

Parent & Community Network News

August 2010



The aim of an argument or discussion should not be victory, but progress.
~Joseph Joubert, *Pensées*, 1842



Focus on Community Advocacy

Editor's Notes

I suppose I am hooked. Yes, I am sure of that. I am a life-long advocate for gifted and other high ability children.

Although there were quite a few very bright classmates who went to school with me, no one was identified as gifted. So my first real experience of "knowing" someone was gifted was during my first year teaching first grade. At that time I considered "Tracy" to be "exceptional." So I took a summer class on exceptional children. Unfortunately, the class didn't cover gifted children, but those with disabilities. So I resorted to buying books. Back in the '70s that was my only source of information.

When my son (first child) was born, I began to see similar characteristics in him that I saw in Tracy and some of my other students. My regret is not learning as much as I could have about educational options after he was

identified in kindergarten. I didn't advocate on his behalf as much as I should as I just didn't know enough. When I began my graduate work in gifted education he was heading into 7th grade. I vowed then to do what I could to share information with parents so they would better understand giftedness and the educational options that are (or should be) available. I now know it takes a village.

I am the grandmother of three wonderful grandchildren. They are all very bright and I expect identification as gifted is in store for at least some of them. So I continue to advocate and teach others about giftedness.

YOU can make a difference for your own child or for others. Now and in the future. Talk to someone about giftedness today. It takes perseverance. So arm yourself with knowledge and facts, and talk to someone. Don't be shy!

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A Good Read

Diane Ravitch's book, *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice are Undermining Education* is a must read to understand how public education came to be where it is today and how its ills can be cured.

Ravitch provides a history of the standards and accountability movements that shed light on today's situation.

The last part of the book suggests what needs to be done to ensure that America's children are provided with high quality curriculum with relevance and rigor. Whether you are on the left, right or are a centrist, this book is enlightening.

Something to Ponder

"I believe...That our goal should be to inspire every student to identify what it is that they are so passionate about that they begin the journey to becoming remarkable at it." Steve Wycoff

Effective Advocates: What's in a Word?

by: **Dr. Julia Link Roberts and Tracy Ford Inman**
(Originally published in *Parenting for High Potential*, March 2007. It is available in *NAGC's Mile Marker Series*.)

A single word has tremendous power. One word can evoke memories, promote thought, or even make a person salivate. Most

of this power comes from the connotation of that word, those personal associations we make to it, the emotions we tie to the word. The word gifted has several connotations, but perhaps the most negative one is elitism. Just last week someone explained to us that she didn't want to use the word gifted with her school program because she didn't want it to be seen as elite. Why is it that people associate giftedness with elitism? The purpose of education is continuous progress for all students, including those who are gifted and talented. How can meeting children's needs be considered elite?

Is it elite to develop our young athletes to be winners in basketball, swimming, cross country running, or soccer?

Is it elite to provide opportunities that allow young musicians to become outstanding so they are able to compete at state levels and beyond?

Is it elite to allow young people to have challenging instruction when they need differentiation and special classes to become world-class in any content area or combination of content areas?

If your answer is yes to any of those three questions, then we are on the verge of losing any competitive edge that our country has had! If we don't intentionally develop our athletic, musical and academic talents, then the future of our country will be severely limited. If providing opportunities for our gifted and talented students is seen as elite, then we are limiting their opportunities to become future Olympic and Nobel Prize winners. We are also thwarting opportunities to have leaders who will attack and hope-

fully solve 21st century problems like terrorism, global warming, pandemic diseases and poverty.

Effective Advocates Educate

So what does this have to do with advocacy? The only way to combat misunderstanding and encourage people to create new connotations is to educate them. Educators, parents, decision-makers, and the public must learn about the needs of children who are gifted and talented. All of these groups tend to see need based on deficiency (i.e., our needs stem from our weak areas), which is not a useful concept in understanding giftedness. For children who are gifted and talented in any area, their strengths define need, making them so different from most age-mates. Strengths do not make a child appear "needy," yet these needs make children just as different from average children as do the deficiencies of children with disabilities. When people truly understand this, their perception of giftedness alters. Educating gifted children doesn't seem elite at all.

Interestingly, the word gifted is used easily in the media-without that negative elite connotation. A radio commentator describes a vocalist, saying that "her voice falls in the gifted category." A sports writer refers to a college athlete as "a gifted freshman." A web page lists the most gifted artists of the 20th century. Our challenge, then, is to transfer those positive impressions that the word gifted connotes in music, art and athletics to the realm of academics.

Multiple Strategies

But how do we accomplish this? Ideally, we become life-long advocates for gifted children. We find kindred spirits who share our

interest. We craft a message that explains what we are advocating for, and we communicate that message over and over and over.

- Get involved in your child's school. People need to view you as someone interested in the needs of a wide range of learners including children who are gifted and talented but not just gifted. Don't be pegged as the one-issue person.

- Know what you are talking about. Fully understand your points of advocacy. When someone questions you, have the answer. Possessing that knowledge instills confidence, and that confidence can only strengthen your argument.

- Use all available resources. The main path to knowing what you're talking about is learning about it. Take advantage of the many web resources out there.

Peruse your state's advocacy organization's page as well as your state's department of education's page. The National Association for Gifted Children's website

(www.nagc.org) provides all sorts of information and is an invaluable resource. The Davidson Institute for Talent Development's page (www.ditd.org) supplies information about individual state policies in addition to the information about highly precocious children. Hoagies Gifted Education Page (www.hoagiesgifted.org) not only has a special section for parents but it also takes you to numerous articles concerning gifted education and many other links.

Spending some time on the web pays off the next time you advocate for children who are gifted and talented.

- Encourage professional development in your child's school and district. Teachers, principals, counselors, and superintendents must all understand the needs of the gifted. If understanding does not occur, then opportunities for gifted children are short-lived. We certainly can't afford an elite view-

point in our schools.

Our communities, states, nation, and world need gifted mathematicians, scientists, historians, writers, and politicians lead the way.

However, unless we provide appropriately challenging learning experiences to allow young people who are ready to learn more in their areas of giftedness to do so, we limit the potential of our communities, states, and nation.

Is gifted synonymous with elite? Is it elite to educate those who have the potential to lead our nation in all fields? Or is it just the smart (right) think to do?

Parent Day in Atlanta

**Saturday, November 13, 2010
Georgia World Congress Center,
Atlanta, GA**

Held in conjunction with the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) Annual Convention, and produced in conjunction with the Georgia Association for Gifted Children (GAGC), NAGC's Parent Day is a one-day event that gives parents tools and networking opportunities to help you support your child's optimal development and ensure their continued growth.

This all day event will include state and national experts in the gifted field. One of the highlights of the day will be lunch time small round table discussions that parents will get to have with experts. This is a special chance to hear from those great authors and speakers in the field that we so admire. Plus there will be many sessions to choose from on all kinds of topics relevant to parenting gifted children.

For more information:

<http://www.nagc.org/2010parent-day.aspx>

Where to Make Your Case

The question is often asked, "Who should I try to influence to improve gifted education services?" I suppose the short answer is everyone. But here is a tried and true, though not exhaustive, list.

There needs to be a change of mindset: that we must provide challenging curriculum for each and every learner. To do that mandates that presenting the same (and often scripted) lessons to all learners must cease.

Each learner is unique and therefore to be able to learn something new each day requires differentiation of curriculum and differentiation of instruction.

- * Family members
- * Neighbors
- * Church, temple, synagogue friends
- * Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions and other civic clubs
- * Teachers and administrators
- * Boards of Education
- * Legislators
- * Local business owners
- * Chambers of Commerce
- * Public Librarian
- * Pediatricians
- * University Level Teacher Trainers
- * PTA/PTO
- * Pre-school teachers
- * Day care providers
- * Coaches
- * Students
- * Scout and other youth group leaders
- * Friends and acquaintances
- * *Anyone* when you have the opportunity!

It isn't that they
can't see the
solution. It is that they
can't see the problem.
~G.K. Chesterton

Dates to Remember:

**September 17
Early Bird
(Discount)
Convention
Registration
Deadline**

**November 11-14
NAGC Convention
Atlanta, GA**

**Parent Day is
Saturday,
November 13**

**Register at
www.nagc.org**

**Don't find fault.
Find a remedy.
~Henry Ford**

Websites to Explore

www.savethewords.org

www.essdackartsnacks.org

www.nagc.org

www.livebinders.com

www.sengifted.org

Test Prep Software Available for NAGC members

Many scholarships and college admission decisions are directly tied to SAT and ACT test scores, so it is important for your children to do their very best. To help prepare for the tests, eKnowledge, a provider of interactive learning products and services, is extending an offer to NAGC members for either the SAT or ACT test prep DVD for \$13.84. The program regularly sells for \$199, but through the Sponsorship Alliance Program, eKnowledge has made it available to NAGC members for the cost of processing, distribution, registration, and licensure. The donation program is also supported by a group of concerned NFL and MLB players. Visit <http://www.eknowledge.com/po-werprep-promo.aspx> for more information. Use code E087C0477.

When using this link, web visitors will be given the opportunity to see other eKnowledge products, but this is a no-obligation offer and upgrading to another package is not necessary.

Buy Two, Get One Free

At this time of financial hardships, we should all take advantage of the bargains that come along. One of the best bargains out there is the being able to get a free *Mile Marker Series* when you buy two.

So, grab a friend and each of you purchase this excellent resource. Then you can take the free copy and give it to another parent or to your child's teacher or school.

For more information visit www.nagc.org.

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Coming soon!

Help with starting and sustaining parent groups!

Stay tuned!