



Advocacy for Gifted and Talented in New York

Advocating for Gifted Education: Just Do It

By: Caren C. Snell

(As the NIKE people say)

If it hasn't happened to you yet as a teacher or administrator, you'll be asked to justify the existence of your program or profession in gifted education. Or, as a parent or community advocate, you may find yourself in the position of wanting to develop or defend a gifted/talented program in your district. What happens most often is the request comes at an inconvenient time and you don't have the resources handy to do the job right.

So as a way to make myself useful, I decided to take the time to do a little web surfing on the subject of gifted education and advocacy. The good news is there are some interesting articles out there full of helpful advice on the how-tos of advocating along with legal advice. The bad news is you won't find much in the way of research to justify practice or promote service delivery models (as of spring 2001).

However, there are a few web sites worthy of reading and review. You may want to bookmark them on your computer or keep them handy for a rainy day:

In his article, *The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented: Past Reflections and Future Directions*, Joseph Renzulli talks about the importance of establishing good, sound empirical research in gifted education and the past problems associated with it.

<http://www.gifted.org/teachers/Teachers%20Discussion%202/NRC.htm>

Here's a good one if you're looking for hard evidence and research on best practices in gifted education. Lucky thing is the *National Research Center for Gifted and Talented* (NRC/G/T) has a cadre of researchers who can study program and service delivery models as well as curricular modifications. They even managed to throw in some findings about middle school educators. Let's hope federal Jacob Javits funding will continue and keep the NRC researching.

<http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/NRCGT.html>

ERIC Digest and KidSource Online are behind the sound advice given in this article, *Supporting Gifted Education Through Advocacy*. Not only will you get background information about advocacy in general, you'll get a discussion of the pitfalls associated with advocating for gifted and talented programs.

<http://www.kidsource.com/education/advocacy.gifted.html>

The National Association for Gifted and Talented (NAGC) has created an Advocacy Toolkit.

<http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=36>

Blending Gifted Education and School Reforms written by G. Hanninen talks about the need to provide a process for assuring that the unique needs of gifted students are included in this era of

school reform. Key elements and strategies are recommended as well as successful grouping strategies for gifted students.

http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content/Blending_Gifted_Ed.html

Public Relations: A Necessary Tool for Advocacy in Gifted Education written by F. Karnes and J. Lewis suggests that it is not enough to advocate among ourselves for gifted education. Building a strong knowledge base among the public is critical. Suggestions for getting started are outlined in detail.

<http://ericec.org/digests/e542.html>

A great list of links on the subject of gifted education and advocacy from the *Hoagies' Gifted Education Page* web site. <http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/advocacy.htm>

Questions Parents of Gifted Students Should Ask Schools written by J. Gallagher is a handy checklist of questions you may want to refer to when your school conducts parent/teacher conferences or if you're meeting with school representatives.

<http://old.nagc.org/Publications/Parenting/question.html>

If you need to get a handle on the legal basics concerning gifted education, this web site will get you started. *Know Your Legal Rights in Gifted Education* written by F. Karnes and R. Marquardt will help you discover the legal framework behind gifted education and it suggests action steps you can take to start resolving issues.

<http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content4/legal.rights.gifted.ed.html>

If you need to argue a case for promoting gifted education, no doubt you'll have to tackle the issue of ability grouping. *Ability Grouping* written by D. Farmer gives a summarized accounting of the latest findings with useful links and references at the end.

<http://www.austega.com/gifted/provisions/abilitygroup.htm>

Should you need to delve into the issue of ability grouping even further, make sure you visit this page. Some great links to some outstanding research/articles on the subject of ability grouping brought to you by Hoagies' Gifted Education Page web site.

<http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/grouping.htm>

Personally, I feel advocating for gifted education should be an ongoing, integral part of any program. Parents and educators need to stay abreast of current findings and research in order to promote g/t programs to the public. There are many communities doing this successfully right here in New York. Are there any chapters or school districts willing to share what works for them in their community?