Hope E. (Bess) Wilson, Ph.D., Network Representative to the Board

**Dr. Bess Wilson** is a former elementary art teacher from Texas who has served NAGC for almost 15 years. She is a graduate from the doctoral program at the University of Connecticut, and currently teaches both graduate and undergraduate teacher candidates at the University of North Florida. Over the last 14 years, she has had the opportunity to work closely with several NAGC presidents, served on many NAGC committees, and been the chair of two different NAGC networks. You might also recognize her cartoons in the Smart Cookies section of *Teaching for High Potential* over the last 14 years. She has been awarded the Early Leader Award (2017) and the Graduate Student of the Year (2009) by NAGC. Her favorite part of serving NAGC is being a mentor young scholars, teachers, and new parents in helping gifted children to reach their potential.

**Personal Statement**

Since my beginning as an elementary art teacher and my time as a new mom of two gifted children, I knew that the NAGC community was my home. Through my first work with the graduate student committee, and by taking on small roles, NAGC helped me grow and learn as a leader. It is an honor to be able to continue to serve this organization in greater roles as network chairs. This organization has been instrumental in my own professional development and I will work to continue its mission for years to come.

Gifted children, particularly those from underrepresented groups, often go unnoticed by today’s school systems. As an organization, I believe that we can do better to advocate for the most vulnerable, and together, make the world, and our schools, a better place for learners. This will require us, as gifted advocates, professionals, and researchers, to come together as a community and fight for the resources that our children need. We will need to be a strong and united community of leaders. I believe in the power of the Networks of NAGC, and of each member to participate in our community of action to make change for gifted learners.

**Please answer the following questions:**
How would your knowledge, experience, abilities, and vision contribute to increasing the public’s urgency to support the needs of gifted and talented children and youth (i.e., Minds)?
I will best support the needs of gifted children through my research and my diligence in reading and understanding the research produced by others. In a time of urgency around the needs of gifted children subsumed in an era of accountability, it is imperative that our practices are supported by sound research practices. I will bring this perspective, I will help stakeholders better understand data, and I will help my teacher colleagues better know how to best support the needs of gifted children with it. The research is constantly evolving, and we as a field must evolve with it.

How would your knowledge, experience, abilities, and vision contribute to advocating for the adoption of policies that promote programs and service in which gifted and talented children and youth will thrive (i.e., Policies)?
My long and varied experience with NAGC will contribute to my success at advocating for gifted children. I have worked with a variety of groups within gifted education communities, including the Arts and the Research and Evaluation Networks, which comprise very different types of members. As a mother of two exceptional children, I am experienced in collaborating with parents advocating at local levels for adequate services in schools. And as a researcher on the national stage, I am comfortable using my power to speak with legislators to discuss state and national policies that affect all of our children’s schools.

How would your knowledge, experience, abilities, and vision contribute to empowering supporters to implement effective practices for all gifted and talented children and youth in homes, schools, and communities (i.e., Practices)?
My creativity is the greatest asset to my ability to implement effective practices for all gifted children across both in and out-of-school contexts. It takes passion and skill to understand how to manipulate curriculum to match to individual learners’ needs. It takes a specific kind of expertise to understand both the research-based practices and the needs of learners, to synthesize those together in a way that will both engage and energize the child, and to ignite wonder and curiosity. I, along with the rest of the team, can nurture this creative expertise within the leadership of NAGC.