

Advocating for Your Gifted Child

Parent Voices Make the Most Difference

Your 8-year-old daughter comes home from school crying, telling you school is boring and she already knows everything they're teaching. Your high school sophomore is ready to take coursework in mathematics at the college level, but the option to do so is not available in your district. Your middle schooler, who used to love school as an elementary student and now attends a middle school where gifted services aren't offered, tells you he hates school and doesn't see the point of going because he has already learned what is being taught.

We wish these scenarios were rarities, but for gifted students, many times they are the norm. Not all school districts or states are supportive of gifted education. As the parent of a gifted child, that can be very frustrating and heartbreaking. So what can you do? Advocate, advocate, advocate.

In most school districts and states, parent voices are heard more often than those of teachers who advocate. Parents of gifted students need to organize and prepare if their efforts for change are to be successful. According to Roberta Braverman, volunteer advocate in gifted education and multi-term committee member on NAGC's Public Policy and Advocacy Committee, there are 6 ways parents can improve their advocacy effectiveness:

- Learn the current situation for gifted students in your district. This means researching district policies and practices that impact gifted students.
- Understand how your school district makes decisions. Are there committees? Does the school board at the direction of the superintendent make decisions? Knowing how decisions are made will help you focus your efforts and recommendations.
- Determine how your district and state compare to other districts and states. Some research will need to be done so you know how other districts of your size in your state are providing for the needs of their gifted students.
- Know the basic information about gifted education and gifted students. As an advocate, you need to be able to speak with an informed voice about best practices in gifted education. You should also know the number of gifted students as a percentage of total student population, number of gifted students receiving services, amount of funding for gifted services, and gifted education specialist to gifted student ratio.
- Involve other parents and community advocates. Generally, the more diverse the group of advocates, the better. Consider including parents, psychologists, business leaders and others from your community who can attest to the need for advanced learning opportunities for success in future careers.
- Raise awareness. As often as you are able, and as often as the opportunity is available, attend meetings, testify, and volunteer to help. By providing a voice backed with researched data and volunteerism, you are more likely to realize success.

With organized advocacy, you can move your district and state to make positive changes for the education of gifted students.

Resource

Braverman, R. (December 2021) *Making Positive Changes for Gifted Students in Your School District and State*
National Association for Gifted Children *Parenting for High Potential*