Advocating for Exceptionally Gifted Young People

A Guidebook

Revised and edited 2011
Online resources updated 2015

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The mission of the Davidson Institute for Talent Development is to recognize, nurture, and support profoundly intelligent young people and to provide opportunities for them to develop their talents to make a positive difference.

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SECTION ONE: Purpose of the Guidebook

Advocacy is an ongoing process that requires thoughtful, organized planning directed towards achieving identified goals. *Advocating for Exceptionally Gifted Young People: A Guidebook* is specifically designed for parents interested in addressing the needs of their exceptionally gifted children. Ideally, it is to be used as an organizational tool and informational guide to building a strong foundation for parent advocacy efforts. This text was created largely in response to requests from parents for a guide that synthesizes many of the available advocacy resources and applies the information to addressing the needs of exceptionally gifted young people.

The purpose of this guidebook is to empower parents in the advocacy process, which is consistent with the mission of the Davidson Institute for Talent Development: "to recognize, nurture, and support profoundly intelligent young people and to provide opportunities for them to develop their talents to make a positive difference." Educational advocacy on behalf of exceptionally bright young people is an important aspect of accomplishing this mission.

Anticipated Outcomes

While the main goal of advocacy is appropriate educational placement, related goals include meeting the young person's social, emotional, and interest-based needs. An essential component of effective educational advocacy is recognizing what you hope to achieve as a result of your efforts. We created this guidebook in accordance with the following anticipated outcomes for parents and students:

- Identification of individual goals
- Greater awareness of viable options and resources
- Better understanding of the systems that impact the education and development of profoundly intelligent young people
- Development of effective communication strategies
- An increased sense of empowerment to make a positive difference for exceptionally gifted young people and those who strive to address their needs

Organization and Use of this Guidebook

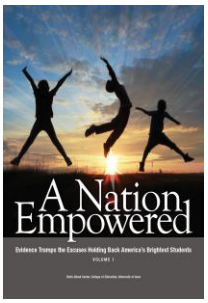
The information included in this guidebook is presented in a series of steps to prepare you for effective advocacy efforts. *Advocating for Exceptionally Gifted Young People: A Guidebook* is organized in sections that may be read sequentially or independently. This guide, used in conjunction with the supplemental materials listed below, is intended to be a thorough orientation to advocating for exceptionally gifted young people. You will find links to key articles followed by a summary and points to ponder once you have read the articles referenced. This is also the case for the required readings listed below. Additional advocacy articles are available in the Davidson Institute's online searchable database, the Davidson Gifted Database.

The references in this guidebook represent text and web-based resources most frequently consulted by Davidson Institute team members for use in educational advocacy efforts on behalf of young people enrolled in the Davidson Young Scholars program.

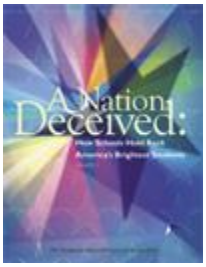
Resources

In order for this guidebook to be optimally effective, we strongly recommend that you obtain a copy of the following texts and consider obtaining copies of the additional texts listed as they relate to your educational advocacy needs.

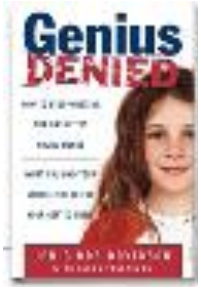
Required readings for optimal use of this guidebook



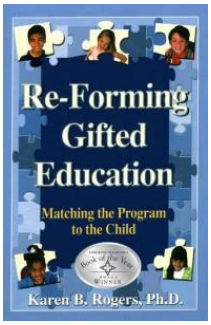
Assouline, S., Colangelo, N., VanTassel-Baska, J. & Lupkowski-Shoplik, A. (2015). *A nation empowered: Evidence trumps the excuses that hold back America's brightest students.* Iowa City, IA: The University of Iowa.
A Nation Empowered information in the Davidson Gifted Database
http://www.accelerationinstitute.org/Nation_Empowered/Default.aspx



Colangelo, N., Assouline, S., & Gross, M. (2004). *A nation deceived: How schools hold back America's brightest students, Vol. I & Vol. II.* Iowa City, IA: The University of Iowa.
Book review of A Nation Deceived available in the Davidson Gifted Database
http://www.accelerationinstitute.org/nation_deceived/



Davidson, J., Davidson, B., & Vanderkam, L. (2004). *Genius denied: How to stop wasting our brightest young minds.* New York: Simon & Schuster.
Reviews of Genius Denied and excerpts available at www.GeniusDenied.com



Rogers, K.B. (2001). *Re-forming gifted education: How parents and teachers can match the program to the child*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.
Book review of Re-Forming Gifted Education available in the Davidson Gifted Database
http://www.greatpotentialpress.com/re-forming-gifted-education

Recommended readings for supplementary use

Assouline, S., Colangelo, N., Lupkowski-Shoplik, A., Forstadt, L., & Lipscomb, J. (2009). *Iowa acceleration scale manual, 3rd edition: A guide for whole-grade acceleration K-8.* Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.

Assouline, S., & Lupkowski-Shoplik, A. (2011). *Developing math talent: A comprehensive guide to math education for gifted students in elementary and middle school, 2nd ed.* Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

California Association for the Gifted. (1996). *Advocacy in action: An advocacy guidebook for gifted and talented education:* Author.

Davidson Institute for Talent Development. *Twelve cost effective educational options for serving gifted student:* Author.

Fisher, R., Ury, W., & Patton, B. (2011). *Getting to yes: Negotiating agreement without giving in.* New York: Penguin.

Galbraith, J., & Delisle, J. (2011). *The gifted teen survival guide: smart, sharp, and ready for (almost) anything, 4th ed.* Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

Gifted Child Quarterly, Vol. 47 (1). (2003).

Karnes, F.A., & Marquardt, R.G. (1991). *Gifted children and the law: Mediation, due process and court cases*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.

Karnes, F.A., & Marquardt, R.G. (1991). *Gifted children and legal issues in education: Parents' stories of hope*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.

Karnes, F.A., & Marquardt, R.G. (2000). *Gifted children and legal issues: An update*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.

Ruf, D. (2009). *5 Levels of gifted: School issues and educational options*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.

Wiskow, K., Fowler, V.D., & Christopher, M.M. (2011). Active advocacy: Working together for appropriate services for gifted learners. *Gifted Child Today, Vol. 34* (2).

Share Your Experiences

Do you have educational advocacy experiences to share? Please provide information regarding advocacy tips and successes you have experienced so that we may include them on our website. This is a great way to make a positive difference for these remarkable young people! Additionally, we welcome your thoughts and comments on how we may improve this guidebook and our services. Please contact us at info@davidsongifted.org.

SECTION TWO: Orientation to Advocacy

Educational advocacy on behalf of exceptionally gifted young people is the process of requesting resources or services, as well as influencing policies and procedures, that impact the availability of developmentally appropriate educational opportunities. This process challenges the basic notion of age-based education, as the vast majority of exceptionally gifted young people are markedly different from their age mates in terms of intellectual and social-emotional development.

Educational advocacy is an *active* process with many potential outcomes. It involves accumulating relevant information and developing a flexible plan. Compromise is inherent in the process, as is the need for excellent communication skills. Effective advocacy, while involving drive and passion, must also involve fact and reason. Advocacy efforts become unproductive when parties involved remain more committed to specific positions than to the interests of the child. Rigid thinking can also lead to unnecessary challenges in the advocacy process.

The Davidson Institute team encourages parents to think in terms of *effectiveness* rather than correctness. Quite simply, this means searching for the most effective educational arrangement for your child that addresses the greatest proportion of her or his needs rather than looking for the "perfect" arrangement. When working to address the educational needs of individuals, there is no absolutely correct solution to the challenges presented. Remember, a child's schooling situation is only one part of the whole picture. Quality of life for a child depends greatly upon the relationship with the family as well. Overemphasis on achieving a "perfect" educational arrangement can have a negative impact on a family when other relationship dynamics are not adequately addressed over time. Effective advocacy involves weighing multiple options and generating creative alternatives.

This section sets the stage for the remainder of the guidebook, which is organized according to the important steps in the advocacy process identified by Dr. Osborn in *Educational Advocacy for Gifted Students*, the final article addressed in this section. The three articles in this series written by Julia Osborn, Ph.D., are referred to in this guidebook, and are presented in order of how they best relate to the advocacy process.

Assessment, Educational Issues, Advocacy: The Process of Parenting an Exceptionally Gifted Child

Author: Julia B. Osborn, Ph.D.

Source: Research commissioned by The Davidson Foundation, Spring 2001

Davidson Gifted Database Assessment, Educational Issues, Advocacy

Summary Points

- As noted by Dr. Osborn, "Parents go through several processes as they try to understand their child, to plan for the child's education and to advocate for an appropriate education." The three articles in this series discuss these processes more in depth.
- Advocacy is for the child, not for the educational plan.
- Advocacy is a long process. Parents should take time to weigh options and determine the best course of action for their child.
- Flexibility is required to achieve desired results. Over time, an educational plan must be expected to change in order to address the needs of the child.

Points to Ponder

- What information do I already have regarding my child? (This should include assessments, tests, and professional evaluations of the child.)
- Have I reviewed information from other parents, researchers, and professionals such as research articles, books or newsletters?
- Would I benefit from joining a support group or online groups?

Issues in Educating Exceptionally Gifted Students

Author: Julia B. Osborn, Ph.D.

Source: Research commissioned by The Davidson Foundation, Spring 2001

Davidson Gifted Database Issues in Educating Exceptionally Gifted Students

Summary Points

- Common educational and social stereotypes about the profoundly intelligent population include:
    - Grade or subject acceleration is harmful.

    - The best educational goal for this population is radical acceleration and early college entrance.
    - If gifted students are well-balanced, engaged, productive, and happy, then *exceptionally* gifted students should be even more well-balanced, engaged, productive, and happy.
    - Extreme intellectual ability *always* means extreme emotions, inappropriate behavior and inability to enjoy childhood.
- Educational issues and potential options include:
    - ***Reading***
        - Seek out suggested reading recommendations from other trusted adults
    - ***Writing***
        - Understand the origin of your child's writing difficulties and investigate options such as those listed in the article.
    - ***Mathematics***
        - Be leery of repetition and slow-paced instruction.
    - ***Friendships***
        - An optimal educational experience often includes a combination of intellectually challenging curriculum and positive experiences with peers.

Points to Ponder

- ***Reading***
    - What has been the most significant issue for your child in the area of reading?
    - *Re-Forming Gifted Education* has significant lists of reading materials appropriate for gifted children. Please see pages 346-347, 356-360, 374.
        - Visit the Davidson Gifted Database for reading materials recommended by profoundly intelligent young people and their parents - Fiction Book List and Non-Fiction Book List
- ***Writing***
    - What has been the most significant issue for your child in the area of writing?
    - Visit the Davidson Gifted Database for writing Articles and Resources
- ***Mathematics***
    - What has been the most significant issue for your child in the area of mathematics?
    - Read or review *Developing Math Talent*
    - Visit the Davidson Gifted Database for math Articles and Resources
- ***Friendships***
    - What has been the most significant issue for your child in establishing friendships?
    - Visit the Davidson Gifted Database for peer relations Articles and Resources; as well as Summer Programs and Saturday Programs specifically designed for profoundly intelligent children

Bringing it All Together

Rank each of the following in order of importance for your child's advocacy needs.

Reading	❑ Very Important	❑ Important	❑ Slightly Important	❑ Not Important
Writing	❑ Very Important	❑ Important	❑ Slightly Important	❑ Not Important
Mathematics	❑ Very Important	❑ Important	❑ Slightly Important	❑ Not Important
Friendships	❑ Very Important	❑ Important	❑ Slightly Important	❑ Not Important

Of these four areas, which has been most significant in your advocacy efforts to date?

What changes would you like to see in each of these areas?

Reading	
Writing	
Mathematics	
Friendships	

What other areas related to your child's educational arrangement would you like to see changed?

What additional resources do you believe would be helpful in reaching these identified goals?

***Re-Forming Gifted Education*, Chapter 1: "Who Needs an Educational Plan, and Who Makes It"**

Author: Karen Rogers, Ph.D.

Source: Great Potential Press http://www.greatpotentialpress.com/re-forming-gifted-education

Davidson Gifted Database Re-Forming Gifted Education

Summary Points

- Development of an educational plan is the cornerstone of educational advocacy.
- Detailed and organized objective information is essential for effective advocacy efforts on behalf of your child.
- Professional educators often do not have knowledge of or experience with the learning styles of exceptionally gifted children.
- Similarly, they often are not familiar with methods to appropriately challenge such bright young people.
- If, as compared to age-mates, your child's abilities are comparatively rare, develop considerably earlier, and are significantly more advanced, an educational plan is needed to foster development of her/his talents.
- A formal educational plan is necessary because "if a child is exceptional, that child needs exceptions to the ordinary program" (p. 8).
- Rogers identifies critical periods for development and implementation of a child's educational plan: before entering kindergarten or primary grades, intermediate grades, middle school, high school, and college.
- Behavior challenges may occur in relation to inappropriate educational placement. A qualified psychologist familiar with gifted children should evaluate such challenges in order to determine whether learning disabilities or other conditions are contributing factors.
- The options presented in Rogers' book are designed to be inexpensive in terms of time and money required by schools.
- Research-based traits of teachers that are most effective in working with gifted children include (pp. 10-13):
    - High degree of intelligence
    - High degree of intellectual honesty
    - Expertise in a specific academic area
    - A genuine interest in and liking of gifted learners
    - Recognition of the importance of intellectual development
    - Strong belief in individual differences and individualization
    - Highly developed teaching skill and knowledge of how to teach

    - Self-directed in their own learning, with a love for new, advanced knowledge
    - Level-headed and emotionally stable
- Gifted children tend to value the following behaviors by teachers (pp. 13-14):
    - Being patient
    - Having a sense of humor
    - Moving quickly through learning material
    - Treating each person as an individual
    - Allowing others' opinions to be heard
    - Consistently giving "accurate" feedback
- Remember that you know your child best.

Points to Ponder

- Do I have detailed and organized information for developing an appropriate educational plan for my child?
- Are there additional people who may be of assistance in implementing an educational plan for my child, some of whom I may not yet have experienced?
- At this time, what am I most concerned about in regards to my child's educational arrangements?
- What do I anticipate being most concerned about in the next two years in regards to my child's educational arrangements?
- As a wish list, what would I like to see as essential components of an educational plan for my child?

Educational Advocacy for Gifted Students

Author: Julia B. Osborn, Ph.D.

Source: Research commissioned by The Davidson Foundation, Spring 2001

Davidson Gifted Database Educational Advocacy

Summary Points

- Parents should be flexible and develop alternative plans when original advocacy plans are unsuccessful.
- Educators and administrators may not have sufficient experience with gifted children and therefore respond negatively to the use of the "gifted" label by parents
- In many cases, educators and administrators are likely to respond more favorably to objective measures of achievement accompanied by additional evidence of precocity, such as materials presented in a portfolio format. Further elaboration on assessments will be the focus of the next section of this guidebook.
- Key behaviors of successful parent advocates:
    - Approach schools respectfully
    - Avoid feelings of entitlement
    - Allow the open exchange of information between school officials, administrators and educators
    - Be patient
    - Be honest about the child and forthcoming about the child's strengths *and* weaknesses
    - Seek collaboration with the school
- Important Steps in the Advocacy Process
    - Obtain an evaluation
        - These scores and notes become important documents on which to base requests.
        - Evaluations should be made using measurement instruments the school is likely to recognize, respect and understand.
    - Read extensively
        - Read and understand current research.
        - Learn about different education options or how other schools have educated children at a similar level. Know how these other programs have worked.
    - Study the school's structure.
        - Become familiar with policies and programs.
        - Identify key decision-makers and their educational point of view.

- Formulate a tentative plan
  - Create general goals and consider alternative plans.
  - Think of possible objections and develop other options in response.
- Request planning meetings
  - Follow the chain of command within the school; most often it is best to start with the teacher.
  - Request the presence of those who will implement plans within the classroom (aides, teachers etc.).
- Generate a paper trail
  - Request, acknowledge and summarize all meetings in writing.
  - During meetings, record topics discussed, action items agreed upon and items for further discussion.
  - Follow up with thank you letters or notes.

- Educational advocacy is an ongoing process that requires flexibility on the part of all parties involved in order to successfully address the needs of your child.

Points to Ponder

- Am I approaching the school in a spirit of collaboration?
- Are my educational goals general or specific?
- How flexible am I willing to be with my child's education? What are other options not included in my educational plan?
- How flexible are the school administrators and educators? Do I know of key administrators who are willing to take risks?
- Am I encouraging open lines of communication with school administrators, teachers, and myself? Are there open lines of communication between the school and outside professionals?
- Who else should be involved with planning meetings? Will the educators instrumental in classroom implementation invited to the meetings?
- Are there any gaps in my factual information about my child's precocity?
- What are some other educational options being used within the state? (Section Five of this guidebook discusses federal, state and local policies. For information on your state's gifted education policies, see the State Policy Database.)

Communicating & Negotiating

Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving In

Author: Roger Fisher, William Ury, Bruce Patton
Source: Penguin USA

Davidson Gifted Database Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving In

Summary points:

- Successful advocates require effective communication and negotiation skills.
- "Principled negotiation," a method described by the authors, guides advocates to focus on underlying interests, rather than positions, through:
    - Separating the people from the problem.
    - Focusing on interests, not positions.
    - Generating a variety of options before making decisions.
    - Insisting that the result be based on some objective criteria.

Points to Ponder:

- How can I improve my negotiation skills?
- When did I experience success in making a request? What communication skills did I use?
- Are there communication tactics I tend to use that may be counterproductive?
- Do I have my child's best interests at heart? Is it possible that I'm trying to "make a statement" with the school?

Additional Suggested Readings

Visit the Davidson Gifted Database for advocacy Articles and Resources. Below are additional suggested readings on Advocacy.

Tips for Parents: Advocacy - Working with Your Child's School
Advocacy for Gifted Students
Educational Advocacy for Gifted Students: Tips for Parents
How to Advocate for Your Child
Preparing for and Holding an Effective School Meeting
Supporting Gifted Education through Advocacy
Communicating Effectively with Your Gifted Child's School

SECTION THREE: Step One – Assessment

Now that you have completed the orientation section of this guidebook, you are ready to initiate the steps in the educational advocacy process as delineated by Julia Osborn, Ph.D. The diverse information presented in this section is designed to empower parents to approach the assessment process in a proactive manner. Simply knowing that your child is gifted or talented is not enough to influence educators and administrators to address your child's needs. A thorough assessment conducted by an experienced professional should include parent reports of developmental history as well as a summary of the child's interests and observed abilities.

Various professional opinions are represented in the context of this section. Assessment data ranges from informal observations to formal testing of children across numerous domains. The articles and book chapters selected to assist you in this important advocacy step represent a broad sample of the available literature on the topic of assessment of gifted children. Additional Articles and Resources on assessment are available in the Davidson Gifted Database, including information for achievement testing and intelligence testing.

Recommended readings include the *Iowa Acceleration Scale Manual, 3rd Edition* and *Developing Math Talent*. These texts contain information specific to acceleration in general, as well as specific diagnostic testing.

Assessing Gifted Children

Author: Julia B. Osborn, Ph.D.
Source: Understanding Our Gifted, 10(2), pp. 9-12, Winter, 1998

Davidson Gifted Database Assessing Gifted Children

Summary Points

- There is a difference between testing and assessment.
- Two basic assessment strategies that take the age of the child into account include:
    - Out-of-level testing, and
    - The identification of behaviors and skills, through observation and interview, that older and/or other gifted children exhibit.
- Any professional who is assessing your child should complete a developmental history.

- When speaking to a professional for the first time, parents should feel free to share that their child may be gifted. This opens the door for honesty regarding the child's developmental and behavioral history.
- Individual intelligence tests are often useful but are not considered sufficient information for development of an educational plan.
- The rapport between the child and the professional conducting the assessment can have a significant impact on the results. Dr. Osborn describes positive ways of interacting with children in the context of assessment while remaining consistent with standardized test administration procedures.
- As noted by Dr. Osborn, "…no assessment is complete until some meaningful changes have taken place in the daily life of the child; however, it is often the parents who must see to it that those changes take place."

Points to Ponder

- What are my goals in having my child assessed? What do I hope to learn from the evaluation?
- What are the tests with which my school is familiar?
- Have I located a professional whose approach seems reasonable and well-informed? Do I feel my child will be comfortable with this tester?
- Do I have a collection of information, such as report forms and checklists, available for the professional to build a developmental history?

A Place to Start: Is My Child Gifted?

Compiled by the Davidson Institute for Talent Development
Source: Davidson Institute for Talent Development, 2004

Davidson Gifted Database A Place to Start: Is My Child Gifted?

Summary Points

- The experts consulted for this article cite school placement and educational programming as key reasons for having a child assessed.
- Testing is generally believed to be most reliable when administered to children between six and nine years of age.
- Many professionals feel it is not necessary to test before the child is ready to enter school. Testing at an earlier age may produce unreliable results.

- IQ tests were not developed to effectively identify individuals at the extremes of the intellectual continuum. Given this, experts recommend using a variety of tests or test sections to get the best combination of skills assessments.
- Several experts recommend the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) for children who top out on individually administered intelligence tests.
- When identifying an appropriate professional to assess your child, the kinds of questions to ask include:
    - What are the professional's training, credentials, and background?
    - How much experience does the professional have with testing gifted children?
    - How does this professional decide on which tests to use?
    - How much information is needed regarding the child's previous testing?
    - How should you best prepare your child?
    - Based on the assessment, what are the professional's suggestions for meeting the child's educational needs. Is the professional available to explain the test results to the school officials, if necessary?
    - Will the professional provide a full report summary, including suggestions and resources? Will this person schedule a meeting to explain and interpret the report for you?

Points to Ponder

- Is my child within the most appropriate testing age range?
- Have I explored which test options which may be best based on my goals and my child?
- Am I familiar with other test options?
- Can I afford an assessment?
- Am I willing to interview more than one professional?
- Do I have a list of questions, and do I feel comfortable asking them?

***Re-Forming Gifted Education*, Chapter 3: "What Else Do You Need to Know About Your Gifted Child?"**

Author: Karen Rogers, Ph.D.

Source: Great Potential Press http://www.greatpotentialpress.com/re-forming-gifted-education

Davidson Gifted Database Re-Forming Gifted Education

Summary Points

- As a parent, you need to be able to provide information supporting your assertion that you believe your child is gifted or talented.

- Concise, well-organized information is much more useful than a large volume of anecdotal information.
- Effective educational planning needs to be supported by information in the following five areas:
    - Cognitive functioning
    - Learning strengths
    - Personality characteristics
    - Learning preferences
    - Personal interests
- Rogers also recommends that creating a comprehensive listing of:
    - Books read by your child
    - Enrichment activities
- Cognitive functioning refers to the how a person thinks, how he/she solves problems, how intelligent he/she is, how he/she engages in problem solving, and the speed with which he/she understands new information. Cognitive functioning is best conveyed by a combination of subjective and objective measures.
- Learning strengths information is addressed in a number of ways, including:
    - Out-of-level testing
    - Individual achievement test administration
    - Teacher Inventory of Learning Strengths (TILS) form provided in Appendix A (p. 451).
- Personality characteristics and traits can be assessed through use of the TILS and Parent Inventory for Finding Potential (PIP) forms, as well as interests and attitudes inventories included in Appendix A.
- Learning preferences can be assessed by using the "How do You Like to Learn?" questionnaire available in Appendix A (p. 466).
- Your child's personal interests can be assessed by using the interests and attitudes inventories as well as the Rogers' Interest Inventory (RII) included in Appendix A (p. 473).
- The Data Collector form in Appendix A (p. 481) can be used to summarize your findings in the five areas highlighted in this chapter. Space is included for comments and concerns regarding the information you have collected.
- "It is critical to try to describe the whole child in order to develop the 'best' plan." (p. 72).

Points to Ponder

- Have I developed comprehensive documentation of my child's abilities?
- Is this documentation well organized to present to educators?
- Does my documentation include the five areas needed for educational planning, listed above?
- Have I gathered information on my child that is measurable and observable?
- What are my child's greatest strengths and interests?

This chapter of Karen Rogers' book concludes the assessment section of this guidebook. The forms made available as supplementary materials in Appendix A of Roger's book are likely to serve as valuable supports for any assessments you obtain from professionals. This combined information will provide you with a diversified presentation of your child's educational needs that allows you to knowledgeably consider the research-based options discussed in subsequent chapters. The information presented in the next several chapters of *Re-Forming Gifted Education* is consistent with the next step in the educational advocacy process, in which Dr. Osborn recommends that parents "read extensively."

Additional Suggested Readings

Visit the Davidson Gifted Database for Resources and Articles on talent searches, which offer out-of-level testing opportunities.

Developing Math Talent includes a thorough explanation of talent searches for elementary students.

SECTION FOUR: Step Two – Read Extensively

This section of the guidebook provides you the opportunity to read extensively about the educational options that may be appropriate for your child. This is an important next step in the educational advocacy process. We recognize that there is a lot of information here, but reading extensively is vital to successful advocacy. As mentioned in the initial section of this guidebook, many educators and administrators are not familiar with the needs of exceptionally gifted children, nor are they highly experienced in how to address them in an educational setting. This can be a challenge, as we know one of the potential pitfalls of advocating for your child involves appearing disrespectful of those you are interested in negotiating with throughout this process.

Advocating frequently involves educating. You can expect to have some role in educating the educators who will be working with your child. Ideally, these will be flexible open-minded individuals who express interest in working with you to address your child's needs. Unfortunately, it is unlikely that you will be able to obtain a perfect educational arrangement. However, utilizing the negotiation skills you have learned, you can present an educational plan backed by existing research that includes thoughtful and reasonable provisions consistent with your child's interests and abilities.

The Davidson Institute team recommends that you make a point of reading each of the *Re-Forming Gifted Education* chapters referred to in this section of the guidebook. We also recommend that you access the following resources as they relate to educational options you are considering.

Developing Math Talent: A Comprehensive Guide to Math Education for Gifted Students in Elementary and Middle School, 2nd ed. is highly recommended for all parent advocates, as the chapters on advocacy and educational assessment are informative and broadly relevant. For parents whose children have more specialized interest in mathematics, this text is essential. The Diagnostic Testing → Prescriptive Instruction model provides step-by-step recommendations for effectively addressing the mathematical needs of children who are talented in this area.

Genius Denied: How to Stop Wasting Our Brightest Young Minds is a valuable tool for your advocacy efforts. Packed with relevant case examples, the book addresses the need to examine and improve educational options for all students. Rather than just describing the problem, the authors outline potential solutions. The chapter on "What You Can Do" provides empowering suggestions for making positive change. This information is supported by the Genius Denied website (www.GeniusDenied.com) and the free, online Davidson Gifted Database (www.DavidsonGifted.org/DB), which includes state policies and contacts, relevant articles and resources. On the Genius Denied website, you can find excerpts of the text, reviews of the text, and book discussion questions.

Iowa Acceleration Scale: A Guide for Whole Grade Acceleration K-8, 3rd ed.: This manual is an essential tool for any parent or educator considering whole grade acceleration. A portion of the manual, "Relevant Educational and Psychological Research" is available in the Davidson Gifted Database.

A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America's Brightest Students, Vol. I & II, otherwise known as the Templeton National Report on Acceleration, is a comprehensive report for parents and educators and can be downloaded at http://www.accelerationinstitute.org/Nation_Deceived/Get_Report.aspx. These volumes summarize the significant research base that supports acceleration as "the most effective curriculum intervention for gifted children," (p. 15). In addition to 12 reasons why acceleration isn't readily accepted in America, the report provides responses to help overcome such misinformation. A wealth of resources for parents and educators completes Volume I, whereas Volume II serves as a summary and how-to guide for acceleration. Each chapter is written by experts in gifted education, making this volume a veritable "who's who" in gifted education and acceleration research. "Research Highlights from the Templeton National Acceleration Report" are available in the Davidson Gifted Database.

***Re-Forming Gifted Education*, Chapter 5: "Subject Acceleration: Which Option Matches Which Child Best at What Age?"**

Author: Karen Rogers, Ph.D.

Source: Great Potential Press http://www.greatpotentialpress.com/re-forming-gifted-education

Davidson Gifted Database Re-Forming Gifted Education

Summary Points

- When considering educational options that involve a change for your child, a list of potential pros and cons can be of great assistance in the decision process.
- A subject-based acceleration option is defined as "any option that allows a gifted student to gain exposure to advanced content and skills beyond the average curriculum standards that are expected for a certain age or grade level" (p. 109).
- Subject-based acceleration options presented include (pp. 109-110):
    - Compacting curriculum
    - Single-subject acceleration
    - Concurrent enrollment
    - Talent search programs
    - Correspondence courses
    - Independent study

    - Distance learning
    - Advanced placement courses
    - International Baccalaureate Program
    - College credit-in-the-school programs
    - Mentorships
    - Post-secondary options
- Research findings are used to indicate the appropriateness of each of these options by identifying aspects of cognitive functioning, personal characteristics, learning preferences, and interests that are particularly compatible with each of the individual options presented in the text.
- Ideas for monitoring the success of each of the options are also included.

Points to Ponder

- Is subject acceleration an option for my child?
- Have I created a pros and cons list?
- How might such an acceleration affect my family's quality of life?
- How will my child's success with acceleration be monitored? Have the anticipated outcomes been identified?

***Re-Forming Gifted Education*, Chapter 6: "Grade-Based Acceleration: Which Option Matches Which Child Best at What Age?"**

Author: Karen Rogers, Ph.D.

Source: Great Potential Press http://www.greatpotentialpress.com/re-forming-gifted-education

Davidson Gifted Database Re-Forming Gifted Education

Summary Points

- As with subject-based acceleration, a listing of potential pros and cons of any grade-based acceleration options is an effective way to determine goodness of fit for an individual child.
- Grade-based acceleration is defined as "any option that shortens the number of years a child spends in mastering the K-12 curriculum" (pp. 165-166).
- Reasons to consider these options include the fact that they are more likely to allow exceptionally gifted children to be academically challenged by increasing the level and pace of learning.
- Grade-based acceleration options include (p. 166**)**:
    - Early entrance to kindergarten or 1st grade
    - Grade-skipping

    - Non-graded classes
    - Multi-grade classes
    - Grade telescoping
    - Credit for prior learning/testing out
    - Early admission to college
- Grade-based acceleration options are followed by a summary of relevant research, characteristics of appropriate candidates for this type of acceleration, and ideas for monitoring the success of the arrangement.

Points to Ponder

- What options are currently offered at my child's school?
- Would any of these options be appropriate for my child?
- Are there grade-based acceleration options that I feel might fit my child that are not currently offered?
- Why do I believe the specific options I've come up with would be appropriate for my child? What are the pros and cons of each option identified?
- Have I reviewed the information available in the Iowa Acceleration Scale Manual? Does my child have a copy of this manual? How can I best use this information?

***Re-Forming Gifted Education*, Chapter 7: "Program Provisions (Grouping) within the School"**

Author: Karen Rogers, Ph.D.

Source: Great Potential Press http://www.greatpotentialpress.com/re-forming-gifted-education

Davidson Gifted Database Re-Forming Gifted Education

Summary Points

- There are a number of arguments in the literature both for and against ability or performance-based grouping.
- Forms of grouping include (p. 209):
    - Small group options
        - Pull-out gifted groups
        - Cluster grouping
        - Ability grouping for specific subjects
        - Within-class ability/achievement level grouping
        - Like-ability cooperative grouping

        - Peer tutoring dyads
        - Cross-grade grouping by achievement level
        - Mixed-ability cooperative grouping (the “default” option or the regular classroom)
    - Whole class options
        - Full-time ability classes or “tracks”
            - Special schools for the gifted
            - Full-time gifted programs or classes
            - School-within-a-school
        - Untracked whole class instruction (the “default” option or the regular classroom)
- Appropriate candidates for each option are identified according to cognitive functioning, personal characteristics, learning preferences, and interests that are most likely to be associated with success in each of these options.
- Rogers has organized the extensive supporting information in this chapter into Table 7.6, “School Instructional Management Provisions and their Impact on Gifted Students” (pp. 251-257). Each form of grouping listed is accompanied by information regarding the academic, social, and emotional benefits associated with it, based on existing research. In addition, she has included the resources required by the school in order to implement each option.
- Research indicates that for gifted and talented students, cluster grouping should be considered as an option, curriculum matters, pull-out programs and within-class grouping are not enough, enrichment is usually inadequate, dyads should not be relied upon as a primary option, mixed-ability cooperative learning is only appropriate in certain situations, and parents should be cautious in accepting whole class instruction as an option (pp. 259-260).
- Table 7.7, “When They Say…, What Will You Say?” (p. 261) provides an opportunity to craft responses to comments frequently made by individuals who are unfamiliar with the research regarding grouping options. This is followed by Table 7.8, “What You Might Say…Possible Responses” (pp. 262-265). Suggested responses focus on the research findings discussed throughout this chapter.
- Steps for teachers are presented at the close of the chapter to assist in identifying children who may benefit from enrichment options and implementing such options.

Points to Ponder

- Am I able to clearly explain and support the type of ability grouping my child needs?
- What options am I willing to accept or build upon? Are there options I feel would be inappropriate for my child?
- Am I prepared to address questions and concerns that adhere to stereotypes and myths about profoundly intelligent young people?

<u>Re-Forming Gifted Education</u>, Chapter 8: "More Program Provisions in School"

Author: Karen Rogers, Ph.D.

Source: Great Potential Press http://www.greatpotentialpress.com/re-forming-gifted-education

Davidson Gifted Database Re-Forming Gifted Education

Summary Points

- Enrichment options for gifted children include concept development, extension of the breadth and depth of curriculum, and exposure to other curriculum outside that which is addressed in the regular classroom
- Table 8.1 (pp. 274-276) lists the essentials for a positive school experience. Gifted students typically require more individualized learning experiences as well as increased opportunities to explore topics of interest in depth. Development of critical thinking skills and interdisciplinary connections are other examples of the many essentials listed.
- Numerous instructional delivery options for gifted and talented students are discussed, including:
    - Projects and self-direction
    - Mentoring
    - Tutoring
    - Pacing and time telescoping
    - Creative thinking skills
    - Inquiry and discovery
    - Academic and talent competitions
- Table 8.2 (pp. 290-299) contains a listing of academic competitions available to students.
- Rogers discusses provisions for content and curriculum modifications that promote multidisciplinary learning and the creation of a qualitatively different curriculum.
- Affective curriculum focuses on healthy emotional development. Offering opportunities to learn about social relationships and the experience and expression of emotions is likely to continue to have benefit for a child as she/he progresses through childhood and adolescence, and even into adulthood.
- The "Yearly Educational Planner" (p. 483) is presented for your use and will be addressed in subsequent chapters.

Points to Ponder

- What enrichment opportunities have been offered to my child in the past? Which have been most effective?
- How flexible is my child's current school in regards to enrichment?

- Is my child able to advocate for his/her own enrichment?
- Do I have the information needed to complete the “Yearly Educational Planner”?
- How will I utilize the “Yearly Educational Planner”?

Additional suggested readings on Educational Options

Basic Educational Options for Gifted Students in Schools
Best Practices of Schools that Nurture Excellence
Genius Denied Website: Getting Started for Educators
Individual Instruction Plan Menu for the Gifted Child
Successful Strategies for Teaching Gifted Learners

Summary

Reading extensively about educational options and relevant research can be an arduous process. However, it is a crucial, although frequently overlooked, step in the process of educational advocacy. This section was designed to help guide parents’ reading by facilitating the use of *Re-Forming Gifted Education* as an effective tool. Rogers’ book was selected as a cornerstone for this important advocacy step because it synthesizes relevant research regarding the appropriateness of educational options for gifted and talented children.

Other information on educational options and resources can be accessed in the Davidson Gifted Database. Many of the summer camps, competitions, programs, and books listed in the chapters from Rogers’ book can be located in the Davidson Gifted Database and are accompanied by comments from other parents of exceptionally gifted young people. Significant additions have been made since Roger’s book was published in 2001. We encourage you to contribute resources and comments as well.

At this point, you should have a good idea of educational provisions that may be appropriate for your child and have these drafted into a yearly educational plan form (example available in Appendix A of *Re-Forming Gifted Education*). We will focus more on the development of this plan in Section Six of this guidebook.

SECTION FIVE: Step Three – Study Policies and Procedures

It is imperative that parents advocating for exceptionally gifted young people become familiar with the policies and procedures that impact gifted education, ranging from awareness of federal initiatives to the positions of individual decision-makers at the school level. This section will address each of the following levels that impact the education of your exceptionally gifted child.

- Federal
- State
- Local/District
- School
- Classroom(s)

Federal and State Initiatives

The Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Act is the only federal initiative dealing specifically with gifted education. As stated on the federal government website for this legislation at http://www2.ed.gov/programs/javits/legislation.html, "To support the development of gifted and talented students in the United States, the U.S. Congress reauthorized the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act as Title V, Part D, Subpart 6 of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. This legislation reauthorizes the U.S. Department of Education to fund grants, provide leadership, and sponsor a national research center on the education of gifted and talented students." The text of this initiative is available at http://www2.ed.gov/programs/javits/index.html; and you may be interested in exploring federal gifted education policies further.

Three publications, *A Nation Empowered*, *A Nation Deceived* and *Genius Denied*, describe the nation's lack of attention to the needs of gifted students. Federal support for gifted and talented education has fluctuated over time and continues to be inconsistent in application. While numerous research studies recognize gifted students' need for special provisions beyond the regular classroom curriculum, it is up to individual states to determine how to address this need.

State initiatives vary widely, thus making generalizations difficult. Definitions of gifted and talented, as well as identification procedures, impact the availability of relevant programs and funding allocations. Additionally, there are often discrepancies between policies and implemented procedures. For example, a state may mandate services for gifted education, yet may not allocate funding to carry out identification procedures or programs.

According to Karnes and Marquardt (2000, p. 9), there are several key components that should be included in state initiatives regarding gifted and talented education in order to carry out effective gifted programming. The authors identified these components as:

- Definition of gifted and talented
- Provisions for non-discriminatory identification and selection
- Procedures for creating and implementing an individualized educational plan (IEP)
- Program options and related services
- Program evaluation procedures
- Procedures for resolving disputes, including mediation and due process
- Provisions for awarding diplomas and honors to students finishing high school early
- Requirements regarding availability of gifted education specialists
- Financing provisions
- Identification of responsibilities of local school districts
- Transportation provisions

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) has prepared the following publications, which define both requisite and exemplary standards for gifted education programming:

- National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) - National Programming Standards
- National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Education Programming Standards: A Guide to Planning and Implementing High-Quality Services

Information on the implementation and interpretation of gifted and talented education in your state can be obtained from the Gifted Education State Policy Database. Your state association for the gifted, as listed on the Gifted Education State Policy Database, is also a good resource for learning more about gifted education in your area. These groups typically function as sources of information to support advocacy efforts for gifted children.

We recommend becoming very familiar with the policies in your state. When reviewing the relevant policies in your state, keep the components listed above in mind, as well as the fact that interpretation of these initiatives is likely to vary at the district and school levels. Available funding and allocation of related resources are likely to impact each school's ability to implement programming. While public schools are bound to provide a free and appropriate education, this does not translate to a free and optimal education.

Local/District Policies

As mentioned previously, state initiatives may only loosely translate to practices at the local level. There may be significant variability in the procedures for identifying gifted and talented children and

implementing programs within a school district, often caused by lack of funding or necessary resources. When gifted education is under-funded, this can impact much more than the availability of programs and services. It can also have an impact on the availability of personnel to assess and educate gifted and talented children.

If your child is or will be in the public school system, we recommend that you review the district website and/or contact the gifted and talented coordinator for your district to inquire about programs and services available to identified children, as well as identification procedures. Expect possible age/grade restrictions and availability subject to enrollment and funding guidelines.

We also recommend that you work to identify influential individuals in the district who have a history of being supportive of gifted education and/or a reputation for being flexible when presented with reasonable requests to meet the special needs of children. The informal policies of the district may differ from the formal policies. Informal policies, or unwritten policies, are those that reflect what is actually done in the district. The gifted and talented coordinator for your district may be willing to share these with you, or you may locate a teacher or administrator who will discuss these. Other parents of gifted children at your local school or in your district may be helpful in guiding you to find these key educators.

School/Classroom(s)

Communicating with individual teachers or administrators who have a history of being supportive and/or who are interested in learning more about addressing the educational needs of gifted children is likely to be your greatest opportunity for effective advocacy. In our work with parents of exceptionally gifted children, we have had the greatest success in effecting change when we have communicated with open-minded, flexible teachers and administrators.

It's likely that many educators do not have experience with exceptionally gifted children. We've found that it is generally a positive sign if educators admit to this and are open to learning more. Keep in mind that the Family Consultant Team is available to work with parents and educators of Davidson Young Scholars. If your child is not currently enrolled in this program, please visit the Davidson Young Scholars website for eligibility criteria, a description of services, and application information. We may also assist educators and administrators in the context of the Davidson Educators Guild.

In educating educators about exceptionally gifted young people, you may first want to introduce them to the characteristics and needs of exceptionally gifted children, as well as the research-based educational plan you are in the process of constructing. To start, here are a few suggested readings that you may wish to share with educators:

Characteristics of Intellectually Advanced Young People

Exceptionally Gifted Children: Different Minds
Identifying Young Einsteins
The Uncommonly Bright Child
Understanding and Encouraging the Exceptionally Gifted

Engaging in positive interactions with school personnel can greatly facilitate the process of educational advocacy. Teachers and administrators are typically much more interested in working with parents who are actively involved in the school and maintain an optimistic and respectful approach. While it's certainly not the ideal, it is key to remember that you are essentially requesting a favor from your child's educators. Due to the inconsistent policies and procedures described above, it is often not required that educators meet the individual needs of these students. Teachers and administrators are generally the most important points of contact for parents. It is with these professionals that your advocacy efforts may be most successful on behalf of your individual child.

Regardless of whether your state or district have appropriate provisions for gifted and talented education, you may be able to arrange for reasonable accommodations for your child. As such, this frees you from having to rely on formal policies and procedures and opens the door for the opportunity to communicate directly with teachers and administrators who are willing to listen. Section Four of this Guidebook addresses the various options that may be appropriate for your child.

SECTION SIX: Step Four – Formulate a Tentative Plan

You will now have the opportunity to create a prospective educational plan for your child based on the information you have collected thus far. The "tentative" aspect of this plan refers to the need for flexibility. It is likely that your child is a candidate for more than one of the educational options discussed in Chapters 5 through 8 in *Re-Forming Gifted Education*. Presenting a menu of potentially well-suited options will increase the likelihood of at least some of the provisions in your child's educational plan being implemented.

***Re-Forming Gifted Education*, Chapter 10: "Developing Your Child's Plan and What Happens Next"**

Author: Karen Rogers, Ph.D.

Source: Great Potential Press http://www.greatpotentialpress.com/re-forming-gifted-education

Davidson Gifted Database Re-Forming Gifted Education

Summary Points

- The essential elements of the "Yearly Educational Planner" (p. 402) are:
  - School-based essentials:
    - Academic progress
    - Academic remediation
    - Psychological adjustment
    - Socialization
  - Domain, or the subject in which the provision will be implemented
  - How often a provision will be implemented
  - Who is responsible and how the provisions will be managed
  - Assessment
- The yearly educational plan should be proposed for one year and be revised on at least an annual basis.
- Opportunities to practice writing a plan for hypothetical case studies are made available in the text.
- The "Data Collector" (pp. 481-482) informs the creation of the yearly educational plan and should e used in conjunction with the "Yearly Educational Planner" (p. 402).
- Strategies for presenting your plan effectively are suggested

Points to Ponder

- Have I accumulated a significant amount of specific information about my child's abilities, strengths, interests, preferences, and needs?

- Has it been updated recently?
- Can I make my presentation in a clearly organized fashion in order to increase my likelihood of success?
- Does the teacher realize that I value his/her input?
- Have I followed the appropriate chain of command?

At this point, you may also wish to refer back to the required and recommended readings in Section One of this guidebook, as they may be useful for individually tailoring your child's educational plan, and/or making recommendations as an advocacy group.

SECTION SEVEN: Step Five and Step Six – Request Planning Meetings and Generate a Paper Trail

Now that you have obtained subjective and objective assessment information about your child's abilities and interests, read extensively about educational options that may be appropriate for your child, studied relevant policies and procedures, and developed a tentative plan, it is time to work on putting the plan into action.

Preparing for a School Meeting

The advocacy steps elaborated upon throughout this guidebook provide significant preparation for the content to be discussed in a school meeting. You should have a portfolio of information about your child that includes the following:

- Test scores and assessment reports that indicate level of cognitive functioning and significant abilities
- Performance records (report cards, examples of your child's work in areas in which he/she is particularly prodigious, as well as any areas in which he/she struggles)
- A summary of the concerns you have about your child's current educational arrangement supported by behavioral observations and other data (teacher reports, grades, etc.)
- Summary of requested provisions (tentative educational plan)
- Supporting information (interest inventories, articles of interest, research-based information indicating your child is an appropriate candidate for the requested accommodation(s), etc)

We recommend that you practice delivering your message prior to the actual meeting. Role-playing anticipated responses can be very helpful. Also, create an outline of the material you plan to cover during the meeting. (For parents of students in the Davidson Young Scholars program, our team of family consultants can assist with this step of the advocacy process. Also, Davidson Young Scholar parents may wish to communicate with other parents of exceptionally gifted children via the private Davidson Institute listserves for additional support and advice.)

Arranging a School Meeting

As mentioned, we recommend that you share your concerns about your child's educational arrangements with the classroom teacher and express your interest to meet with additional school personnel as needed. The teacher may be interested and willing to address your concerns but is likely to need the approval of the principal and/or a gifted and talented coordinator in order to make accommodations. Alternatively, you may be experiencing challenges with a particular teacher and need to communicate with someone at the next level in order to effect change.

After speaking with the teacher, contact the school office to find out about how to schedule a meeting with the appropriate parties. Participants in an initial meeting may vary with school policies and parent requests. An initial meeting is likely to be small, as it is an opportunity for you to share your concerns and suggestions in a venue that is not too costly to the school in terms of staff time. Additional personnel are likely to be involved in any subsequent meetings to determine the feasibility of an educational plan and who will be responsible for implementing and monitoring it. If there are two parents involved in the child's life, both should plan on attending school meetings that involve advocating for the child's needs. Both parents should be in agreement regarding options and plans before attending a meeting.

If your child's education falls under the guidelines associated an individualized educational plan (IEP) or Section 504 plan of the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act (IDEA), the school will have a team that participates in meetings to address these plans. As a parent you are allowed to attend and should attend these meetings, as it is required that you be notified in advance. For additional information on IEP and 504 plans, we suggest LD Online and Articles in the Davidson Gifted Database.

Communicating in a School Meeting

Effective communication skills are very important assets in working with the school to address your child's needs. Particularly if you are the one who initiated the meeting, plan to play an active role in the structure and flow of the meeting. It is best to appear confident without being overbearing. You can facilitate this presentation if you:

- Speak clearly and concisely
- Thank the participants for making time to meet with you
- Refer to the materials you have collected in preparation for the meeting
- Rely on facts instead of emotions
- Take notes, even if someone else is doing so
- Clarify points that are unclear by asking questions
- Summarize next steps at the close of the meeting
- Arrange a time-frame for follow-up

Follow-up After a School Meeting

Too often, parents feel that their work ends with expressing their child's needs in a school meeting. After the meeting, you have much more to do than wait to see if your efforts have made a positive difference. Advocacy is an ongoing process that continues after the meeting ends. The follow-up from one meeting is simply the preparation phase for the next. Steps to initiate include:

- Thank the participants for taking time to meet with you, even of the meeting did not go as you would have liked
- Create a summary of the points discussed and plans for follow-up
- Distribute this record to all parties involved in the meeting
- Upon completion of your follow-up tasks, send a written/electronic note that you have completed them.
- Check-in with other participants in a timely manner regarding their respective follow-up tasks

Record Keeping

Be sure to keep a record of all contacts you have with the school. You may consider keeping a log that allows you to create a record of the date and time of the contact, the method (phone, letter, email, on-site), the people involved, the issues discussed, the anticipated follow-up, and who is responsible for the follow-up. Be sure to keep copies of any correspondence. Keep these records in a central location for easy reference. This allows you to proactively generate a paper trail that can be of benefit in initiating follow-up and furthering your advocacy efforts at the next level, if needed.

Suggested Readings

In addition to other articles available in the Davidson Gifted Database that can assist you in preparing for meetings and keeping records, here are a few full-text articles that may further assist you in these activities.

Educational Advocacy for Gifted Students: Tips for Parents
How to Advocate for Your Child
Preparing for and Holding an Effective School Meeting
Supporting Gifted Education through Advocacy

SECTION EIGHT: Advocacy as an Ongoing Process

When Things Go Well

We cannot reiterate often enough that advocacy is an ongoing process. Even when you have been successful and the educational plan you have developed for your child has been implemented, your responsibilities as an advocate continue. Continued advocacy efforts will involve updating your child's yearly educational plan and maintaining records of your efforts and contacts, as well as your child's progress. This includes keeping an updated version of your child's portfolio available.

When Things Don't Go Well

Don't give up! This is your opportunity to analyze the process and determine whether alternate strategies may produce more desirable results. The paper trail you have generated can assist you in this analysis.

Sometimes, despite your best efforts, your child's educational plan will not be considered. Whether this is due to inflexible administrators, lack of funding, lack of interest, or other factors beyond your immediate control, it's important to continue considering next steps.

Advocacy at the next level may be an option, although avoidance of legal disputes, when possible, is likely to be in the best interest of you, your child, and the rest of your family.

Mediation and Due Process

These formal options are not available in all states for issues pertaining to gifted education. Where available, mediation can be conducted with parties involved in disputes over educational provisions and an appointed mediator. Preparation for such a meeting is very much like the meeting preparation discussed in Section Seven of this guidebook. We recommend that you contact your state department of education to determine whether formal mediation and/or due process is available in the context of gifted education disputes in your state.

Due process, the next level of formal conflict resolution, involves a much more rigorous process that includes a hearing and may allow an appeals process. While this level of intervention is preferable to going to court, it can still be a time-consuming and draining process.

On rare occasions, parents and school district officials seek to have disputes settled in court. In general, court cases present financial and personal burdens for families as the time involved in reaching a decision may be longer than the time a child stands to benefit from a positive resolution to the dispute.

Points to Ponder

- What has worked well for you?
- What would you have done differently?

- What is your next step to address short-term goals?
- What steps can you initiate towards long-term goals?

Additional Suggested Readings

Information to assist you in further investigating mediation, due process, and court cases is available at:

The Frances A. Karnes Center for Gifted Studies
National Association for Gifted Children

Karnes, F.A., & Marquardt, R.G. (1991). *Gifted children and the law: Mediation, due process and court cases*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press

Karnes, F.A., & Marquardt, R.G. (1991). *Gifted children and legal issues in education: Parents' stories of hope*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press

Karnes, F.A., & Marquardt, R.G. (2000). *Gifted children and legal issues: An update*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press

SECTION NINE: Developing and Maintaining Advocacy Groups

As you have likely experienced, advocacy can be a trying process! However, you don't always have to go it alone. Working with parents of other gifted students can provide a sense of community with those in similar situations and offer a support network. If a number of students would benefit, schools may also be more willing to offer accommodations and opportunities for bright students. Administrators and educators may be more open to hearing from a group of parents who are trying to share the same message, rather than just one parent. If there are not parent advocacy groups in your area, you may wish to speak with parents who may also be interested in advocating on behalf of their exceptionally bright child and begin assembling your own advocacy group.

Supporting Gifted Education through Advocacy

Author: Sandra L. Berger, M.Ed.
Source: ERIC Digest #E494

Davidson Gifted Database Supporting Gifted Education

Summary Points

- A partnership between home and the school is important in gifted education and it requires knowledge of giftedness, the needs of gifted children, and advocacy.
- Given that educational advocacy is often an arduous process, it makes sense to involve others with similar concerns whenever possible to create a division of labor and unity of purpose.
- There are many potential pitfalls in the process of advocating for your child, including:
    - Using an adversarial rather than a persuasive style
    - Assuming that people in administrative and political positions are not too bright or not very knowledgeable or both
    - Being impatient
    - Being human
- Developing a successful parent advocacy group involves an organized approach to defining the mission, values, goals, and structure of the group. There are a number of groups that end up functioning as support groups rather than advocacy groups. While support groups can certainly be helpful in addressing the challenges of raising an exceptionally gifted child, they seldom function to create desired changes in educational settings.

Points to Ponder

- Have I committed any of the pitfalls to advocacy? How can I avoid them in the future?

- Are there other parents who share my concerns? How might I contact them?
- What additional information would I want to know about other parents' concerns and methods before becoming involved in group advocacy efforts with them?

Additional Suggested Resources

Information to further assist you with developing educational advocacy groups is available at the links below:

Visit the Davidson Gifted Database for a listing of Advocacy resources and GT Associations.

Visit the Gifted Issues Discussion Forum for discussions regarding your region.

How Parent Advocacy Groups Can Make a Difference: An Interview with Christine Smith…
How Parent Advocacy Groups Can Make a Difference: An Interview with Debbie King and Juli Moseley
Highly Capable Program in the State of Washington - Q & A on Legislation and Advocacy
California Association for the Gifted - Advocacy in Action, 2nd Edition
Gifted Child Quarterly, Vol. 47 (1). (2003)
Wiskow, K., Fowler, V.D., & Christopher, M.M. (2011). Active advocacy: Working together for appropriate services for gifted learners. *Gifted Child Today, Vol. 34* (2).

In closing, we hope that the information included in this guidebook has been, and will continue to be, helpful in your ongoing educational advocacy efforts. Remember, every effort makes a difference, even if it's not immediately evident.