

## The Importance of Parent, Family, and Community Engagement

NAGC believes that parents and families of gifted, high-ability, and advanced learners matter. Family is critical to the development and support of students' talents (Jolly & Matthews, 2017), and research supports the long- and short-term benefits of parent, family, and community engagement on student performance, school attendance, and social and emotional growth and development, regardless of income, ethnicity, culture, language proficiency, or geography (Webb, Gore, Amend, & DeVries, 2007). The field of gifted education, however, needs greater attention in research, policy, and practice to educate and engage parents, families, and communities as part of overall efforts to nurture and support the growth and development of gifted children.

NAGC supports the national consensus on the importance of parents, family, and community involvement in the development of the whole gifted child (e.g., cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and spiritual), and calls to expand research efforts, policies, and practices related to parent, family, and community engagement, with specific emphasis on honoring and respecting culturally, linguistically, or ethnically diverse parents and families. Moreover, NAGC cultivates such engagement and advocacy through improved access to resources, community connections, and support for educators in enhancing relationships with families.

**Support for Gifted Children Across Areas of Development.** Parents, families, and communities advance the development of potential and talent through engagement efforts that align with the interests, passions, and strengths of their gifted children. Family collaboration with school personnel, district leaders, and community mentors regarding a child's interests, passions, and strengths encourages and supports the growth of the whole child. Such collaborative relationships are enhanced by productive communication around a child's growth and by information resources on nurturing of giftedness and talent, including those that NAGC provides.

**Understanding of Individual and Group Differences Among Gifted Learners, Families, and Communities.** As demographics shift in the United States, gifted education must be responsive and inclusive, providing equity in identification and access to services for learners regardless of ethnicity, culture, language spoken, economic background, other exceptionalities, sexual orientation, gender, and religion. Thus, it is more important than ever for schools to collaborate and partner with parents and families in identification, services, and decision-making. Culturally competent leaders at the school level advocate with parents and families through actions and behaviors that are proactive and responsive to the needs of the communities they serve. These actions and behaviors include, among others, developing cultural competency, communicating in multiple languages, and utilizing parent and family voices in program planning.

Cultural responsiveness affirms that not all gifted students benefit from the same learning opportunities. Such efforts depend on educator and parent accessibility to updated resources on such issues as equity in identification and access for all gifted children, including those from underrepresented populations. Communicating with parents and families provides teachers of the gifted with greater clarity on how to approach teaching and learning with individual gifted learners, including those who are twice-exceptional and require appropriate services for their exceptional abilities and disabilities (Baum, Schader, & Owens, 2017).

**Communication and Collaboration for Academic Challenge and Student Growth.** Parents are key to monitoring their child's level of challenge at school and whether he or she is growing academically, socially, and emotionally each year. Communication between teachers and parents, focused on sharing important observations and questions about progress and challenges, is critical to supporting how to best maximize the talent and potential of

each individual child. Parents and families should expect their gifted children to be taught by a highly qualified teacher of the gifted. NAGC strongly encourages and participates in the efforts of school districts, universities, and other organizations to provide exemplary professional learning and development experiences for educators, administrators, and counselors.

**Shared Decision-Making with Teachers, Principals, and District Leaders.** Exemplary district leaders support gifted students and their parents and families by demonstrating a conceptual understanding of talent development and potential. They keep the local gifted community informed by creating parent gifted advisory committees, routinely meeting with stakeholder groups, reporting on the status of the programs, seeking input and feedback, and encouraging engagement in decision-making processes. Trust, respect, and a commitment to teamwork allow district leaders to build a program infrastructure that is both supportive of and dependent on open and transparent communication with parents and families. Districts with this degree of accountability maximize equity, access, and opportunity for students. NAGC encourages efforts of schools, parents, families, and communities to engage in shared planning and decision-making, and supports and facilitates efforts of multiple stakeholders to develop and disseminate resources that promote open communication and productive collaboration.

**Advocacy.** Many U.S. students, especially those in culturally, linguistically, ethnically, and economically diverse school districts, lack access to gifted services. Educating parents and families about the specialized needs of gifted students and engaging them in advocacy efforts is key to influencing policy changes that will allow a larger number of gifted students to be identified and served. Parents are the strongest advocates for their children, and when parents come together within and across communities to share challenges, expectations, questions, and goals, they have the opportunity to promote stronger supports for gifted children and their growth. Parents and families need access to advocacy tools and resources as well as advice and support for advocacy efforts (Davis, 2010). NAGC and its state affiliate organizations encourage parental involvement in advocacy efforts and support ongoing efforts to develop and disseminate key resources toward advocacy. Furthermore, NAGC encourages efforts at the local, state, and national levels to engage parents in conversations about advocacy needs, particularly in communities that serve low-income, culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse populations.

In summary, NAGC acknowledges the central role of parents, families, and communities in the growth and development of gifted children. NAGC encourages efforts that will build stronger, trusting relationships among schools, parents, and families, particularly in communities that serve low-income and culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse populations. Through networking and access to resources, NAGC encourages and supports strong engagement of parents and families with schools and other organizations toward key goals—such as strengthening gifted programs locally and advocating for services at all levels across the nation.

## References

- Baum, S. M., Schader, R. M., & Owen, S. V. (2017). *To be gifted and learning disabled: Strength-based strategies for helping twice-exceptional students with LD, ADD*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.
- Davis, J. L. (2010). *Bright, talented & Black: A guide for families of African American gifted learners*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.
- Jolly, J. L., & Matthews, M. S. (2017). Parenting. In J. A. Plucker & C. M. Callahan (Eds.), *Critical issues and practices in gifted education: What the research says* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (pp. 481–492). Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.
- Webb, J. T., Gore, J. L., Amend, E. R., & DeVries, A. R. (2007). *A parent's guide to gifted education*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) is an organization of parents, teachers, educators, other professionals, and community leaders who unite to address the unique needs of children and youth with demonstrated gifts and talents as well as those children who may be able to develop their talent potential with appropriate educational experiences.

All position papers are approved by the NAGC Board of Directors and remain consistent with the organization's position that education in a democracy must respect the uniqueness of all individuals, the broad range of cultural diversity present in our society, and the similarities and differences in learning characteristics that can be found within any group of students. NAGC Position Papers can be found at [www.nagc.org](http://www.nagc.org).