

# Parent Advocacy and Involvement

Parent Part E of the  
Competencies  
Collaboration

SEVA Council of Gifted Administrators

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# Gifted Education Advisory Committees

What is the advisory committee?

- This committee is composed of parents, school personnel, and other community members who are appointed by the school board
- The purpose of the committee is to:
  - Review annually the local plan for the education of gifted students and to determine the extent to which the plan for the previous year was implemented, and
  - To provide to the school board and superintendent the findings and recommendations of the annual program effectiveness

## Gifted Education Advisory Committees

What is the advisory committee (continued)?

- Meetings of the advisory committee are open to the public. Meeting dates and times are posted on the gifted web site. Minutes from the meetings are also posted.
- Anyone who would like to serve on this committee is invited to fill out a nomination form, and will be put on the mailing list for meeting notices. Nomination forms are available on the website and from the gifted office.
- Parents and other interested folks are welcome to attend these meetings to have a voice in gifted education.

# Gifted Education Advisory Committees

An effective Gifted Education Advisory Committee:

- Positively represents the community it serves
- Collaborates with school division staff and the community
- Focuses attention on gifted education issues, not individual concerns or complaints
- Utilizes new information, current research and best practices in gifted education for its program effectiveness review

Virginia Department of Education, Office of Mathematics and Governor's Schools,  
(2012), *Roles and Responsibilities of Local Gifted Education Advisory Committees*

## Effective Advocacy for Gifted Education

Advocacy means supporting a cause and influencing decision-makers. Parents and teachers can be effective advocates in many ways:

- Attend the school division's Gifted Education Advisory Committee meetings
- Read the school division's Local Plan for Gifted Education so that you are familiar with how your division interprets the regulations
- Join organizations such as the Virginia Association for the Gifted ([vagifted.org](http://vagifted.org)) or the National Association for Gifted Children ([nagc.org](http://nagc.org)). These organizations provide information, sponsor conferences and workshops, and sponsor scholarships and awards for gifted students.
- Reflect on current issues in gifted education by subscribing to journals such as *Parenting for High Potential* or *Teaching for High Potential*

# Effective Advocacy for Gifted Education

More strategies for advocacy:

- Attend school board meetings to see how budget money is spent on gifted education
- Attend public budget hearings (for the school board as well as the city council) to support funding for gifted education; writing letters during budget cycles to the city council can also be helpful
- Follow legislation that impacts gifted education, and contact your state representatives to express your support
- Speak at your local school board regarding gifted services, especially when gifted instruction has had a significant impact on your student

# Effective Parent Advocacy for Gifted Education

Parents can also be advocates for their students through effective parent-teacher conferences:

- Ask your child if there is anything that he or she would like you to discuss with the teacher
- Work as a team to establish goals and expectations
- Instead of “My child is bored” try “Let’s figure this out together”
- Be specific about “My child is not being challenged” – what suggestions do you have?
- Take notes about what has been discussed
- Follow up with a note or email expressing appreciation, and summarizing details

# Effective Advocacy in the Classroom

Questions for the parent to ask the teacher:

- What are some of your academic goals for my child this year?
- How are gifted students grouped in your classroom?
- How do you accommodate differences in learning? (In what ways are you differentiating instruction to meet each child's specific needs and learning pace?)
- How does my child respond to critical and creative thinking or problem solving opportunities?
- What kinds of information do you use to evaluate each child's academic progress?
- What is an appropriate level of parent involvement and support for homework?
- How can I help?

# Effective Advocacy in the Classroom

Questions for the teacher to ask the parent:

- What are some of your academic goals for your child this year?
- What are your child's favorite interests or activities? What kinds of books does he/she like to read?
- What life-long goals or career possibilities has your child discussed with you?
- What do you see as your child's greatest strengths? Greatest challenges?
- How can I help?

# Effective Advocacy Through Conferences

Hints for successful collaborative conferences about gifted students:

- Be calm, tactful, diplomatic, and positive.
- Work as a team to establish goals and expectations.
- Prepare samples of student work to share, especially work that shows creativity or advanced levels of thinking and reasoning.
- Be prepared to explain how you have differentiated or modified assignments to meet the needs of the student.
- Take notes about what has been discussed.
- Follow up with a note or email summarizing or confirming details of your discussion and plan.

# Effective Advocacy Through Conferences

Traps to avoid in collaborative conferences for gifted students:

- Avoid comparing one student with another student.
- Avoid comparing gifted siblings.
- Avoid unrealistic expectations. Not all gifted students get straight As, behave perfectly, or are gifted in everything.
- Avoid generalizations. (Gifted students should be able to...)
- Teachers should avoid making judgments. (Your child is too far ahead; your child should be in this program...) It is each teacher's responsibility to meet the academic needs of his or her students.
- Parents should avoid making judgments. Listen carefully to what the teacher is saying, and try to work out a feasible solution to the problem.

## How Can Parents Help?

- Parents can help support their gifted child by:
  - Encouraging your child to play an active, meaningful role in family decisions
  - Encouraging integrative thinking by drawing relationships among ideas and events
  - Discussing possible consequences of actions, both personal and social, building upon daily experiences and contemporary events
  - Encouraging imagination – engage in storytelling and creative expression in the arts, for example
  - Helping your child develop resiliency in coping with disappointments

## How Can Parents Help?

Parents can help their gifted children by: (continued)

- Supporting a child's or adolescent's calculated risk-taking and non-dangerous experimentation, even when the possibilities of success are slim
- Guiding your child in learning how to socially and emotionally cope with failure, AND with success
- Providing opportunities to experience a variety of books, games, puzzles, activities, and publications that foster critical and creative thinking
- Introducing them to situations that expand their horizons and help build an appreciation for diversity and an understanding of cross-cultural perspectives

## How Can Parents Help?

Parents need to be as informed as possible:

- Read the documents and materials available on the HCS gifted website
- Read books and articles about gifted education (Prufrock Press has wonderful books for parents of gifted students)
- Check out the information available on websites such as Hoagies or Seng (see links on last page of this presentation)
- Participate in best practice workshops or seminars
- Make time to ask your gifted child about his or her needs, issues, and concerns
- Call the gifted director at 727-2160 if you have questions about anything related to gifted education

## How Can Parents Help?

Parents need to be as informed as possible (continued):

- Establish a collaborative relationship and partnership with teachers and school administrators about educating highly advanced learners
- Understand policies and procedural guidelines that exist regarding accelerative options for your child
- Seek other parents of children with advanced capabilities and share ideas and concerns
- Explore activities and experiences outside of the school, within your local communities and state

Hillmann, Paula J. Ph.D., (2012) *How to Support Your Gifted Child's Education*, "[www.parentinvolvementmatters.org/articles/giftedness.html](http://www.parentinvolvementmatters.org/articles/giftedness.html)"

## How Can Parents Be Involved?

There are many ways that parents can be involved with gifted education. Some ideas include:

- Attend Local Advisory Committee meetings
- Attend workshops or seminars about gifted education
- Volunteer as a coach for Odyssey of the Mind or other after school clubs or activities
- Participate in IB parent activities and community service projects
- Serve as mentor for middle, high school, or Governor's School students interested in your field
- Volunteer to assist with publishing the gifted education newsletter or brochures
- Join the PTA

## More Ways Parents Can Be Involved

- Work with the gifted resource teachers to provide assistance for special projects
- Work with your child's regular classroom teacher to provide assistance for special projects or small group work
- Work with the director to locate grant funding for special projects
- Provide your time and expertise for Career Day or College Day events
- Join the Virginia Association for the Gifted to support gifted education in Virginia
- Give recognition to outstanding teachers by nominating them for awards
- Share your expertise by serving as a speaker or presenter at a class or workshop

## Still More Ways Parents Can Be Involved

- Donate class sets of novels or science materials for special projects (ask the teachers what they might need)
- Speak at school board meetings to support funding for gifted education
- Volunteer as a tutor to provide extra enrichment in mathematics or history
- Donate materials to the Excel Art program (ask the teacher first!)
- Work on the outdoor environmental classroom at Spratley
- Assist with logistics at Science Fairs, exhibitions, or other activities
- Offer to translate documents and information into other languages for other parents
- Be creative and let us know how else you might be able to help!

## Organizations and Resources that Support Gifted Parents

- <http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/parents.htm>
- [www.nagc.org](http://www.nagc.org)
- [www.vagifted.org](http://www.vagifted.org)
- [www.seng.org](http://www.seng.org)
- [www.vdoe.gov](http://www.vdoe.gov)