

HAPPY NEW YEAR!
DATA, DECISION, AND DEFEATING THE DOLDRUMS



CELEBRATING POTENTIAL: THE SHARED ROLE IN SUPPORTING THE NEEDS OF GIFTED LEARNERS

By Beth Ustanko

NDAGC President

An essential component of the Gifted Children's Bill of Rights written by Del Siegle, Ph. D. is that they have, "a right...to learn something new every day." If one assumes this learning happens at a child's school, then it would seem few would argue with Siegle. This is because schools should be synonymous with learning. Where else, one could ask, would our children go for education? However a curious dichotomy can exist in schools, and at times these places of learning can diminish the needs of learners who have demonstrated potential for advancement.

To illustrate, I need to look no further than my daughter's experience in high school. In both her junior and senior years I had the opportunity to attend the academic awards at her school. During the ceremonies student representatives in each respective senior class were invited to speak, and each year the students' words contained a strikingly similar theme. The students provided a gentle warning to their peers that they should remember their academic success does not define them. While I understand their kind intent about having healthy self-concepts and being well-rounded individuals, I wondered if these students felt uncomfortable publicly celebrating their academic success.

I also wonder if it is the same with sports. It seems to me if an individual is a talented athlete, traditionally the accomplishments are openly and widely celebrated. After all, professional athletes revel in achieving status as the Greatest of All Time, or G.O.A.T. In "The Palcuzzi Ploy", the emphasis and value of sports programs in educational systems is brought to the forefront. A school principal, Mr. Palcuzzi proposes that gifted students should be advanced according to their talents, should have specially trained teachers, and be allowed time to share their talents with children of other schools- both in the area and across the state (with the school paying transportation costs). As expected, these proposals were met with questions and criticism.

Newsletter Highlights

Upcoming Webinars

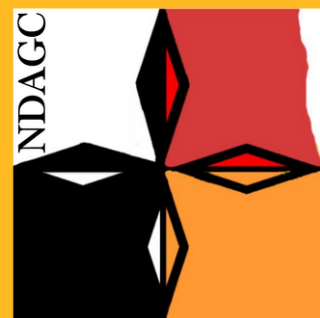
DEL SIEGLE PRESENTS

Parent Corner: Gifted Academic Services for Middle School and High School Students in North Dakota: One Parent's Search

Parent Corner: GIFTed Gathering

Teacher Corner: Identifying Gifted Students

In the News





It was then that Mr. Palcuzzi explained that he was describing a program that currently existed within the school system- it was a program for gifted basketball players. One by one, each objection to a program for gifted learners was overcome when framed with the needs of talented athletes in mind. As "The Palcuzzi Ploy" author James J. Gallagher concludes:

What then does this tell us? The culture and community will support the kinds of activities that they find necessary, valuable, and/or enjoyable. If they feel that a program is sufficiently necessary or sufficiently enjoyable all sorts of objections are put aside as being relatively inconsequential. If, on the other hand, the community is not fully interested or involved in supporting such a program, all kinds of objections can be raised as to why these things should not be done, or cannot be done (Katz 6).

When a community is supportive of gifted learners, what should it strive to provide? I believe a focus on the needs of the gifted would mean instruction which fosters productive struggle for ALL students. Productive struggle describes a learning experience where the student brings some prior knowledge to the outset (in other words, the student knows a few things). However, the student needs to think and persist in order to be successful. The student will feel challenged, however they will know effort will lead to success. Dr. Sylvia Rimm asserts, "The surest path to high self-esteem is to be successful at something you perceived would be difficult. Each time we steal our students' struggle by insisting they do work that is too easy for them, we steal their opportunity to have an esteem-building experience. Unless kids are consistently engaged in challenging work, they will lose their motivation to work hard."

Simply put, our children's learning environments, both at home and school, should foster learning and be places where potential is nurtured into talent. As Carl Ann Tomlinson Ed.D. so aptly describes:

What it takes to teach gifted learners well is actually a little common sense. It begins with the premise that each child should come to school to stretch and grow daily...And it envisions schooling as an escalator on which students continually progress, rather than a series of stairs, with landings on which advanced learners consistently wait (Tomlinson).

Learning is hard work, and when this work is properly nurtured and supported it results in meaningful study which is personally engaging and motivating. Our communities in North Dakota should strive to create such learning environments. More importantly, we should instill in our learners the knowledge that their accomplishments are worthy of celebration.

References:

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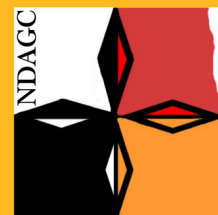
Upcoming Events

February Webinar

MTSS for All: Application of NDDPI's Best Practices for Gifted Education within the MTSS Framework

March Webinar

The Anatomy of IQ - Intersections Between Intelligence and 2e



Don't miss our January Webinar!

NDAGC Webinar Series


Del Siegle Presents


**Addressing Underachievement: Five Tips for
Unlocking Your Students' Gifts and Talents**

Wednesday, January 17th, 2024 @ 7 PM CST

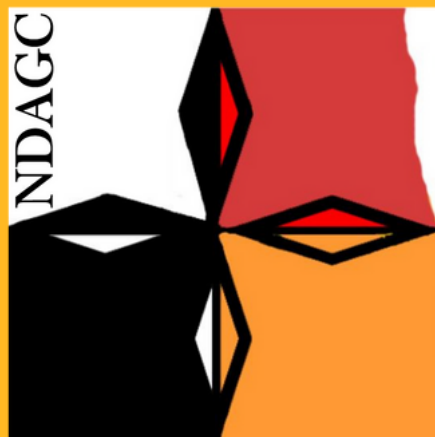
The experiences students have in our classrooms influence the beliefs and attitudes they hold toward themselves, given tasks, and achievement itself. In this webinar we will discuss the importance of offering students the options in their learning, fostering confidence in their ability to achieve, encourage curiosity and questioning, paying attention to student interests, and modeling enthusiasm for life and learning. When students value a task or outcome and have positive perceptions of their skills and their opportunities for success, they are more likely to implement self-regulatory behavior and apply appropriate strategies for academic success.

Del Siegle is the Lynn and Ray Neag Endowed Chair for Talent Development at the University of Connecticut, where he directs the U.S. National Center for Research on Gifted Education (NCRGE). He is a past-president of the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) and the recipient of their 2021 Founder's Memorial, 2018 Distinguished Scholar, and 2011 Distinguished Service Award. He is a former co-editor of Gifted Child Quarterly (GCQ) and the Journal of Advanced Academics (JOAA), co-author with Gary Davis and Sylvia Rimm of the 6th and 7th editions of Education of the Gifted and Talented, author of The Underachieving Gifted Child: Recognizing, Understanding, & Reversing Underachievement, and author of a technology column for Gifted Child Today. He has served as an Educational Psychology department head and Neag School of Education Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Affairs at the University of Connecticut.





This is a must-see webinar on underachievement for educators and parents! Del Siegle, former president of the National Association for Gifted Children and director of the U.S. National Center for Research on Gifted Education, shares his expertise Wednesday, January 17 at 7pm. [Click here to register!](#)



GIFTED ACADEMIC SERVICES FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NORTH DAKOTA: ONE PARENT'S SEARCH

By Yee Han Chu PhD MSSW

University of North Dakota Academic Support and Fellowship Opportunities Coordinator
NDAGC, Past President

Gifted education extends well beyond the elementary school years. Giftedness wires a child's mind to need complex and rigorous learning. Without external cultivation, this giftedness stagnates as "potential" and never becomes talent. With support and practice, early capacities mature into disciplinary talents and eventually expertise (Subotnik et al., 2011). The question for parents is how to find and provide these resources to our children. The purpose of this article is to share my search for gifted academic services in the middle and high school years in North Dakota.

When students transition from elementary to middle school, the academic program shifts from teaching foundational knowledge to delivering focused and specialized knowledge taught by subject-focused teachers. A friend of mine told me to anticipate limited academic enrichment and absolutely no acceleration in the middle school years. My friend wasn't that far off the mark. I found that while the schools would provide some support, it would only do so for students whose parents pushed.

Advocating for my children in the middle school years required understanding the needs of gifted children, learning about ND laws about my rights as a parent, and reaching out to anyone who could help. That effort paid off when we moved our daughter to a different middle school that had just introduced enrichment Honors courses for their high-performing students. Through these courses, my daughter found her friend group and the social-emotional support she needed.

Resources Outside of School

For many students, school will not offer enough of a challenge. My daughter truly loved math. She enjoyed the Math Track competitions offered by the school, but she needed more. My research brought to me talent search programs. Talent search programs identify students for enrichment and/or accelerated content matched to their abilities. "The talent search model has the strongest current research base of all models predicting future productivity" (Worrell et al., 2019).

Families with middle school-age children should consider talent search programs. The [Northwestern Center for Talent Development](#)'s is the designated program for our ND area. It offers a wide array of programming that now extends into the early grades. Some of the programming is available online and others are accessed through residential summer programs offered on the Northwestern University campus.

Eligibility varies depending on the degree of advanced content taught. Some courses offer open enrollment, while others require documentation of readiness (either test score or portfolio). Some threshold MAP or STAR scores require performance at the 90th percentile. Others require the 95th percentile, and others require above-grade-level testing. My daughter took the ACT as a 7th grader. Her math score qualified her to participate in the program over several summers, taking classes such as Pre-Calculus Honors, Algebra II/Trig Honors, and AP Chemistry.

High School Opportunities

College planning reaches a frenzy during the high school years. Gifted services in these years come in many forms such as Advanced Placement Courses, Dual Enrollment Courses, and Subject Acceleration, to name a few, all designed to prepare students for the rigors of college education. One type of enrichment not commonly discussed is study abroad. Our family brought our children to Concordia Language Villages most summers to learn German.

Applying for the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange for High School Students (CBYX-HS) Scholarship seemed like a natural next step to support our daughter's learning of German. Through this scholarship, my daughter lived abroad in Hanover, Germany during her junior year of high school. She emerged from this experience with a more independent sense of self, a broader view of the world, increased confidence, and an amazing fluency in German. This experience allowed her to start her college career with advanced credits in German, to enroll in an upper-division German literature class as a freshman, and to eventually join Phi Beta Kappa when she graduated from university.

Closer to home is the North Dakota Governor's School. Highly motivated high school sophomores and juniors gather for a four-week residential program in the summer. COVID pushed the program into hiatus in 2020, but it will return next year. Historically run by North Dakota State University, it is now run jointly by NDSU (summer 2024) and the University of North Dakota (summer 2025).

The NDSU Governor's School offers discipline-specific tracks for students wanting to learn more about Engineering, Information Technology, Laboratory Science, or Mathematics. The Governor's School provides more than academic learning. The program teaches the Five P's: Be Prompt; Be Present; Be Personable; Be Persistent; and Be Principled as students engage in many fun summer activities such as canoeing, salsa dancing, spa nights, and more. The application portal for the Governor's School is open until January 15, 2024.

In closing, be patient and persistent in your search for resources for your gifted children. Know that there are others like you fighting the good fight and will gladly share lessons learned in what will be a process that continues well into your child's adult years. Here are some planning tips from Sandra Berger, author of *College Planning for Gifted Students*, and me.

A Year-by-Year Checklist for Finding Resources for Your Gifted Child

Seventh Grade

- Help your child explore and investigate new academic areas and extracurricular interests.
- Arrange for your seventh grader to take the ACT and consider enrollment in Talent Search Programs.

Eighth Grade

- Help your child take accelerated courses in high school, if possible.
- Plan a creative summer.

Ninth Grade

- Encourage your child to register for the PSAT and take it for practice.
- Help your child craft a 4 year plan to discern what courses are needed, what courses are challenging (and college directed) and what pre-requisites are required for these courses, and when these courses can be scheduled to allow for extra-curriculars.

Tenth Grade

- Help your child sign up for the PSAT and take it for practice.
- Think about study abroad.
- Think about taking the SAT/ACT Subject tests at the end of 10th grade in any subjects in which the student has done well BUT does not plan to continue studying in high school (while the material is still fresh in one's mind).
- Plan a meaningful summer activity. Consider the ND Governor's School.
- Look into careers.
- Become familiar with the Occupational Outlook Handbook.

11th Grade

- Begin the college search process.
- Sign up for the October PSAT. This time the score counts for National Merit Scholarships!
- Take ACT Subject Tests your child will complete at the end of the school year.
- Consider taking AP tests.

12th Grade

- Review admission criteria for schools of interest and send applications.
- Begin scholarship search.
- Check out the Common App site to see which colleges accept the common application and fill it out, if necessary.
- Line up recommendations as soon as possible if applying for early admission.

Bibliography of Resources

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FARGO AREA

GIFTed GATHERING

GUIDING INDIVIDUALS & FAMILIES TOGETHER

Programming for families to attend together:

-  **FOR PARENTS: EXPLORING THE SOCIAL EMOTIONAL NEEDS OF YOUR GIFTED CHILD**
-  **FOR CHILDREN OF REGISTERED PARENTS IN GRADES 3-6+: EXPLORING ENGINEERING**

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2024
3 TO 5 PM

NDSU A. GLEN HILL CENTER, ROOM 130/132
1306 CENTENNIAL BLVD; FARGO, ND 58105

REGISTRATION:
NDAGC MEMBERS: FREE
NON-NDAGC MEMBERS: \$10 PER FAMILY

Register at ndagc.org 

ASSESSMENT DATA AND OBSERVATION: IDENTIFYING GIFTED STUDENTS

Educators are well-aware of the “testing windows” that exist in the school calendar. These “windows” usually occur at the beginning of the school year, in the middle of the year, and again at the end of the year. Since the mid-year window is right around the corner, it is appropriate to reflect upon assessment and identification of gifted learners.

According to the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction’s (NDDPI) Best Practices for Gifted Education, “A definition of giftedness is the foundation upon which an educational program for gifted students is built.” Educational researchers have constructed many definitions of giftedness all of which are dependent upon the measure(s) used to identify students and the kinds of educational services that are provided. North Dakota Century Code §15.1-32-01 states: “Student who is gifted means an individual who is identified by qualified professionals as being capable of high performance and who needs educational programs and services beyond those normally provided in a regular education program.”

NDDPI Best Practices for Gifted Education indicates that students who demonstrate high performance or the potential to do so, must have an educational experience designed for their optimal learning. There is a responsibility for educators and school systems to provide for the educational needs of these students.

The purpose of assessment is to discover emergent patterns from the data collected on a student which would identify this student as one who would benefit from services beyond those normally provided in a regular classroom program. The goal is to create a collage over time versus a snapshot—a one-time test score. In some instances, a gifted student stands out academically. Achievement scores are consistently elevated, high-level thinking is demonstrated in classroom activities and discussions, and the common characteristics of a gifted individual are very apparent. However, there are students in every school whom teachers know have great potential, but are underachieving. These students can be more difficult to identify through testing data because they typically will not perform at high levels on assessments. In all cases, along with assessment data, teacher observation is key to identifying high potential. According to NDDPI Best Practices for Gifted Education, these are some of the characteristics and behaviors to watch for:

- Cognitive characteristics: keen power of abstraction, interest in problem-solving and applying concepts, voracious and early reader, large vocabulary, intellectual curiosity, power of critical thinking, self-criticism, persistent, goal-directed behavior, diversity of interests and abilities.
- Creative characteristics: creativeness and inventiveness, keen sense of humor, wide interests, intuitiveness, flexibility, independence in attitude and social behavior, self-acceptance and unconcern for social norms, commitment to self-selected work.
- Affective characteristics: unusual emotional depth and intensity, sensitivity or empathy to the feelings of others, high expectations of self and others often leading to feelings of frustration, heightened self-awareness accompanied by feelings of being different, easily wounded, need for emotional support, need for consistency between abstract values and personal actions, advanced levels of moral judgment, idealism, sense of justice.
- Behavioral characteristics: spontaneity, boundless enthusiasm, intensely focused on passions, resists changing activities when engrossed in own interests, highly energetic, needs little sleep or down time, constantly questions, insatiable curiosity, impulsive, eager and spirited, perseverance, high levels of frustration particularly when having difficulty meeting standards of performance, volatile temper, non-stop talking/chattering.
- Social Emotional Issues: Because gifted students demonstrate greater maturity in some domains over others, they may be at greater risk for specific kinds of social-emotional difficulties if their needs are not met. These aspects may include heightened awareness, anxiety, perfectionism, stress, issues with peer relationships, concerns with identity and belonging.





Of course, gifted and high potential students will not demonstrate all of the above characteristics. Some students present as “teacher pleasers” while others present through negative learning and social-emotional behaviors such as correcting the teacher and other students, refusing to follow rules unless they know “why”, struggling with transitions and moving on to new learning topics, or being argumentative along with other negative behaviors.

As educators strive to identify gifted students and those students who have undemonstrated high potential, they must consider not only assessment data, but also observational information. They must watch for emergent patterns over time.

When students are identified as needing learning opportunities beyond what is typically provided through the regular classroom curriculum, expectations should be raised so identified students can experience learning as challenging, but achievable.

Productive struggle is necessary for students to reach their full potential and optimal growth.

Reference

[North Dakota Department of Public Instruction Best Practices for Gifted Education](#)

YOU’VE ASSESSED. YOU’VE OBSERVED. YOU’VE IDENTIFIED. NOW WHAT?

Gifted students need meaningful, high-quality learning opportunities in the classroom. These activities should be rigorous and engage students in productive struggle.

Below is a link to a document that includes activities, resources, apps, and websites educators can use to support and engage gifted students. Each of these resources can be used to enrich, extend, and accelerate a gifted student’s educational experience.

[Resources Document Link](#)

In the news

Beth Ustanko and Andrea Edstrom, NDAGC President and Treasurer, presented at the North Dakota Council of Educational Leaders conference held in October. This conference is attended by administrators from around the state along with personnel from the ND Department of Public Instruction. The title of their presentation was *MTSS for All: Application of NDDPI’s Best Practices for Gifted Education within the MTSS Framework*.



IN THE NEWS (CONT.)



Anna Adrover, NDAGC Eastern Regional Representative - Fargo, was awarded the 2023-2024 Teacher Excellence Award from the International Technology and Engineering Educators Association (ITEEA). The Teacher Excellence Awards program was established to identify outstanding technology and engineering teachers deserving of recognition and who serve as models of excellence for their colleagues. It is one of the highest honors given to technology and engineering education classroom teachers at the elementary, middle, and high school levels and is presented in recognition of outstanding contributions to the profession and their students. Congratulations, Anna!

Alicia Schroeder-Schock, NDAGC Secretary, presented at the National Association for Gifted Children's (NAGC) annual convention held at Disney's Coronado Springs Resort in November. Her first session, *A Brave Approach: Allowing Learners to Choose Their Destiny with Choice Boards*, was co-presented with Cheryll Adams, Ph.D., Director Emerita of the Center for Gifted Studies and Talent Development at Ball State University. This session focused on how to develop advanced, standards-aligned choice boards. Her second session, *Creating Tales as Old as Time: Enhancing Creativity Through Book Publication*, focused on how to engage learners as practicing professionals through the writing, illustrating, and publishing process.



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<https://ndagc.org/Join-us>



IN THE NEWS (CONT.)

KVRR STEM.... NDAGC and KVRR partnered to bring STEM projects to families across the valley. Gifted students from Longfellow Elementary participated in a design challenge to create paper bridges that could withstand the weight of over 100 pennies, and engineering a structure to withstand a tornado. Members can view these reports on our website [here](#).

