at their grade level.	Middle School Program: ages 11–13; High School Program: ages 13–17
GERI: Gifted Education Resource Institute Summer Programs	Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN http://geri.education.purdue.edu/	GERI engages gifted, creative, and talented students in residential camps designed to stimulate their imagination and expand their abilities. Students who have completed grades 5–12 live in campus residence halls, take challenging courses, and participate in engaging recreational activities. GERI offers three programs each summer.	Day Program: Pre–K–grade 6; Residential Program: grades 5–12

(Extended Learning Opportunities continues on p.20)

* Program descriptions adapted from program promotional materials.

summer learning opportunities

(Extended Learning Opportunities continued from p.19)

Program	Site and Contact Information	Description of Program*	Ages or Grades
Interlochen Arts Camp	Northwest Michigan; http://camp.interlochen.org/summer-arts-programs	With its programs in creative writing, dance, motion picture arts, music, theatre arts, and visual arts, Interlochen is an ideal camp for children whose abilities and interests lie in the performing arts area.	Grades 3–12
Satori Summer Camp	Cheney, WA; http://www.satoricamp.org/	A summer experience for gifted junior and senior high school students. An opportunity for academically and intellectually talented students to experience their first taste of college with others who share their enthusiasm for learning in an academic and social environment.	Grades 11–12
Summer Enrichment Program, The College of William and Mary	The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA; http://education.wm.edu/centers/cfge/precollegiate/index.php	Programs for high-ability students are offered through the Center for Gifted Education. Courses are offered at The College of William and Mary and various locations in Richmond, VA. This enrichment program enables students to explore specialized topics not typically studied in the regular classroom.	Grades K–9
Summer Institute for the Gifted: • <i>Day Programs</i> • <i>Residential Programs</i>	MA, PA, GA, CT, TN, CA, NY, NJ, FL; http://www.giftedstudy.org MA, PA, GA, NJ, CA, NY; http://www.giftedstudy.org	Unique programming, which combines academics with social, cultural, and recreational opportunities for a truly engaging summer. Courses are led by qualified instructors who have expertise in their disciplines and represent an array of professional backgrounds.	Grades K–6 Grades 4–11
Talent Identification Program (TIP)	Duke University, (sites in NC, KS); http://tip.duke.edu/	Academic, residential, and social experiences for 4th through 12th graders. These 1- to 3-week sessions are intense and demanding; students are challenged to think critically about themselves and their world.	Grades 4–12
The Summer Program for Verbally and Mathematically Precocious Youth: VAMPY	Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY; http://www.wku.edu/gifted/	Summer residential camp with science and math courses in astronomy, environmental science, forensic chemistry, genetics, mathematics, and physics. Courses in the humanities include writing, Chinese, humanities, presidential politics, and many others.	Grades 7–10
The THINK Summer Institute	University of Nevada, Reno, NV; http://www.davidsongifted.org/think/Article/Davidson_THINK_Summer_Institute__2014_Courses_407.aspx	Three-week residential program for profoundly gifted children, where participants can earn up to seven transferable college credits. Since few school districts have more than one profoundly gifted child, this camp links profoundly gifted kids who share interests and abilities. This camp is ideal for these children.	Ages 12–15

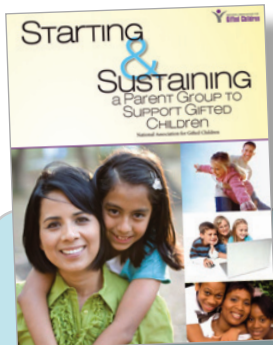
* Program descriptions adapted from program promotional materials.

Program	Site and Contact Information	Description of Program*	Ages or Grades
Frances A. Karnes Center for Gifted Studies Summer Gifted Studies Program	University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS; http://www.usm.edu/karnes-gifted/summer-gifted-studies-program	Designed to enhance cognitive, affective, and psychomotor abilities of gifted students through planned enrichment/acceleration activities. Emphasis placed on individual participation in areas that provide in-depth analysis of specific topics of interest, coupled with leisure and cultural activities.	Grades 7–10
Vanderbilt University Program for Talented Youth	Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN; http://pty.vanderbilt.edu/students/	Students engage in accelerated coursework taught by Vanderbilt faculty and scholars while living in a vibrant social community of intellectual peers. Held in July in 1-, 2-, and 3-week sessions for gifted students entering grades 8–12 with qualifying ACT or SAT scores.	Grades 8–12

* Program descriptions adapted from program promotional materials.



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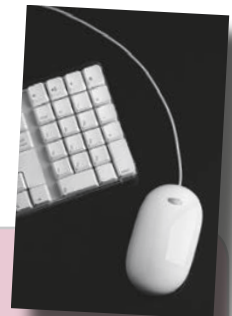


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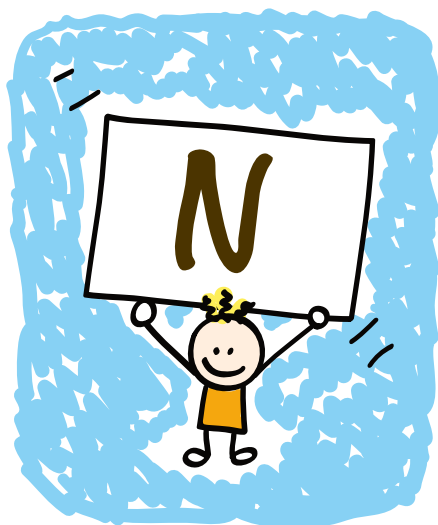
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ABCs of Being Smart ... N Is for Nurturing

By Dr. Joanne Foster



In this installment of *ABCs of Being Smart*, I navigate words beginning with the letter N, with a nod to all those who nobly nurture children’s high-level development—in accordance with their numerous needs. In a nutshell, here are **necessities** and **nuances** to think about now.

Necessities (the nitty-gritty)

- **Networks**—friends, families, and colleagues—we depend upon one another, locally and globally, for ideas, recommendations, updates, findings, and strategies. NAGC is one noteworthy organization. Its members embrace and further the mandate to help kids reach the highest levels possible.
- **Neighbors**—another integral part of that network. Our communities are strongholds for children’s optimal development. (“It takes a village to raise a child.”¹)
- **Neural Plasticity**—the brain continually changes in its structure and functional pathways, sculpted by experiences across the lifespan. Intensive brain-building occurs during the early years, and it influences and shapes children’s development. Necessities for optimal brain health include opportunities for playful exploration, conversation, and exposure to many kinds of cognitive and sensory stimulation.²
- **Netscapes**—new technological advances alter the status quo, and will continue to affect the way we acquire information, communicate, and learn. Help children attain technological know-how, and teach them to use it wisely.
- **Nascent**—each child has promise—talents and abilities that will emerge with maturity, and with the right kinds of learning opportunities and nurturing.
- **Naïve**—don’t be. As long as there’ve been kids, there’ve been parents looking out for them. Observe, listen, model, guide, motivate, and be available (nearby) when needed. If you think your job is done, then think again.
- **Notice**—keep your eyes open for the little things as well as the big ones. Sometimes small matters end up becoming challenging issues that might’ve been nipped in the bud.
- **Narrow**—kids who narrowly miss a designated “cut-off” for inclusion in a gifted program likely have advanced learning needs that should be addressed. Differentiated programming would be beneficial. In fact, it would be beneficial for *all* children.



- **Never**—never stop advocating for gifted/high-ability learners. If you don't, who will?
- **Nucleus**—offer safety, learning experiences, direction, and reassurance, ideally within the nucleus of a loving family.

Nuances (nevertheless, don't neglect...)

- **Newsworthy Versus Nonsense**—be astute when it comes to determining what child-rearing information merits your close attention, and what should be taken lightly. (In other words, use your noggin.)
- **Negotiation**—it's somewhat of an art. When engaged with kids, be sensible. However, don't be too quick to say **no**.
- **Normal**—what's normal? What's not? Every child is different. Some have strengths with numeracy, or numbers; some are naughty, or nerdy, or neat, or noisy, or nonstop questioners. Others are still finding their personal nexus or niche.
- **Nagging**—kids often need reminders; however, don't needle or nitpick.
- **Nap**—rest is important. A balance of stimulation and downtime is good over the long-term.
- **Notions**—children have all kinds of curious, novel, and even outlandish ideas. Why be a naysayer? The future depends on creative juices!
- **Nerve**—the word brings to mind the synonyms courage, boldness, spunk, and bravado. No matter how you define it, a child's spirit of adventure shouldn't be nixed. ☺

Author's Note

Joanne Foster, Ed.D., is co-author (with Dona Matthews) of the award-winning book *Being Smart About Gifted Education, 2nd Ed.* (2009, Great Potential Press), and *Beyond Intelligence* (in press, Anansi). As a parent, teacher, consultant, researcher, and education specialist, Dr. Foster has more than 30 years of experience in the field of gifted education. She teaches at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto and writes and presents extensively about high-level development and a wide range of gifted-related topics at conferences and learning venues across North America. Her book on procrastination, *Not Now, Maybe Later*, will be published in mid-2014. You can visit her website at www.beyondintelligence.net or contact her at joanne.foster@utoronto.ca.

Endnotes

- ¹ Popular African proverb; adopted more recently by Hillary Clinton for her book, *It Takes a Village: And Other Lessons Children Teach Us* (1996).
- ² For more on brain-building, including practical ideas for parents, check out the resources page at www.beyondintelligence.net.