

Advocacy for the Gifted

Advanced Academic Services
1111 West 6th Street
Austin, Texas 78703

Fall 2005



Welcome to Another
School Year!

ADVANCED ACADEMIC SERVICES
1111 WEST 6TH STREET
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78703

GT Express

A NEWSLETTER FOR PARENTS

Welcome back! This issue focuses on issues related to advocacy. What is advocacy? Advocacy is essentially taking an active role to support an idea or cause; in this case, the gifted child. We hope you find some useful information to guide you on your journey through gifted education.



Director's Cut

The new school year has started, and parents of gifted students across AISD are once again moving into their yearly role as advocates for their sons and daughters. Now is the time to be sure that you build strong communication lines between you and your school, and enter into positive and collaborative educational partnerships with your child's teacher.

Keep in mind that you share the educational responsibilities for your child, whether through providing a quiet place at home for challenging reading selections, helping your child explore the resources of the Internet, or enriching your child through after school and Saturday learning experiences. These outside of school options that you provide, which may extend beyond academics and include social, emotional, and artistic development, will supplement the educational program offered during the school day.

The nature of our gifted education model in AISD, in which clusters of gifted students are assigned to a trained teacher who provides gifted instruction through modifications to the regular curriculum, requires an increased level of communication between the teacher and parents. It is not too early to begin asking your child's teacher how instruction will be modified to be more challenging throughout the year for your identified child, and to share how you will be supplementing that instruction. Together you will be able to accomplish much more educationally for your son or daughter than you will working in isolation.

This issue has a focus on parent advocacy. If you would be interested in broadening your advocacy role, I'd encourage you to complete the enclosed form requesting consideration to serve on the Gifted Parent Advisory Committee that we are forming. As always, we welcome your feedback, questions, suggestions, and concerns on behalf of your gifted child.

My department staff and I wish you and your gifted child a challenging and stimulation school year.

Dr. Jim Granada
Director, Advanced Academic Services

Take a Web Tour - <http://www.austinisd.org/academic/curriculum/gt/>

Our website contains information that may be of interest to you. You will find answers to frequently asked questions, publications, upcoming events, as well as organizations and resources. Our online communications are just another way of extending our invitation to you as a partner in gifted education.



Winner's Circle

Congratulations to the following individuals from our district representing Region XIII as award winners for the Texas Association for Gifted and Talented:

2005 Outstanding Parents of the Gifted—Bennett and Sharon Joiner
2005 Teacher of the Gifted—Laura Davis

Bennett and Sharon Joiner have shared the role of lead recruiters for Austin Association for Gifted and Talented (AAGT), and one or both of them have been present at numerous gifted program functions providing information about AAGT and gifted education as parents. Mrs. Joiner served for several years as the primary information dissemination contact for AAGT, and helped provide AISD with a direct link to parents regarding information on gifted education and opportunities for gifted children and their parents in the district. Both of the Joiners have gained respect within both AAGT and AISD for their willingness to ask hard questions about how the needs of gifted students were being met through a program that was sorely in need of revision five years ago, and continuing to ask the questions as the program evolved and improved. The Joiners continue to advocate for gifted children at the elementary and middle school levels, even as their gifted daughter moved beyond those levels and is pursuing high education.

Laura Davis is a 3rd grade teacher and campus GT Advocate at Kiker Elementary, a campus with a large number of identified Gifted and Talented students. She is both creative and effective in differentiating the curriculum for the gifted students in her classroom. Laura knows the importance of differentiating for academic ability and for emotional needs as well, because she understands that gifted students can experience things differently from the rest of their peers and emotional health is vital to ensure that gifted children continue to grow in all areas of their life. Ms. Davis also plans and conducts numerous GT staff developments throughout each school year to teachers in Austin ISD. Her principal has asked her to lead the campus Differentiation of Instruction Cadre and this involves working closely with the teachers at her campus in the capacity of GT trainer. Laura is also an official GT Trainer for Austin ISD and trains teachers on Saturdays and summers, something she has been doing for over three years. She is an effective presenter who enjoys sharing her passion for gifted education any way she can.

Role of the GT Advocate

Did you know that every campus has a designated GT Advocate? These individuals are trained to assist gifted students and their parents with their learning experiences. They assist teachers in planning for instruction and assessment of GT students, provide communications and support regarding gifted services to colleagues, and help their campus remain in compliance with the *Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students*.

You can find out who the advocate is on your child's campus by contacting their campus or looking online at:

[http://www.austinisd.org/
academics/curriculum/gt/contact.
phtml](http://www.austinisd.org/academics/curriculum/gt/contact.phtml)



Hide not your talents, they for use
were made.
What's a Sun-dial in the shade?
-- Benjamin Franklin

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!
Other Shades of Giftedness
Fall GT Parent Symposium
Saturday, October 1, 2005
9:00 a.m. —12:30 p.m.

Professional Development Academy
2608 Richcreek



How Can I Support My Gifted Child?

Raising and nurturing a gifted child can be an exciting yet daunting challenge. This brochure defines giftedness and offers some insight into what parents can do to act as their child's best advocate throughout the school years.

Perceptions of giftedness vary even among gifted-education specialists. Today, giftedness generally includes a wide range of attributes, from traditional intellectual measures to interpersonal abilities. Giftedness can be found in children from all cultural, linguistic, and economic groups.

The U.S. Department of Education (1995) defines *giftedness* as "children or youth who give evidence of high performance capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop such capabilities." Many states and localities use this definition or a variation. School districts use a wide variety of methods or tests to decide which children qualify for gifted programs or services. Some school districts use a definition from a specific model, such as Renzulli's Schoolwide Enrichment Model or Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences.

How Can I Encourage My Gifted Child?

Children learn first from their parents and families. Parents who spend time with their gifted child are more able to tune into their child's interests and can respond by offering appropriate enrichment opportunities. If you are the parent of a gifted child, you should:

Read aloud to your child. It is important that parents read to their gifted child often, even if the child is already capable of reading.

Help your child discover personal interests. Stimulation and support of interests are vital to the development of

talents. Parents should expose their child to their own interests and encourage the child to learn about a wide variety of subjects, such as art, nature, music, and sports, in addition to traditional academic subjects such as math, reading, and science.

Encourage the support of extended family and friends. As an infant, a gifted child can exhaust new parents because he or she often sleeps less than other babies and requires extra stimulation when awake. It can be helpful to have extended family in the home, grandparents who live nearby, or close friends in the neighborhood who can spend some time with the child so the primary caretakers can get some rest and to give the infant added -- or different -- stimulation.

Speak and listen to your child with consideration and respect. From the time he or she can talk, a gifted child is constantly asking questions and will often challenge authority. "Do it because I said so" doesn't work. Generally, a gifted child will cooperate more with parents who take the time to explain requests than with more authoritarian parents.

Conclusion

Parents of gifted children need opportunities to share parenting experiences with one another. It takes the persistence of large groups of parents to ensure that provisions for gifted children are kept firmly in place. It is important for parents of children with any special needs to meet with teachers early in the school year, work regularly with teachers, and stay both involved in their child's education and informed about gifted education in general.

The key to raising gifted children is to respect their uniqueness, their opinions and ideas, and their dreams. It can be painful for parents when their children feel out of sync with others, but it is unwise to put too much emphasis on the importance of fitting in; children get

You're invited to our GT PARENT FORUMS

Giftedness and Moral Development

November 15, 2005

6:00—7:30 p.m.

Baker Center
3908 Avenue B

Creating Family/School Partnerships to Support Your GT Child

January 31, 2006

6:00—7:30 p.m.

Baker Center
3908 Avenue B

Addressing Global and Social Issues with Your Gifted Child

March 7, 2006

6:00—7:30 p.m.

Baker Center
3908 Avenue B

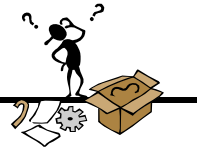
enough of that message in the outside world. At home, children need to know that they are appreciated for being themselves.



This article is excerpted from the updated version of the 1992 ERIC Digest *How Can Parents Support Gifted Children?*, written by Linda Kreger Silverman of the Gifted Child Development Center. It has been updated by Sandra Berger of the [ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education](#).

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Organizations and Resources



American Association for Gifted Children (AAGC) - Nation's oldest advocacy organization for gifted children that produces materials for the educational research community, for people in the medical profession, and for parents and teachers of gifted children.

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) - Largest international professional organization dedicated to improving educational outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities, students with disabilities, and/or the gifted. CEC advocates for appropriate governmental policies, sets professional standards, provides continual professional development, advocates for newly and historically underserved individuals with exceptionalities, and helps professionals obtain conditions and resources necessary for effective professional practice.

Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children - National support and resource network focused on the needs of highly gifted children primarily serves as a clearinghouse of information and events.

National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) - National organization of parents, teachers, administrators, and community members which exists to support gifted and talented students through publications, professional development conferences, and scholarships among other things.

The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented (NRCGT) - A collaborative effort of university staff, teachers, parents, and community members to plan, conduct, and disseminate research as it relates to gifted and talented students. An emphasis is placed on traditionally underserved populations.

Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted, Inc. (SENG) - Focuses on the unique social and emotional needs of gifted individuals, which are often misunderstood or ignored. SENNG underwrites and provides education, research, theory building, and staff development.

Educational Resources Information Center - A national information system designed to provide access to an extensive body of education-related literature. Products and services include research summaries, bibliographies, computer searches, and document reproduction.

Texas Education Agency Advanced Academics - State agency providing direction and leadership to K-12 advanced academic programs. Unit staff assists districts statewide with implementation of the *Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students*, oversees the Texas AP/IB Incentive Programs and collaborates with the Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented, The College Board, and other groups to meet the needs of gifted and academically advanced students. The Advanced Academics provides on-going communication with the field about current issues pertaining to the gifted/talented and advanced programs and policy interpretations related to the Texas Administrative Code Chapter 89 and graduation requirements in Chapter 74.

Texas Association for the Gifted & Talented (TAGT) - State organization of parents, teachers, administrators, and community members which exists to support gifted and talented students through publications, professional development conferences, and scholarships among other things.

Austin Association for the Gifted and Talented (AAGT) - Austin G/T parent advocacy group which provides information and opportunities to parents regarding their gifted children.

Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students - Document is the basis of program accountability for gifted and talented as well as a guide for the improvement of services.



About Us . . .

The Department of Advanced Academic Services in Austin ISD provides support and services for numerous programs and events, including the following:

- Gifted and Talented Program
- Advanced Placement
- Pre-Advanced Placement
- International Baccalaureate Diploma Program
- International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program
- Academic Magnets
- Project SOS: Supporting Optimal Scholarship
- Future Problem Solving

Department of Advanced Academic Services

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------|
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We're on the Web!
[http://www.austinisd.org/academic/
curriculum/gt/](http://www.austinisd.org/academic/curriculum/gt/)