

Grassroots Advocacy

NEEDS YOU!!!

Now is the time to take action and get involved.
Make a difference.

Help us help you and your children; read on and find out how you can take part in this tremendous effort for Gifted and Talented and Twice Exceptional students in NYS.

**FALL 2011
OPEN LETTER FROM AGATE**

Dear Educators, Parents, and Students,

We are writing you because New York State laws and funding to support gifted, talented, and twice exceptional children are within our grasp!

High ability students throughout our state are depending on you to help them to receive appropriate educational opportunities that will allow them to reach their full potential.

All of New York State will benefit if our children and youth optimize their potential via state-mandated and state-funded gifted, talented, and twice exceptional education combined with a funded mandatory 3-credit teacher training course for every new teacher in NY State. Check out the legislation, text, and the status of each: <http://public.leginfo.state.ny.us/frmload.cgi?MENU-22642826>

S3301/A3281

S1272/A5506

S1273/A5507 (S=Senate A=Assembly)

The above three pieces of legislation have been caught in committee since January 2011. This legislation will not be passed, or funded at the state level, unless we do massive educational efforts and raise awareness throughout New York State.

We strongly urge and hope that you will [support these bills](#) to the fullest extent!

TIMELINE:

- Send handwritten [letters](#) to your elected NY State representatives (**early Nov.** and ongoing)
- [Call](#) your local [Senate](#) and [Assembly](#) office & their Albany legislative offices (ongoing)
- [Visit](#) Albany Legislative Aids (if you can) & your local offices (**Jan and Feb 2012**)
- Educate others within your community using the attached lesson plans for families, organizations, & classroom (aligned with NY State Standards & Core) (**early Nov 2011-May 2012**)

The enclosed background information: letter template, lesson plans, and scripts are intended to help you educate your elected officials; especially to help you educate those in your family, workplace, school, and community about the urgent need for this legislation and the necessity for statewide funding so that ALL districts and diverse students have equal access.

We can pass and fund this important legislation if we collaboratively educate and activate others! Let's do it together! Starting in **November** we can create a [trickle](#), then a [stream](#), then a [flood](#) of [overwhelming support](#) for laws mandating and funding identification and support for the educational needs of NY State's diverse gifted, talented, and twice exceptional children!

Inspired and Active,

Advocacy for Talented and Gifted Education (AGATE)

P.S. April 2011 Federal legislation to support gifted, talented, and twice exceptional children was proposed and attached to renewal of NCLB/ESEA (No Child Left Behind/The Elementary and Secondary Education Act) in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. You can find out more at the Council for Exceptional Children's [Legislative Action](#) site or from the National Association for Gifted Children's [Advocacy and Legislation](#) site.

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HOW-TO
Pass Gifted and Talented (G&T) and Twice Exceptional Legislation in NY State
by
AGATE NY with CEC and NAGC support

Objective: Pass Legislation Through Education!

Statewide funding for legislation by treating each gifted, talented, or twice exceptional student as a "resource room" student, ie. dedicate 1.5X funding!

How: Handwritten letters from all. Calls from voters. Follow up visit if possible.
This method uses NO LOBBYISTS but rather, relies on individual families & teachers!
We need YOUR HELP as an educator! :-)

Who: You, your coworkers, friends, and family, your community, and elected officials

Where: In homes, at schools during class, during PTA Meetings, anytime, anywhere!

What: **Materials:** Paper, envelopes, writing implement, addresses of NY State officials
Curricula: Utilize/modify the most appropriate lesson plan to best meet the needs of your students. Each grade level lesson plan provides a slightly different approach.

When: One 30-60 minute session (and for 6th-12th graders, a 1 hour homework assignment & the revision/final draft of persuasive essay to be completed at home).

Why: Providing both appropriate instructional opportunities and educational equity for the gifted students from all areas of New York State in every school district, particularly in these tight budget times when schools districts remove all services not mandated, will benefit not only individual students, but also our entire state.

Date:

Name:

Address:

Dear

I am writing to you in support of a number of bills, A03281/S3301 and A05506/S1272 relating to gifted education. These bills will require that all pre-service teachers receive a dedicated three-credit course in gifted education **before** receiving certification. These bills will also ensure that all students who are identified as gifted and talented by their school districts receive sufficient appropriate educational opportunities that would include services delivered by a certified gifted teacher along with expanded acceleration opportunities for grades 1, 3, and 5. (Acceleration is currently only required in grade 8 in NYS). These bills would also include \$1,000,000 to help with the costs of training the teachers.

In addition, I am writing to garner your support for bills A05507/S1273. These bills ensure sufficient appropriate education for twice exceptional gifted students. This category of special education student often does not receive the supports they need to survive and thrive. Specialized teaching methods and approaches are needed for these students who are both gifted and have learning difficulties. Passage of these bills is critical to move forward the opportunity to provide both appropriate instructional opportunities and educational equity for the intellectually gifted students from all areas of New York State in every school district, particularly in these tight budget times when schools districts remove all services not mandated.

The attached fact sheet indicates the status of gifted education across NYS. Please read it to get a fuller sense of why the gifted students in every school district statewide need your support.

I strongly urge and hope that you will support these bills to the fullest extent. High ability students throughout our state are depending on you to help them, receive appropriate educational opportunities that will allow them to reach their full potential.

Sincerely,

Your name

Your address

Date

Dear

As a long-time constituent, I thank you for your service in Albany. I am writing in the hopes that you will build on your legislative record by helping to bring to the floor, and to pass, A3281/S3301, A5506/S1272, and A5507/S1273, to mandate and fund gifted, talented, and twice exceptional education as well as a related three-credit teacher training course for all new teachers.

The above-referenced bills have been caught in committee since January 2011. All three are likely to die there unless well-intentioned legislators like you rescue them.

The proposed legislation will replace our State's unacceptable notion of a "basic" education for high ability students with a commitment to help our brightest and most curious students develop their potential. Numerous districts in NY State, like New York City, pay lip service to "gifted and talented" education; however, for many gifted, talented, and twice exceptional students education falls far short of what is necessary. With massive budget cuts the situation for most of these students in New York State is even more dismal.

I hope that I can count on your support.

Sincerely,

Your name
Your address

New York Fails Its Gifted Education Students

The Problem:

1. In spite of the fact that New York considers itself one of the leaders in the field of education, New York State is one of only 11 states that fail to mandate Gifted Education and fail to provide dedicated funding for Gifted Education.
2. New York State is one of only 15 states that fail to mandate Gifted Education.
3. Two bordering states (PA, NJ) mandate or fund gifted education, making them more appealing for new industrial development.
4. Lack of sufficient appropriate opportunities for every segment of New York State's school children makes the state less attractive for businesses and developers who need well educated employees of all ability levels.
5. New York State is not recognized as an educational leader in Gifted Education.
6. There is inequity of sufficient appropriate educational opportunities for gifted students across the state—some urban and wealthy suburban districts provide sufficient appropriate education to gifted students, however many rural and urban districts fail to provide these opportunities.
7. Some schools throughout the state refuse to ability group in any grade level and do not accelerate, do not offer Honors classes, do not allow students to challenge exams when ready, do not offer appropriate Gifted Education services, offer very few, if any, AP options, and have no Gifted Education certified teachers on staff, even though every New York State school has gifted students.
8. As budgets tighten around the state all non-mandated services, including Gifted Education, are targets for first cuts.
9. Although statistically every teacher in New York State has some gifted students in their assignments, very few teachers have taken coursework that increases their expertise with this population.
10. Approximately 20% of all school dropouts are intellectually gifted.
11. New York City's Department of Education requires gifted services to all eligible students, while the rest of NYS schools do not necessarily offer these services.
12. Gifted students do not reach their full intellectual potentials without sufficient appropriate educational stimulation throughout their school careers.

New York Fails Its Gifted Education Students

The Solution:

1. Restore Gifted Education categorical aid funding.
2. Provide equity of opportunities by developing a comprehensive Pre K-12 Acceleration Regulation for all students in New York State Schools.
3. Encourage on-line courses and early college entry for students who would excel with these options.
4. Provide incentives and accountability for growth (in level 4 scores) on NYS tests, and high (over 1300) on the SATs or (scores 95+) Regents Exams.
5. Require differentiated opportunities and special programs designed to stimulate and cultivate the intellectual capacities of every student throughout the state, regardless of where they reside.
6. Require every school district to have at least one certified Gifted Education teacher or purchase Gifted Education services taught by a certified Gifted Education teacher through the local BOCES.
7. Consider modified IEPs for every gifted student throughout the state.
8. Support legislation that requires a dedicated 3 credit gifted education course for every teacher before they receive certification to teach. (Assemblyman Thiele/State Senator Addabbo - Bill **AO5506/SO1272**)
9. Support legislation to require universal gifted education for all eligible students throughout the state. (State Senator Addabbo/Assemblyman Thiele – Bill **S03301/AO3281**)
10. Support legislation relates to gifted students with special needs (Assemblyman Thiele/State Senator Addabbo **A5507/SO1273**)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

LEGISLATIVE ACTION ----- INITIAL CALL
Passing Gifted and Talented (G&T) and Twice Exceptional Legislation in NY State
(Thank you to Kimberly Hymes at the CEC for this script we revised for NY AGATE in October 2011)

Quick tips: Ask to speak to the Education Legislative Assistant; share personal stories of the importance of gifted education; fill out a feedback form so that we can track support and provide needed outreach.

Sample dialogue: My name is _____ and I am a (teacher/administrator/parent/etc.) and constituent from your district. I am calling today to urge Assemblymember/State Senator _____ to sign on to the three Gifted & Talented bills in committee right now:

S3301/A3281 S1272/A5506 S1273/A5507 (S=Senate A=Assembly)

This legislation is designed to address the unique learning needs of New York State's students with gifts, talents, and those who are gifted or talented but also have a disability (twice exceptional). Students with gifts and talents need access to appropriate services and supports to ensure they remain challenged in school and achieve their potential. While students with gifts and talents exist in every community, far too often, schools are ill-equipped to meet their needs. Especially when the child has both a disability and gifts or talents!

I urge Assemblymember/State Senator _____ to cosponsor these three pieces of legislation which are, as of November 2011, currently in committee in both the Assembly and the State Senate.

To sign onto or cosponsor the three Assembly bills, you may contact Lisa Lombardo in Assemblymember Theile's office (746 LOB in Albany) at 518-455-5997 or via email lombardol@assembly.state.ny.us. To sign onto or cosponsor the State Senate's three bills please contact Frank Scaduto in State Senator Addabbo's office (613 LOB) at (518) 455-2321 or via email scaduto@nyenate.gov.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to your response to my request.

FEEDBACK: PLEASE COPY & PASTE this feedback into an email for jenseron@pipeline.com

NAME OF CONTACTS: _____Assembly, _____Senate

WILL SPONSOR? YES NO MAYBE YES NO MAYBE

WILL COSPONSOR? YES NO MAYBE YES NO MAYBE

NEED ADDITIONAL INFO or CONTACT? YES NO YES NO

What do they need? _____

LEGISLATIVE ACTION ----- FOLLOW-UP TO LETTER CALL
Passing Gifted and Talented (G&T) and Twice Exceptional Legislation in NY State
 (Thank you Kimberly Hymes at the CEC for this script we revised for NY AGATE in October 2011)

Quick tips: Ask to speak to the Education Legislative Assistant; share personal stories of the importance of gifted education; fill out a feedback form so that we can track support and provide needed outreach.

Sample dialogue: My name is _____ and I am a (teacher/administrator/parent/etc.) and constituent from your district. I am calling today to urge Assemblymember/State Senator _____ to sign on to the three Gifted & Talented bills in committee right now:

S3301/A3281 S1272/A5506 S1273/A5507 (S=Senate A=Assembly)

This legislation is designed to address the unique learning needs of New York State's students with gifts, talents, and those who are gifted or talented but also have a disability (twice exceptional). This legislation includes a related 3-credit course which would be required for every new teacher in NY State.

I/my family/my students sent you letters requesting your support for this legislation. These bills are of utmost importance to me/my family/my students and the future of New York State! We need to optimize the potential of all our students, including those with gifts and talents!

To sign onto or cosponsor the three Assembly bills, you may contact Lisa Lombardo in Assemblymember Theile's office (746 LOB in Albany) at 518-455-5997 or via email lombardol@assembly.state.ny.us. To sign onto or cosponsor the State Senate's three bills please contact Frank Scaduto in State Senator Addabbo's office (613 LOB) at (518) 455-2321 or via email scaduto@nysenate.gov.

Can we count on the support of Assemblymember/State Senator _____? Has s/he decided to sponsor or cosponsor these three important pieces of legislation? If not? Would there be a time I could come by and speak directly with Assemblymember/State Senator _____ or with his/her legislative aid?

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to your response.

FEEDBACK: PLEASE COPY & PASTE this feedback into an email for jenseron@pipeline.com

NAME OF CONTACTS: _____ Assembly, _____ Senate

WILL SPONSOR? YES NO MAYBE YES NO MAYBE

WILL COSPONSOR? YES NO MAYBE YES NO MAYBE

NEED ADDITIONAL INFO or CONTACT? YES NO YES NO

What do they need? _____

Date:

Name:

Address:

Dear

I am writing to thank you for your support of gifted, talented, and twice exceptional students in NY State.

Thank you for your support of bills A03281/S3301 and A05506/S1272 relating to gifted education. These bills will require that all pre-service teachers receive a dedicated three-credit course in gifted education **before** receiving certification. These bills will also ensure that all students who are identified as gifted and talented by their school districts receive sufficient appropriate educational opportunities that would include services delivered by a certified gifted teacher along with expanded acceleration opportunities for grades 1, 3, and 5. (Acceleration is currently only required in grade 8 in NYS). These bills would also include \$1,000,000 to help with the costs of training the teachers.

In addition, I am writing to thank you for your support of bills A05507/S1273. These bills ensure sufficient appropriate education for twice exceptional gifted students. Specialized teaching methods and approaches are needed for these students who are both gifted and have learning difficulties.

Passage of these bills is critical to move forward the opportunity to provide both appropriate instructional opportunities and educational equity for the intellectually gifted students from all areas of New York State in every school district, particularly in these tight budget times when schools districts remove all services not protected with legislation.

I thank you for your support these bills which support high ability students throughout our state. With your help they will receive appropriate educational opportunities that will allow them to reach their full potential and we will begin to make the best use of our state's vast untapped human resources!

Sincerely and with Many Thanks,

FAMILY LESSON PLAN
Passing Gifted and Talented (G&T) and Twice Exceptional Legislation in NY State
by
AGATE NY with CEC and NAGC support

GOAL: Every family can help to make important bills become laws by persuading their elected NY State representatives to Cosponsor or Sponsor S3301/A3281, S1272/A5506, S1273/A5507 (S=Senate A=Assembly)

HOW: Every Family can make drawings, write letters, or develop a project to be mailed or dropped off to their NY State elected representatives. Follow up to make sure your officials sponsor or cosponsor.

WHY: These bills have a direct impact on our children and our families. Without such legislation at the State level many of our best and brightest children never receive the support they need to optimize their special talents! We need our best and brightest! It is in the long term best interests of all New Yorkers to provide trained teachers and to mandate and fund G&T and Twice Exceptional Education!

FYI: This is a non-partisan issue with both Republican and Democratic supporters in NY State Senate and Assembly.

1. Rules are Important:
 - A. Household rules (what are the most important ones?) --- Discuss as a family
 - B. City, State, National Rules (what are the most important ones? --- Discuss/Google if needed :-)
2. Who makes rules?
 - A. Household rules made by . . .
 - B. Rules in our country are made by . . . the PEOPLE! People get ideas which can be written into bills which can become law if enough people want them to be laws. The process involves individual citizens communicating their wishes to their elected officials. There are many ways to communicate your wishes on issues important to you! We are going to communicate as a family because right now there are three bills which should be laws! Our family and other families all over NY State can help make these bills into laws! **(S3301/A3281, S1272/A5506, S1273/A5507)**
3. Justification for OUR LEGISLATION: These three bills mandate that every child in NY State who has a special gift or talent will get support, trained teachers, and even get help if they also have a disability in some other area. Helping gifted, talented, and twice exceptional students will have an impact on our family, friends, and community. Right now this important legislation has been caught in committee since January of 2011. If it doesn't get enough support it will never get out of committee. WE NEED TO HELP BILLS **S3301/A3281, S1272/A5506, S1273/A5507** BECOME LAWS!
4. **ACTIVITY:** We will write letters to our two elected officials and mail them in two big envelopes. Each of us can write our own letter about why we, our community, our society would be better off if our G&T & DE students got support, identified, & had access to trained teachers. Can we do it? YES!

If you have young children, you could ask them to draw a picture of themselves when they grow up doing the job they want to do. Every job is important and every student is important. We will all benefit if every child is allowed to reach their full potential and achieve their dreams!

Adolescents and teens could make a short 2-minute media-based project to summarize their position and to persuade their elected officials using technological tools, graphics, music, etc.

DRAFT THE LETTERS, MAKE THE DRAWINGS or PROJECTS: Ask your elected officials to Sponsor or COSPONSOR the three pieces of legislation. (S3301/A3281, S1272/A5506, S1273/A5507) Use the letter template & info sheets to help! Go to the AGATE web site <http://www.agateny.com/> if you want more. Check out the Federal legislation at the [CEC](#) web site and the legislative toolkit at the [NAGC](#) web site!

5. Ask your children/adolescents/teens to google and find your elected officials or use the links below:
Link to find your State Assemblymember: <http://assembly.state.ny.us/mem/?sh=search>
Link to find your State Senator: <http://www.nysenate.gov/senators>
6. **REVISE OR COMPLETE YOUR LETTERS:** Look at what your elected officials believe and what other legislation they are proposing. Do you support what they are doing? What issues do you think should be addressed. What can you thank them for doing? Personalize your letters and complete them!
7. Mail or drop off your family letters, drawings, projects. Be sure to thank your representatives for their work.
8. Follow up with a telephone call to your representatives and ask them to Sponsor or Cosponsor (better) the three pieces of legislation (S3301/A3281, S1272/A5506, S1273/A5507)
9. Meet with their Legislative Aid in Albany, if possible, or in the local district office and ask them again to Sponsor or Cosponsor the three pieces of legislation. (S3301/A3281, S1272/A5506, S1273/A5507)

ADDITIONAL LINKS OF INTEREST

ADVOCACY FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION (AGATE) IN NY LEGISLATIVE PAGE:
http://www.agateny.com/Agate_Legislation.html

NY STATE LEGISLATURE INFO ON HOW BILLS BECOME LAW IN NY STATE:
http://www.nymtaideas.org/sws/aboutsenate/how_idea_becomes_law.html
<http://teachergenius.teachtci.com/new-york-state-government-the-legislative-branch-2/>

US FEDERAL INFO ON HOW FEDERAL BILLS BECOME LAWS:
<http://kids.clerk.house.gov/grade-school/lesson.html?intID=17> (simplest)
<http://thomas.loc.gov/home/lawsmade.toc.html> (more detailed by the Library of Congress)

US FEDERAL LEVEL RESEARCH DOCUMENT ON "EXCELLENCE GAPS"
<https://www.iub.edu/~ceep/Gap/excellence/ExcellenceGapBrief.pdf>

FEDERAL NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR GIFTED CHILDREN (NAGC) ADVOCACY PAGE
<http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=970>

FEDERAL COUNCIL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN (CEC) LEGISLATIVE PAGES
<http://www.cec.sped.org/Content/NavigationMenu/PolicyAdvocacy/CECPolicyResources/GiftedTalented/default.htm> -- General
CEC Info on Gifted, Talented, and Twice Exceptional at the Federal US level
<http://capwiz.com/cek/issues/alert/?alertid=53399391> -- Fund Gifted Ed. 10/11
<http://capwiz.com/cek/issues/alert/?alertid=44879501> -- Federal TALENT legislation proposed 4/11

INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON AND "WEAK CURRICULUM" IN US?
<http://4brevard.com/choice/international-test-scores.htm>

GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY LESSON PLAN
Passing Gifted and Talented (G&T) and Twice Exceptional Legislation in NY State
by
AGATE NY with CEC and NAGC support

GOAL: Individuals can help to make important bills become laws by persuading their elected NY State representatives to Cosponsor or Sponsor S3301/A3281, S1272/A5506, S1273/A5507 (S=Senate A=Assembly)

HOW: Individuals can write letters to be mailed or dropped off to their NY State elected representatives. Follow up to make sure your officials sponsor or cosponsor.

WHY: These bills have a direct impact on our state, communities, children, and our families. Without such legislation at the State level many of our best and brightest children never receive the support they need to optimize their special talents! We need our best and brightest! It is in the long term best interests of all New Yorkers to provide trained teachers and to mandate and fund G&T and Twice Exceptional education!

FYI: This is a non-partisan issue with both Republican and Democratic supporters in NY State Senate and Assembly.

60-minute Grassroots Advocacy Workshop

Advance Preparation: If you are speaking to a group, ask and/or send an email reminder beforehand for each person to bring some old stationery and envelopes.

Goal of 60-Minute Session: Inform about legislation via education. Model exactly what participants will do in their own schools, organizations (PTAs, unions), workplaces, and communities.

10min. A. **Importance of Gifted and Twice Exceptional training/assessment/funding for all students across New York State.** Tell your own story (within 2 minutes) and ask participants to take 5 minutes and turn to their neighbor and share one of their stories and listen to their neighbor.

Pass out the "Fall 2011 Open Letter from AGATE" to all participants while they're talking

10 min. B. **Legislation in NY State: We are close for the first time in 30 years!**
S3301/A3281 S1272/A5506 S1273/A5507
(There is also FEDERAL legislation H.R.1674 and S.857)

Pass out "New York Fails its Gifted Education Students" both the Summary and the Solutions.

C. **WHAT CAN WE DO?** Participate in our Democracy! Legislation via Education!
We can educate our elected officials as to the importance to our state & children!
1. Handwritten letters from children, parents, families, teachers, classrooms, schools, administrators, academics.

Pass out the two "Sample Letters"

- 10 min .
- a. **Write a letter now** to your State Assemblymember and your State Senator:
 1. Pick a piece of stationary and envelope and write a letter yourself.
 2. Follow the template for facts or if you want help
 3. Add your own reason why you, your child, your students, your school, your community **DESERVES** and **NEEDS** to support every child with a gift or talent, especially those who may also have deficits!!!

Pass out the "Initial Call" script and feedback sheet

- 10 min.
- b. Use your cell phone and **make a call now to both your State Senator and Assemblymember.** Follow the script and/or read the letter you wrote.
 2. Please **put on your calendar to follow up with a phone call** to both your NY State Assemblymember's and State Senator's Albany offices and ask whether they have "Signed on as Cosponsors of the legislation".
S3301/A3281 S1272/A5506 S1273/A5507

Pass out and suggest people use the "Follow-up to Letter Call" script and feedback sheet

- 10 min. D. **TAKE IT HOME:** Do exactly this in your own community, organization, or school!
1. If you are a parent, do this in your own home with your family. Each family member handwrites own letters. **PUT IT ON YOUR CALENDAR.**
 2. Parents can call other parents you know and have a letter-writing party or do this at a PTA meeting or at sports events.
 3. If you are a teacher use (or modify :-) this grassroots advocacy template to inform other teachers and the online PreK-12 lesson plans for your students.
 4. If you are an administrator use the "Administrator Action Plan" to present the curricula to your teachers and if you have time, use this Grassroots Advocacy session to model what your teachers will do with their students.
 5. If you are a specialist, activate every family, school, or community which you serve. Offer this Grassroots Advocacy session to professional, service, or non-profit organizations (PTA and Unions, but also include Rotary, Lion's, Knights of Columbus, etc.) in your community.

- 10 min. E. **FOLLOW UP** with a thank you if your State Senator or Assemblymember signs on or cosponsors the legislation! If you like to write, publish an article in the local newspaper.

Pass out the "Thank You for your Support Letter"

- F. **THANK YOU** for your time and your commitment to making our state a better place for all of us. We can pass and fund this important legislation if we collaboratively educate and activate others! Let's do it together! Starting in **November** we can create a trickle, then a stream, then a flood of overwhelming support for laws mandating and funding identification and support for the educational needs of NY State's diverse gifted, talented, and twice exceptional children!