



# Affiliate Handbook

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*\*This manual was based on the Pennsylvania Association for Gifted Education Publication (PAGE) with permission.*

# INTRODUCTION

There are so many ways to support the education of gifted children. You have chosen one of the most effective means by becoming actively involved in The Alliance (THE MI ALLIANCE) Affiliate. This Handbook was developed in an effort to make your involvement in The Alliance as productive and satisfying as possible.

The Handbook is not meant to be a “cookbook”, nor is it meant to be comprehensive or definitive. It is intended simply to be a resource for those of us who are trying to create and run an Affiliate of The Alliance.

This Handbook is intended to provide practical ideas which have worked for The Michigan Alliance for Gifted Education Affiliates. Therefore, material which describes issues in gifted education has not been included. This material is readily available from The Alliance or on our website [www.migiftedchild.org](http://www.migiftedchild.org).

This Handbook is a product, in part, of many conversations and meetings with Affiliate leaders. Additionally, some portions of this Handbook are excerpts from handouts and newsletters received over the year. Many of these did not cite the source of the author. If any reader identifies unattributed material which should be credited, please notify The Alliance leadership so that proper credit can be given when revisions are made.

Each segment of the Handbook is meant to stand alone, so that any part may be duplicated to use as you see fit, whether at meetings or as a tool to help certain committees or individuals. For example, the membership chairperson should be given copies of the sections which deal with membership, so that perhaps their job will be a little easier. An effort has been made to provide variety in the format of the pages so that they can be used as handouts. Be sure, however, to keep the Handbook intact. Duplicate whatever sections you intend to hand out.

The Handbook should be passed from the current Affiliate Vice-President to their successor. As parts of the Handbook become obsolete, those sections will be replaced with new information which will be provided by The Alliance.



There once was a pretty good student,  
Who sat in a pretty good class  
And was taught by a pretty good teacher,  
Who always let pretty good pass.  
He wasn't terrific at reading.  
He wasn't a wiz-bang at math.  
But for him education was leading  
Straight down a pretty good path.  
He didn't find school too exciting,  
But he wanted to do pretty well,  
And he did have some trouble with writing.  
and nobody had taught him to spell.  
When doing arithmetic problems,  
Pretty good was regarded as fine.  
Five plus five didn't always add up to ten,  
A pretty good answer was nine.  
The pretty good class that he sat in  
Was part of a pretty good school.  
And the student was not an exception.  
On the contrary, he was the rule.  
The pretty good school that he went to  
Was there in a pretty good town.  
And nobody there seemed to notice  
He could not tell a verb from a noun.  
The pretty good student in fact was  
Part of a pretty good mob.  
And the first time he knew what he lacked was  
When he looked for a pretty good job.  
It was then, when he sought a position,  
He discovered that life could be tough.  
And he soon had a sneaky suspicion  
Pretty good might not be good enough.  
The pretty good town in our story  
Was part of a pretty good state,  
Which had pretty good aspirations,  
And prayed for pretty good fate.  
There once as a pretty good nation,  
Pretty proud of the greatness it had,  
Which learned much too late,  
If you want to be great,  
Pretty good is, in fact, pretty bad.



*-The Osgood File, copyrighted 1986, CBS, Inc.*

## Mission Statement

The Michigan Alliance for Gifted Education (**The Alliance**) is dedicated to providing leadership, advocacy, and support of differentiated education and services for meeting the unique needs of gifted, talented, and creative students in Michigan.

## Vision Statement

*A Vision for Talent Development for Michigan's Diverse Student Population*

**Children of exceptional gifts and talents are present throughout Michigan. Our vision is to see each of these learners develop their personal potential, without limitations, through an environment of challenging and meaningful learning experiences. Meeting the unique needs of gifted and talented students today will enhance the future of Michigan.**

## Organizational Goals

- Enabling legislation, policies, and appropriations.
- Education of staff, parents, and communities regarding talent development.
- Deliberate discovery and nurturance of talent in all domains.
- Continuity of specialized services for specialized needs.

The guiding vision the Support Committee of the Alliance:

*The MI Alliance for Gifted Education will be broadly recognized by Michigan parents and teachers as the primary resource of information and references, training, networking, and support of all aspects of gifted education.*

# **MEMBERSHIP**



## BENEFITS OF ALLIANCE MEMBERSHIP

### **YOUR SOURCE for:**

- Support and resources for parents, educators and affiliates
- Advocating as one strong voice for the needs of gifted and talented children
- Knowledge on the nature and nurture of gifted children
- Internet resources, FAQs and helpful links
- Networking with those who have “been there, done that”

### **Membership benefits include:**

- *Images*, our quarterly newsletter, email news and other resources
- Access to the help of member-only GT listserv discussions
- Member discounts for conferences, workshops and events
- Committed and knowledgeable board members who are accessible
- Leadership training for parents and educators
- Current information on legislation and actions affecting gifted

### **How does your membership make a difference?**

Every membership is vital to the Alliance’s ability to provide:

- Conferences and workshops for parents and educators
- Heightened awareness of the needs of gifted students
- Mini-grants and scholarships for member-sponsored students
- Grants for adult gifted-related projects
- Access to a speakers’ list for member affiliates and schools
- Advocacy guidance for legislative and administration contacts

### **Why join the Michigan Alliance for Gifted Education?**

Membership allows you to:

- Keep abreast of gifted issues
- Be alerted to opportunities to advocate for gifted
- Form a solid membership base to make our voice stronger
- *One message* coming from many is very powerful

**MISSION STATEMENT:** *The Michigan Alliance for Gifted Education is dedicated to providing leadership, advocacy, and support of differentiated education and services for meeting the unique needs of gifted, talented, and creative students in Michigan.*

**One size does not fit all.  
Meet the needs of gifted children.**



# MEMBERSHIP

**An Affiliate** should decide who will be included in their membership. It may be parents, parents and teachers, or anyone who is interested in gifted education. An Affiliate might want to include only persons from their school district, or they might choose to include people from many districts.

**A multi-district Affiliate** can be a little more difficult to run, because it is hard to keep up with everything in each district. Therefore, it becomes necessary to have a representative from each district on the Board. An advantage is that you can have a larger membership because you are drawing from many districts, and therefore, may be able to offer more and better programs. It is also very helpful to know what the neighboring districts are doing and how each district has dealt with various situations. (GT Resource Network and PLUS of SWMI are good examples of this multi-district affiliation.)

**Membership in a group** will vary from time to time. For example, when things are going well in the district's gifted programs, membership may decline because parents do not feel the need to get together to ask for changes. At that time, the Affiliate might want to switch from stressing advocacy to providing support such as field trips and enrichment activities. Similarly, a group which does only advocacy might find that if it included educational programs or social events that its membership would increase.

**Members** should be given a packet of information along with a Welcome Letter.

**Renewing members** – Send special thanks to renewing members, have non-renewing people receive calls to invite them to rejoin the group.

**Affiliates should not overlook** the importance of renewing memberships. Current members are already interested but need to be reminded with a letter (or postcard) when it is time to renew their membership.

**Whether recruiting new members** or renewing current memberships, it is important to stress the value of membership in The Alliance as well as the local Affiliate.

**A membership drive** could state that a drawing would be held from the memberships which have been received. The prize could be a gift certificate for dinner for two or a free membership in the Affiliate or the Alliance or both.

## **OTHER IDEAS**

- Set up membership tables at open houses, PTA meetings, and The Alliance meetings.
- Teachers of gifted classes can be asked to distribute flyers which describe the Affiliate.
- School districts should never be told the membership total for the group unless it is really impressive. Do not put this information into a newsletter, either, as a small number could be used negatively.
- Membership dues should be available in a range of amounts. Let Affiliate members know when funding is needed – a benefactor may help.

- Scholarships through MI Alliance – To learn more: <http://www.migiftedchild.org/>
- Be sure that a membership form appears in every newsletter.
- Offer a discount price at special children's events (such as a Saturday enrichment program) for member families. Accept memberships during the event.
- Sponsor a gifted child's event and offer babysitting.
- Offer present members a discount for each new member they convince to join the Affiliate. This costs a little at first, but will produce results.
- Offer T-shirts, badges, or literature as a membership bonus. Consider offering something when a member renews their membership.
- Network with other organizations to set up a table at their event or ask if your information can be displayed during the event.

# **BECOMING AN AFFILIATE**

# WHY JOIN AN ADVOCACY GROUP

## Michigan Alliance for Gifted Education

There are many reasons for membership in an affiliate organization. The best reason would be to see something positive happen for gifted children. More information can be found at [www.migiftedchild.org](http://www.migiftedchild.org) link to AFFILIATES or call 616-365-8230.

### ***You will also gain:***

- ◆ cooperation with people to accomplish goals you cannot do alone.
- ◆ informational meetings and activities for the whole family.
- ◆ one strong voice speaking for gifted education to our legislators.
- ◆ information network that expands beyond your immediate area.
- ◆ help and leadership from The Alliance, the parent organization, at all stages of your organization---beginning, rejuvenation, celebration!
- ◆ resources for you and your members.
- ◆ yearly conferences with national and international speakers, plus many local practical speakers—often with reduced fee for members.
- ◆ regional conferences and opportunities planned with affiliates, ISDs.
- ◆ the newsletter Images four times a year plus important mailings.
- ◆ mini-grants for students and teachers to expand their personal horizons and encourage development of gifted programs.
- ◆ support and guidance from parents who have “been there, done that”.
- ◆ awareness that programs should not go away--there are **always** students who will need support for the development of their talents. Gifted are “at risk!”
- ◆ discounts--for membership in the Michigan Alliance; affiliates could have a sale of books and/or events with a discount for members.
- ◆ happenings for children and families through local affiliates.

### IF YOU WANT SOME ACTION...

*Be there...*

*Be cooperative...*

*Be positive...*

*Don't go away!*

# FORMING AN ADVOCACY GROUP

## Ways to be a Viable Advocacy Group

How does a group, particularly interested in advocacy for gifted children and gifted education, gain recognition and influence in a school district or area? Here are just a few ideas that have worked. For support and guidance, contact [www.migiftedchild.org](http://www.migiftedchild.org). Check list of "Affiliates" to find a group near you or contact your Regional Representative or Vice President for Affiliates. The Alliance phone number is (616) 365-8230.

1. Be informed! Your group needs to learn all it can about gifted children and gifted education--not just about one or two children. Attend the Alliance's conferences and workshops. And in turn, be a source of information. Some groups have book clubs or individuals read books and share information.

2. Know what's happening in your district! You'll be pleasantly surprised that much is going on that is good for gifted even though it doesn't have the label. Have members attend school board meetings--wearing your group's name tags (or signing in as representatives). Be on the School Improvement Committee. Encourage people to run for the school board who understand about the needs of gifted students.

3. Send out the "thank yous"! For those who help, those who use mind-stretching techniques in the classroom, those advancing your cause in any way--and tell their superior. If these people--be they teachers, administrators, parents or citizens--are supporting your goals, invite them to become members too! Make the superintendent an honorary member!

4. Don't yell! Patience is a virtue...being demanding will do more damage to your cause than anything. No one will trust you to listen and understand their point of view.

5. Have an easily recognized name or acronym and a logo. A district wide contest for a logo will get you known fast--and state your broad-based goals on the contest flyer.

6. Charge dues! You're worth it! Charging \$30 to \$35 a year to cover local and Alliance dues is usually possible when there is some other source of income. How many organizations do you know that ask for that little when wanting your support? And this is for children and education!

7. See that members get something for their money! A membership card would be a good thing to start with--a card with your logo and a one phrase philosophy. Other bonuses can include newsletters from you and the Alliance, discounts at your book fairs or mini-conferences, larger scholarships for member's children, and other benefits from the Alliance.

8. Provide activities that are open to all parents and children. **And above all . . .**

***Be There...      Be Cooperative...      Be positive and...      Don't go away!***

# HOW TO START AN AFFILIATE

## *A Step by Step Guide*

### **Organizing**

#### **Step 1**

**Make a decision** to work with others in your district/area to secure appropriate gifted programs. You will need to keep this goal in sharp focus as you proceed. Think of your Affiliate as a “PTA for the Gifted”. Remember, there is strength in numbers!

#### **Step 2**

**Contact** your school district’s central office about reserving a room free of charge for your first organizational meeting. Ask also if they will distribute a flyer (or electronically, via website) to families of the gifted for you. If the district refuses to distribute the flyer for you, find other ways...ask your child to pass them out to friends in the gifted program, take them to sports games, scout troops, PTA meetings, etc. The flyer should give a statement about The Alliance or your intended purpose for organizing and the who, what, when, where, etc., about the meeting.

#### **Step 3 – The First Meeting**

**Arrange for a speaker.** Choose a topic that is general enough to include all age levels. Some possibilities are: Gifted Characteristics, Dealing with Stress, Sensitive and Smart, etc. Free speakers could be neighboring Affiliate leader, an Intermediate Unit spokesperson, a local teacher of the gifted (or one who understands them), or your school district’s Special Education Coordinator. Ask the speaker to plan for 30-45 minutes. People will need time to just share stories and mingle during this first meeting.

**Have a sign-in table** at the door. Make sure each person is greeted, given a name tag to wear, and fills out an information sheet for future mailings, emails and meeting announcements. This form should also include information about the children’s ages and school attending. This can be a good time to distribute an article for them to read while waiting for the meeting to begin.

**Begin with welcomes** and introductions, and briefly explain the need for an Affiliate, a parent advocacy group. Introduce the speaker for the evening’s program. Following the speaker’s presentation allow a few minutes for questions from the audience. Then, to encourage all who attend to express their needs and concerns, break into small groups by grade level, school, or special concerns, or interest. Ask these small groups to choose a recorder to write down key ideas. After 20-30 minutes, call the large group back together and ask the recorders to share their reports with everyone.

## Step 4

**Ask for 3-5 volunteers** to write a set of bylaws for the new Affiliate. Explain that this is a short-term commitment and set the first small group meeting and a final date for completion. (See sample Bylaws.)

**Describe to the group the advantages** of becoming an Affiliate of The Alliance. Pass out membership forms for The Alliance and explain that your group must have at least 5 new paid memberships in order to become an Affiliate. (See [www.migiftedchild.org](http://www.migiftedchild.org) for forms)

**Announce the date** for the next large group meeting. Thank all who attended and ask them to spread the word to other families with gifted children. Tell them that the next agenda will be to adopt/revise the bylaws, choose an Affiliate name, elect officers, determine a tentative calendar, and set dues.

## Step 5

**When you have approved** your bylaws and have 5 new people who have joined The Alliance, send The Alliance forms along with a copy of the bylaws and affiliation dues to The Alliance, as listed on the form.

## Step 6

**Congratulate yourself!** You have now provided a structure to deal with future educational issues in a proven and successful manner. You are no longer alone in your advocacy for your child's gifted education.

## *Location*

Affiliates usually meet in one of the school district's buildings. There should be no financial charges because this is a school related activity and a non-profit group. However, the Affiliate may have to sign a contract for each building. To the knowledge of The Affiliate Board, no district denies this opportunity to Affiliates.

It is very desirable to have a specific place to hold regular meetings. Institutions should not be asked to sponsor Affiliates, but simply to provide space for meetings. Space can be found at district offices, churches/temples, libraries, meeting rooms in stores, restaurants, banks, and other community organization facilities. You may request such a list from your local Chamber of Commerce.

Some Affiliates meet at local college campuses. There are many advantages to this, such as special labs and facilities for children's programs and faculty members are interested in giftedness and are willing to provide programs.

## **Structure**

Most Affiliates set up an Executive Committee which consists of at least:

- \*President
- \* Secretary
- \*Vice President
- \*Treasurer

### ***Executive Committee***

- makes decisions and recommendations to the membership
- sets long and short term goals
- approves a budget, speakers' fees, and large expenditures

Some Affiliates have expanded to include:

### ***Membership Committee***

- makes phone calls
- recruits new members
- keeps mailing list in order
- sends letter of acknowledgement and welcome to new members

### ***Publicity and Fundraising Committee***

- writes press releases and contacts media regarding meetings and special projects
- recommends and implements fundraising projects

### ***Gifted Program Study and Action Committee***

- researches curriculum options and confers with school personnel

### ***Special Projects Committee***

- works on projects as recommended by membership; i.e. summer programs, Saturday programs, awards for scholastic excellence, purchasing of special equipment, applications for grants, in service opportunities for school district professionals, parenting seminars, etc.

### ***Budget Committee***

- formulates the budget for the year
- works directly with the Executive Committee to determine allocations of funds

Each Affiliate should determine the standing committees it believes are necessary to achieve its goals. (See sample Bylaws or Alliance Constitution.)

The Executive Board can form *ad hoc* committees as needed, such as picnic committee, teacher appreciation party committee, etc.

Some Affiliates have four program-type meetings a year which do not include a business meeting. The Executive Committee acts on recommendations from standing committees and meets four times a year. In this case, the real work is done by the committees, who meet as necessary. Business-type information can be given to the members through the newsletter and via email.

A representative from each school or grade level can be very helpful. These people attend PTA, School Board, and other meetings and work closely with parents of that building. A building level representative would also help to keep the list of gifted students current. They might serve as “gripe person” since he or she would ideally have children in that school. Concerns vary greatly between the elementary, middle and high school levels. It is important to keep in touch with all levels in order to insure a comprehensive gifted program.

Some Affiliates who have a present, past president, and president-elect find that this helps because the three presidents share the responsibilities.

Be sure that those who chair various committees are both motivators and workers who follow through. Chairs of standing committees should serve as members of the Executive Board.

Give each member of the Executive Committee a binder with information relating to their position in your Affiliate. Include such things as:

- a description of the duties of their office or committee
- information duplicated from this handbook which is relevant
- a copy of your Affiliate Bylaws
- telephone listing of all Executive Committee members
- minutes of meetings
- past activities of their committee or office

The Executive Committee member should be responsible for keeping the binder up to date, and giving it to the person who succeeds them on the Executive Committee.

Not all groups are this formal, and you are not a failure if you do not follow this model. Each group must adjust to suit its particular needs.

An Affiliate leader should always try to make sure that those who are volunteering their time and energy to the Affiliate feel appreciated for their efforts. Although this sounds simplistic, it is sometimes one of the most difficult tasks as well as one that can get lost in the flurry of getting things done. A short note or phone call, or perhaps special mention in the newsletter, will work wonders.

### **Bylaws**

See sample Bylaws (Appendix). This may be used as a guide; however, each Affiliate will need to customize it appropriately.

Make sure The Alliance receives a copy of the Affiliate Bylaws each time it is amended. It is suggested that a current copy of the Affiliate Bylaws be kept in this handbook.

It is important that meetings be conducted in the manner that is both efficient and orderly. Most groups use *Robert's Rules of Order* which can be obtained at any bookstore. A handy chart is included in this handbook (see Appendix). It is imperative that issues are voted upon and minutes of the meeting are taken. Minutes should be presented and approved at the next meeting.

# PARENT ADVOCACY GROUP

## DO's and DON'Ts

- Do** → plan to invest a great deal of time in your advocacy group.
- Do** → keep your focus broad, especially at the beginning. Avoid splintering your groups' efforts on minor issues. When you have achieved your major goals, you can move on to fine tuning your program.
- Do** → arrive promptly for all scheduled meetings with school officials.
- Do** → approach all negotiations with a positive, nonconfrontational attitude, emphasizing your support and willingness to work out solutions (see Positive Approaches make a Difference).
- Do** → lavish praise on teachers, administrations, school board members for any job well done.
- Do** → present a unified and well organized front for your organization when meeting with outside groups, school officials or others. Establish early on a 'chain of command' for presenting requests and ideas to the school district—no individual nay-sayers allowed.
- Do** → expect to experience delays in implementation, even when you think all obstacles have been overcome.
- Do** → use your group as a forum for personal problems, hopes and concerns. Enjoy the experience of being part of a group whose children are much like yours!
- Do** → avoid looking weak or ineffectual. You **are** a force to be reckoned with.
- Do** → show your political muscle, if all else falls.

## DO's and DON'Ts Continued...

- Don't...** criticize gossip or engage in any form of political infighting with various factions of your school district. Refuse to have negative discussions at your meetings by establishing a way to gather information from would-be nay-sayers..
- Don't...** contradict members of your group on important issues when meeting with school district officials. Do your homework and formulate your position in advance of any meetings. (Follow that chain of command.)
- Don't...** vent personal problems or individual situations involving your child when meeting with the administration or school board on group business. If you need to discuss your child, arrange a separate appointment and identify clearly, in advance, that you are not representing the group.
- Don't...** meet with the administration, school board members, or school officials alone. Always take another member of your group with you. Meetings should be with equal numbers of school personnel and your members.
- Don't...** draw your membership from only one or two sections of your school district. Try to achieve a balance which is genuinely representative of your entire district.
- Don't...** underestimate yourselves. As parents of gifted children, no one has more day-to-day experience with this type of child than you do. (See Advocacy section)
- Don't...** underestimate your "opposition". Many educators are dedicated professionals who truly believe in mainstreaming the gifted. (See Advocacy, "Additional Guidelines for Advocacy") Your job is to convince them that gifted children have special needs which must be met in special ways.

# **THE ADVANTAGES OF A PARENT GROUP: When a Child Wants to Learn, Let's find a Way.**

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# **THE ADVANTAGES OF A PARENT GROUP: WHEN A CHILD WANTS TO LEARN, LET'S FIND A WAY**

## *Be There--A Mission*

Parents must take on the role of advocates for their children. They are the ones who know them best--their ways of learning, their emotional and social needs, their strengths and weaknesses, and their educational needs. Schools will find that allowing parents to meet together, to be better informed, giving and receiving support--these parents become a positive, cooperative partner. This is the kind of positive partnerships schools have with PTOs. These groups just vary in their goals.

Parents know their children but that is not enough. They need to find out more about educational opportunities, the teaching techniques appropriate for gifted and creative students, the reforms and legislative demands that are influencing schools today and how that all impacts children. Working together as a parent group becomes a much more efficient way of gathering and assimilating all of this information. Parents share a common voice and together they can get and give support. It does take research for parents to be sufficiently informed. When this does happen, however, they will be ready to take organized, positive steps towards changes that are closer in line with the goals of the district.

This means parents need to take organized action. Hopefully the parents know about the Michigan Alliance for Gifted Education (the Alliance). If the parents need help in organizing and establishing goals, they should be in close contact with the Alliance. (Reference Affiliate Handbook)

There is POWER in numbers, but there is also a relief when parents have found a group that understands some of their concerns and is willing to work cooperatively with the district to facilitate changes. Many parent groups have found great support and resources by joining together and working with the Alliance. As a group they can really accomplish so much more than one person who might be looked on as a "complainer". School districts are much more willing to listen to an *informed* organized group. Affiliation with Alliance gives the parent group a source of information, support and guidance in developing a cooperative relationship with their school districts.

*How do you find people of similar concerns?* Hopefully there is a friendly face among the administration that will help parents advertise an initial meeting or even host it themselves. Parents working with the district personnel as much

as possible will help establish more educational opportunities and positive changes. If someone from administration is not ready to come forth with help, there are other places to look for advocates wanting to work together for change: the parents of O.M. or D.I. students, band students, theater students, quiz bowl, math and science Olympiad or clubs, etc. The local newspapers are quite willing to put in meeting announcements. NOTE: As a draw please try to invite one of the Alliance officers to attend. Also it helps to arrange for childcare (high school students are looking for community service projects).

**SETTING GOALS** -- Brainstorm with your core group of 4-8 people and then, with the larger group, things that you would like to see happen (have a facilitator help you). A brainstorming form is available. (See Goal Setting Section) Be reasonable, narrow your wants down and prioritize. The goals should be broad based enough to include people who want a challenging curriculum, and opportunities for many kinds of talents regardless of whether identification takes place. The needs of various grade level (elementary, middle school and high school) should be visited each year to help meet various family needs. Examine carefully what improvements should be addressed as a written policy so that the opportunities will not go away. "Traditions" change with evolving leadership.

**GET THINGS DONE** -- Getting people to lead an organization is easier if they share the responsibilities. Officers can be co-chairs...twice as many heads to get more things done. The executive board utilizes the results of the group's brainstorming and decides what the major topics/focuses of meetings for the year. Review this with the district administration (Meeting with Administrators) to see if any common in-servicing topics are already in the works. Many speakers throw in a parent presentation when they do staff in-servicing. Have that school calendar right there to avoid conflicting with other large school events, district wide fundraising, and allowing coordination with town festivals. Above all, make sure to include kids in the majority of plans (ask the older ones to be leaders for some of the children activities, child caregivers, etc.).

The responsibility of planning should be divided among the board members so the work is spread evenly. That way each officer gains experience in organizing and running a meeting. Other jobs can be covered by members--publicity with someone who knows the local newspaper editor, a field-trip person who likes to plan, a refreshment person, a kids-activity person--who can also get sitters to cover), representatives from other groups--athletic boosters, music booster, drama club, and especially a representative from each school--these are needed to avoid conflict of interests and activities/fund raisers as well as feed-back from each school. Start each fall positively by having your own

representative at a table during the fall open house evening--answering questions, recruiting members. Special invitations would be a very friendly gesture to ask other groups for a representative to yours.

School reports from the representatives may reveal that there are already some really good things happening, but perhaps not in each of the schools. [Those “good things” could be showcased as a topic for one of your meetings by inviting administrators or outstanding teachers.] Tell ALL your members they will ALL be asked to be advocates to respond to a call to action at some time, either in the district itself or on legislative matters--that is when the numbers count! Policy and legislation will not happen without voices speaking out. Many voices declaring a common message gets attention.

**COMMUNICATE MESSAGES--**Getting the word out is often a problem with a group spread district-wide. That means that early on, the purpose for the group must be established and brought to the superintendent of schools for his/her “blessing”. Explain that you are a parent group with the district’s interests in mind. Whatever amenities the district has afforded the PTO’s or PTA’s or other parent groups, they need to be given to your parent group too! You are a nonprofit organization supporting the district just as the Band Boosters and the Athletic Boosters do.

Being a non-profit like other organizations will get you permission to copy and distribute flyers (someone in central office or each school probably needs to “approve” first) about your group and activities to all the schools. It might be a reduced rate or free if you supply your own paper. Perhaps this can be paperless with email or via a website (yours or the districts). Have it also linked to the MI Alliance. If the Superintendent is hesitant, you may need to “prove yourself” [acts that show you also aim to help the schools overall, not specifically an elite few]. It wouldn’t hurt to have the local newspaper cover one of your events, especially if this one includes kids. Also use a phone/email fan out system to reach more. You want a decent turn out, but usually involving kids will do that for you.

### **Be Positive--How To Be Known And Respected By Everyone**

The key to pleasing many is to do something for kids! Just like meetings that involve activities for children will bring in the parents, the same is true for people’s impressions of the worth of your group--if you are doing something for students, then you are a “good” organization. Here are a few ideas. Check with other affiliates.

### **CONTESTS --**

**LOGO CONTEST** -- There are many reasons why this is a good choice. The contest entries have to exemplify “why” you exist (letting parents, schools, and students also know). Then one can advertise by writing an article for the newspaper that this is the winning idea, take a photo of winner, and mention an upcoming meeting. Money is probably the best draw for this contest, or a free art class from community education or a local artist willing to donate a lesson.

**WRITING CONTEST** -- If the community is about to celebrate some event (bicentennial, etc.), ask students to complete the sentence: “Hartland is nice because...” Even teachers will get on the bandwagon with this. Make it across grade levels so there is a winner from every grade and honorable mentions. The judges can be the superintendent, a retired teacher, the newspaper editor, or other distinguished people of the community...just give them copies and criteria. The end result can be published for a fund raiser during the celebration.

**POSTER CONTESTS** -- Do you have an event you want advertised and cannot really afford the materials to handle the publicity? Have a poster contest also with grade level categories. Be specific about facts to include, size requirements, etc. Stores LOVE to have kids' posters in their windows and on walls. Everything you want the community to know is right there on the posters!

## **OTHER ACTIVITIES:**

**TALENT FAIR** -- A Talent Fair is NOT a performing show (although you could if you have LOTS of help). This is one where students display in a gym/cafeteria something that they have done that they are proud of. So much of their lives are never revealed in school and this is their chance! The categories can be fairly wide-open (art, writing, collections, constructions [Lego, etc.], reports from social studies or science, sports awards and more). It is a lot of work concentrated in the gathering of prizes and then the intense “set-up on Friday, then take it home with you on Saturday.” Besides showing off, the kids all go home with a participant ribbon and a possible prize from the tables of donations from local businesses when their name is drawn. Size of display is limited and \$1 is charged. All prizes are expected to be worth approximately \$2, but of course many stores are very generous. Fowlerville FACTO affiliate has their own version. Note: this would be difficult in district with more than 3,500 students.

**SPEAKERS** -- Sponsor speakers on topics that would interest many and could be applicable to all students, i.e., developing creativity, peer pressure, problem solving, etc. Include a student portion or make it a whole-family activity to insure attracting the parents. GT Resource Network has a neat Saturday version.

**BOOKS** -- With money that your organization makes, set some aside to donate to the local library--books that are for parents and students too that deal with raising and schooling creative, talented and gifted children. You may want to give the library cash and a list of titles to save on money. This is one way for your group to have a "lending library" that you don't have to keep track of. Don't forget books for the school's professional libraries--the ones you know will make a difference for your children.

**SCHOLARSHIPS** -- If you have had sufficient fund raisers or local businesses that will back you financially as a nonprofit group, offer scholarships to students to encourage them to take enrichment classes. This obviously must be limited to one per student, but the information/applications are out there all year in the schools spreading lots of good will.

**CARNIVAL** -- Hold a carnival in conjunction with a community event (as long as a real carnival is not brought in). You won't need a whole lot of room, but a source of electricity and water would be nice as well as a good-sized canvas tent/covering. Your poster contest winners will also get 10 free tickets to the carnival games! There are companies that supply you with everything you need--games, prizes, etc.

**GARAGE SALE/BAKE SALE**--This is one fairly painless way to build your account. Again have it in conjunction with a community event and at a member's house that is near to "what's happening". Their garage is only taken over for three days and it's over--two for loading and pricing, one Saturday Sale day--then it's off to the Salvation Army in someone's trailer. Include bake sale for more money!

**FAMILY MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES** --The greatest draw for meetings will happen when the whole family is invited. Group field trips for families are also exciting. Find someone among your group that likes to plan such trips. See a listing elsewhere in this handout.

*Gifted Education has to do with opportunities...*

*Gifted education is a process of making changes in the instruction in which students are involved and basing those changes upon the skills and knowledge that the students already possess. There are many important techniques that can be used to differentiate a curriculum so that all children are asked to work at a pace and level of ability closer to their potential. Without such measures, very bright students often end up too easily meeting (or rejecting) standards meant for 'most' children in a particular age group--standards that may have very little relevance for them. What opportunities are available? What changes are happening to make a difference? How are YOU involved to see that it happens?*

## *Being Informed, Being Involved*

Support and encouragement for the school district is best given by becoming knowledgeable about ALL curriculum, budget and building matters for all kids. Share activities with members.

1. Attend (have members take turns) all school board meetings and sign in that you are representing your advocacy group.
2. Ask to receive copies of board agenda and minutes so you know in advance what your group might be concerned about.
3. Offer to serve on citizen, school improvement, or curriculum committees and task force groups--making sure policy happens.
4. Invite administrators, teachers to informal conversations or panel presentations, etc. to let people know "what's happening"
5. Offer free membership in your group to administrators
6. Support and work for millage and bond issues
7. Offer to assist in classrooms (not just your child's)
8. Contribute G/T materials/books to professional libraries in schools
9. Offer to be "clippers" of information on G/T for administrators ("Did you see...?")
10. Offer to use your own skills to aid instructional processes

**Communicate** A great way of maintaining a positive impression is to express your appreciation for a “job well done”.

- The best kind of flattery is to have teachers “demonstrate what they do well” as a focus for a meeting or a small article in your newsletter [If you showcase what’s good, others will see and think seriously about trying it in their own classroom.]
- Use phone calls and/or written notes to let teachers know they have helped your child grow in some way
- Send a copy of the notes to the principal
- If you have a negative to share, please sandwich it between two positive comments
- When you praise a principal, send a copy to the superintendent
- Thank those who support an issue
- Should your group develop a financial base, offer thanks to teachers with scholarships for conferences or workshops or membership in the Alliance
- Give recognition publicly by writing letters to the editor

### *Be Cooperative*

One of the ways to gain support from a school district is to ask what is happening to provide appropriate learning environments for students who learn differently and at different speeds. Let the district know that your group is willing to assist in any way you can to help them obtain such goals. Be ready to offer suggestions--whether it is immediate help in the classrooms or a study of what is most appropriate and asking when and where to begin. As advocates we need to maintain our calmness but to keep on returning until there is movement towards positive ends. If you are not there after a week, they are already hoping you have gone away.

**Be Involved beyond** Support and encouragement for gifted and talented children in your school district can be given by:

- A. Setting up a community Resource Volunteer program
- B. Recruiting mentors (matching student’s intense interest with someone in field, university, or high school)
- C. Operating programs outside the school setting
  1. Saturday or “no school day” excursions (family/caravan field trips)
  2. Summer options, including community service
  3. Workshops—arts, science, math, theater
  4. Shared expertise through clubs and mini-classes (any retirees, grandparents want to help?)

5. Shared space for playmates providing needed time with intellectual peers
6. Swapping game/book clubs

- D. Operating or helping to put together programs within the school setting
  1. Resource files for staff
  2. Resource center
  3. Learning Centers
  4. Special mini-courses
  5. Support efforts to encourage Midwest Academic Talent Search and spread information  
to all grades 3 to 9<sup>th</sup> that would benefit from MATS
- E. Providing Leadership and/or Sponsorship of
  1. Junior Great Books
  2. Future Problem Solving
  3. Young Astronauts
  4. Destination Imagination/Odyssey of the Mind
  5. Mathematics Pentathlon
  6. Chess or other clubs
- F. Arranging opportunities for Career Exploration (especially job shadowing)
- G. Promoting and/or providing student scholarships to encourage additional stretching and exploration
- H. Sponsor contests for kids-essays, art, posters
- I. Publish stories, poems, essays
- K. Help get student led school newspaper get started

### *Going Beyond the School District*

If we, as advocates for gifted, want to see real changes, we also need to turn our focus to the state and federal legislators. Please check with the Alliance Advocacy Committee for help here.

- Get to know your legislators in a non-crisis situation (you will be listened to more positively)
- Write the legislators thanking them for their continued support.
- Keep ALL messages POSITIVE and LOOKING FORWARD to further support for gifted and talented students
- Be constructive--emphasizing what could be done rather than what is not being done
- Be knowledgeable about the Bills in the legislature that would affect gifted education (as well as acceleration) and funding.
- When calling, remember they are very busy people. Listen to their views without interrupting and do not drag out your point. Have message written and ready!
- Be an appreciative winner or a graceful loser
- Buy these legislators free membership so they can get on your mailing list!

## *Energizing Activities*

### GROUP FAMILY FIELD TRIPS (on teacher workshop days and...)

- \* Cranbrook Institute--groups can buy their own laser light show!
- \* Detroit Federal Reserve Bank & nearby downtown sights
- \* Impressions 5 in Lansing--deals for groups and overnighters
- \* Gem & Mineral Shows -- kids love them, demonstrators love kids!
- \* Theater productions—the local groups and high school groups too
- \* Orchestra/band concerts, Children's series of Detroit Symphony Orch.
- \* Henry Ford Museum, the Detroit Historical Museum, DIA, etc.
- \* Gardening, led by local club
- \* See Summer Opportunities booklet, <http://www.resa.net/dyd/>

### TOPICS OF CONCERN

- \* Sensitivities
- \* Building Self Esteem
- \* Perfectionism
- \* ADHD and Gifted, Aspergers, LD and gifted (2E), etc.
- \* Emotional needs of gifted, talented, creative
- \* Fostering creativity
- \* Enrichment opportunities
- \* Learning Disabled Gifted, Visual-Spatial Learners
- \* Sibling Rivalry
- \* Testing to match ability to curriculum, identification
- \* Peer Relationships
- \* Midwest Academic Talent Search, gr. 3-9
- \* Problem Solving
- \* Motivation/homework skills

### OTHER ACTIVITIES

- \* Picnic with nature exploration
- \* Exploration of deaf culture
- \* Demonstrate and play Academic games
- \* Computer fun, introduce new game or program
- \* Science experiments you can eat (each family "teaches" one)
- \* Writing seminar, with local author or teacher?
- \* Math games, fun night
- \* Doodling seminar, or art with members of local art council
- \* Travelogue with activities, esp. in area of interest or study
- \* And many more

*Combine any of these with a Book Fair to earn money.*

# The Michigan Alliance Affiliates

## A Proactive Partnership

Along with all the benefits of being an Affiliate of the MI Alliance, there comes a few responsibilities. As you will see, however, these few responsibilities are simply necessary so that The Alliance can serve your Affiliate effectively. The president should be sure to delegate these jobs to the proper persons within the Affiliate.

- ▶ Keep The Alliance aware of changes in leadership as they occur. Include names, addresses, and phone numbers and email addresses of Affiliate leaders so that they will receive all correspondence.
- ▶ Provide The Alliance with a complete Affiliate membership list so that local Affiliate members will receive mailings/emails of upcoming Alliance sponsored activities.
- ▶ Affiliation renewal forms and dues should be completed and paid promptly by June 30<sup>th</sup> of each year. The three forms are on line at [www.migiftedchild.org](http://www.migiftedchild.org), "Affiliates."
- ▶ Affiliate Officers must belong to The Alliance and all Affiliate members should be encouraged to also be members of the Alliance (most affiliates include that as part of their own membership). Please consider joining our parent organization: NAGC (National Association for Gifted Children, [www.nagc.org](http://www.nagc.org))
- ▶ Attending meetings of other Affiliates is a great way to learn. Many Affiliates feature speakers at their meetings, which are open to the public.
- ▶ Attend and send delegates to The Alliance conferences, Affiliate activities and regional events—especially the twice-annual joint regional meetings.
- ▶ Send your newsletter and updates to your Regional Representative and to other Affiliate leaders, as well as the **IMAGES** editor.
- ▶ Contact your Regional Representative to plan a special event. Seed money is available to get a great kick-off meeting for your group or help in making your idea a reality.

# AFFILIATE OFFICERS – EXPLANATION OF FORMS

*The Alliance provides forms necessary for legal recognition as an Affiliate – Request these forms when applying or renewing annually.*

**Place this letter and all of the listed forms in a notebook and label Affiliate Handbook.** These letters and papers recognize you as a legal subordinate organization (Affiliate) of the Michigan Alliance for Gifted Education. Through these papers you are able to be a non-profit organization under our umbrella. Pass these papers/notebook on to the newly elected president and officers and notify The Alliance of board changes.

**Letter of Recognition** (mailed yearly upon completion of renewal forms)

Your Letter of Recognition (from the Vice President for Affiliates) may be required to conduct various types of business. Your letter is in effect for the year/dates given and renewable each year as your Affiliate renews. It indicates that your purposes and bylaws are in concert with the parent organization and that you are exempt from federal income tax under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

**Federal Exemption Number**

The Federal Exemption Number issued to the Alliance (Federal GEN #2762, Group Exemption Number), your parent organization, recognizes it as a 501(c)(3) organization. *Interpretation:* As a registered Affiliate in good standing, you are exempt from federal income taxes and filing a report *as long as* you are listed on our yearly filing and *as long as* your yearly budget does not exceed \$25,000. We must certify your organization as an Affiliate EACH YEAR, and submit a copy of your financial statement with our IRS filing in January (your end of June report of previous year). The 501(c)(3) status that you enjoy as an Affiliate also means that donations to your organization and expenses incurred working for the organization are tax deductible to the donor within the limits of the tax code. (blue form)

**Certificate of Amendment to Articles of Incorporation**

The number of the Alliance's state Corporation Identification Number (CIN) is 758-152 and gives evidence that we are registered as a non-profit corporation with the Michigan Department of Commerce. (green form)

### **Michigan Sales and Use Tax Certificate of Exemption** (white form)

As the parent group of the Michigan subordinate chapters (Affiliates), our paperwork verifying this nonprofit status allows your group to use these certificates. DO NOT use if you are no longer an affiliate.

*Interpretation:* As an Affiliate, you fall under our umbrella and are exempt from sales tax on items you purchase specifically for Affiliate business. We trust that you will not misuse this right. The appropriate Certificate of Exemption Form (white) is enclosed. Read carefully and photocopy as needed. Attach a copy of the cream colored IRS form as requested on the form. Your Letter of Recognition will also be required. See Section 3 of Certificate for “Nonprofit Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3)...”

When making purchases, often the company will ask you just for *your* EIN (or FEIN) number. The “official” way of handling transactions, however, is to GIVE the company a copy of the Certificate of Exemption Form filled out and dated at the bottom for EACH purchase. If repeated business is expected, check the appropriate box and the company will keep the form on file. Be prepared. Some companies may also ask for more exact proof of who you are: Letter of Recognition, the Alliance’s Federal GEN number, the Alliance’s State Incorporation number, and your own State EIN number. Carry these Alliance numbers with you: Federal GEN #2762; State EIN #38-2096360; State Incorporation #758-152. Companies will need this form for ‘donations’ to your group too.

***Obligation to pay Sales Tax to State on Items you sell is still in effect.***

Questions regarding this information, contact Alliance Executive Secretary at 616-365-8230, [sbelaski@comcast.net](mailto:sbelaski@comcast.net)

### **Employer Identification Number** (EIN)

Use Form SS-4 to apply for an employer identification number (EIN). An EIN is a nine-digit number assigned to sole proprietors, corporations, partnerships, estate, trust and other entities for tax filing and reporting purposes. The information you provide on this form will establish your business tax account.

The Alliance does not usually provide this form. You can download the form with instructions from the web.

Instructions for Form SS-4 <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/iss4.pdf>

Form SS-4 <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fss4.pdf>

I dreamed I stood in a studio  
and watched two sculptors there,  
the clay they used was a young child's mind  
and they fashioned it with care.

One was a teacher—the tools (s)he used  
were books and music art;  
one a parent with a guiding hand,  
and a gentle, loving heart.



Day after day the teacher toiled,  
with a touch that was deft and sure,  
while the parent labored by his side  
and polished and smoothed it over.

And when at last their task was done,  
they were proud of what they had wrought,  
for the things they had molded into the child  
could neither be sold nor bought.

And each agreed he would have failed  
if he had worked alone,  
for behind the parent stood the school,  
and behind the teacher, the home.

- author unknown -

# **ADVOCACY IN SCHOOLS**

# What makes an Effective Advocate?

## Effective Advocates are:

1. **Well informed regarding their subject** and armed with information supporting their goals. While decision-makers expect professionals to have special knowledge about gifted and talented education, this expectation is not necessarily true for parents. Anecdotal information from parents is most effective.
2. **Knowledgeable about their constituency.** While advocates are usually speaking for themselves, they are sometimes authorized to speak as representatives of an organization. An advocate must be aware of the difference.

- **Resourceful**
- **Quietly Persistent**
- **Sincere**
- **Imaginative**
- **Respectful of other's point of view**
- **Politically aware**
- **Tactful**
- **Enthusiastic**
- **Well organized**
- **Articulate**
- **Knowledgeable about the power hierarchy**
- **Sensitive to others' reactions**

Effective advocates must do their homework ahead of time if they wish to influence policy decisions and legislation. Such homework includes being sure that requests are specific and proposals are well documented. In addition, it is important that advocates know the assignments, areas of expertise, and areas of interest of school officials and other decision-makers.

Decision makers are obligated to be aware of all sides of an issue, and they must look at the total educational picture when making decisions. Therefore, effective advocates are prepared to respond to possible criticism and explain why gifted and talented education should be a high priority.

***Advocacy supported by knowledge, good sense, good humor, and humility has been enormously successful in gaining benefits for gifted children.***

**One size does not fit all. Meet the needs of gifted children.**



## “When there’s a problem in school”

The following are excerpts from the article of the same name written by Donald J. Treffinger & Marvin J. Fine for the November/December, 1979, issue of G/C/T. The excerpts are just the ones regarding guiding parents in this process.

“We strongly endorse the concept of parents and teachers serving in the partnership regarding the child’s education. Collaboration, however, does not mean to discount the teacher’s unique contributions in terms of expertise in curriculum planning, classroom organization and pupil motivation. Nor does the concept of partnership seek to discount the parents’ unique insights into their child in terms of their awareness of his/her needs and aspirations, interests and aptitudes, and how the child and family intermesh.

“It is recognized that while parents and teachers may share common objectives related to the child’s social and academic growth, they may approach the subject from different vantage points and with different emotional investments...

### Preparing for the Conference

#### *Guidelines for Parents:*

1. Don’t be afraid to discuss school problems thoroughly with your child.
2. Don’t be afraid to intervene when, in your best judgment, there is a real problem. Do intervene carefully and sensitively.
3. Keep the issues clear in your own mind. It is not your ego at stake. It’s the most appropriate educational program for your child that must be central.
4. Before calling the teacher, think through what it is you’re concerned about and what you plan to ask or say. Writing out some questions or statements may be helpful.
5. Identify specific examples of your child’s work, feelings, and behavior, not merely your casual impressions.
6. Avoid running from friend to friend getting “free” advice. It may help to talk over your concerns with someone who’s a good listener, but you don’t need to shop around. Go right to the source--the teacher.
7. Consider what attitudes and values are involved; the “problem” may involve *differences*, not just a “teacher doing bad things to my child.”
8. Keep in mind that (unless proven otherwise) you and the teacher are probably concerned with the same basic goal--helping your child.
9. Keep in mind that there may be legitimate, honest differences of opinion and judgment about how children should be educated and handled. It might be good to set down for yourself the basic assumptions and beliefs you hold.
10. Do plan the conference at a time when there is ample time for conversation--not in the corridor after school, not in the middle of open house...

## Conducting the Conference

### *Guidelines for Parents*

1. Be "straight" in your communication--neither aggressive and demanding nor apologetic, embarrassed, uncomfortable. Be what you, in fact, are--a responsible mature, concerned parent with some questions to present candidly.
2. Be prepared to listen, but *do* ask for clarification when you don't understand. Don't settle for a lot of words. Be sure you really understand what the teacher is saying. Be prepared to ask questions to help clarify what actually happens in the classroom.
3. Express a willingness to help and to share in solving the problem. ("What can I do? How would you want me to help?")
4. When you talk with the teacher, express your own ideas, concerns, and observations, rather than what you suppose or believe to be the *teacher's* problems. In other words, you are taking responsibility initially. [This may be expressed with "I" rather than "you" statements, "I've been watching (talking to) my child and I have some questions..."]
5. Focus on "how the problem can be resolved," not on polarized attitudes ("us versus the school," or "Sally versus the teacher").
6. Don't over dwell on past angers, hurts, complaints with teachers--the key question is "where do we go from here?"
7. Emphasize the child's work, feelings, concerns, or behavior. Deal with evidence of the child's *actual* reaction.
8. Be alert for opportunities to be positive about the child, and the teacher--don't be totally negative.
9. Don't criticize the teacher personally. Strive to help avoid defensiveness and hostility.
10. Don't attack the teacher's intentions or feelings about your child.
11. Be prepared to share with the teacher constructive information about your child's interests and activities outside school; this may help.
12. Don't settle for "explanations" that rely on vague opinions or fuzzy generalizations. Maintain efforts to see that the discussion focuses on the child's behavior, your expectations and those of the teacher for helping the child.
13. If reference is made to tests or test scores, ask for a full explanation of the meaning of the scores--numbers aren't useful in themselves! If no comprehensive evaluation has been conducted, ask or that might be arranged. You have a *right* to know, in an understandable way, whatever the school knows about your child's ability and performance...

## Follow-up after the Conference

### *Guidelines for Parents*

1. If you still feel dissatisfied, concerned, unhappy, etc.--"don't blow it." Share as honestly as possible that you are still concerned and ask the teacher what else might be suggested to resolve or clarify the situation. If he/she doesn't know (or claims not to), state that you would like to discuss the matter further with other people present (principal, school counselor, coordinator, etc.).
2. Be willing to take what the teacher says under advisement: e.g., "That sounds OK, but I'm not sure I understand fully--let me think it over and call you back."

3. Be willing to go along with a suggestion if it sounds plausible, but set up another appointment to evaluate how things have progressed. Don't let things merely drag on. Keep in mind what you and the teacher agree will happen. What is the teacher going to do? What is the child expected to do? Who else will be involved, and to do what? When will you start? When will you meet to evaluate what happens?
4. You do want your child to develop tolerance of others' ideas and self-discipline. Help the child to learn and accept that everyone must sometimes do things under pressure from others. (But don't let this become a substitute for solving the problem!)
5. Don't *threaten* or act angrily toward the teacher.
6. If the teacher is (overly) concerned about "basic skills", seek efforts which will determine accurately what the child's actual needs are, and how these basic skills can be demonstrated without undue drill or repetition.
7. Help plan ways for your child to demonstrate competence without being seen as a "show off" to reduce boredom and idle time in the classroom.
8. Work with the school and school organizations to help obtain materials and resources to create new learning opportunities for all students.
9. If the point comes where frustrations continues to increase, seek specialized help (Gifted Coordinator, director of Special Education) to locate special programs, classes or another school program more suited to the goals and needs of your family."... *[End of excerpts]*

## **PARENTS' RIGHTS**

### **PARENTS HAVE THE RIGHT TO:**

- BE TREATED WITH RESPECT
- BE ADVOCATES FOR THEIR CHILDREN
- HAVE THEIR OPINIONS CONSIDERED
- HAVE THEIR QUESTIONS ANSWERED
- HAVE ACCESS TO INFORMATION REGARDING THEIR CHILDREN
- HAVE ACCESS TO INFORMATION REGARDING SCHOOL POLICY
- INFLUENCE PUBLIC OPINION
- UTILIZATION OF THE POLITICAL PROCESSES TO ACHIEVE THEIR ENDS

## **INFORMED ADVOCACY**

### **TO BE EFFECTIVE ADVOCATES, PARENTS NEED TO:**

- UNDERSTAND CURRICULUM
- UNDERSTAND TEACHING/LEARNING STYLES
- ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS
- KNOW WHO IS RESPONSIBLE
- KNOW THE CHAIN OF AUTHORITY
- KNOW INFLUENCE STRATEGIES
- RECOGNIZE AVOIDANCE STRATEGIES
- USE POWER JUDICIOUSLY

## **INFLUENCE STRATEGIES**

- FREQUENT CONTACT
- PHYSICAL PRESENCE
- PUT IT IN WRITING
- SEND COPIES TO THE UNIVERSE
- SHOW WILLINGNESS TO ORGANIZE
- IDENTIFY WITH ISSUES OF OTHERS
- ESTABLISH TARGETS
- TEST THE I.Q. (IMPACT QUOTIENT)
- MINIMIZE DEMANDS ON SUPPORT GROUP
- VARY YOUR STRATEGIES
- AVOID OVERKILL

## **AVOIDANCE STRATEGIES**

[WAYS TO WARD OFF ASSERTIVE PARENTS]

- ANY EXCUSE NOT TO SEE OR SPEAK
- AGREE WITH EVERYTHING THEY SAY
- CONVINCED THEM THAT THEY'RE WRONG
- ACCUSE THEM OF EXCESS "PRESSURING"
- TELL THEM ABOUT YOUR TROUBLES
- SUGGEST THAT IT HAS "always been that way"
- BLAME IT ON SOMEONE ELSE
- TELL THEM YOUR HANDS ARE TIED
- GET THEM MAD & PROVE THEM DISTURBED
- DISCREDIT THEM AMONG THE STAFF
- JOKE ABOUT THEIR "PUSHY BEHAVIOR"
- IGNORE THEM
- SUGGEST ANOTHER SCHOOL

## Analogies can sometimes say it better!

So many times people do not understand what gifted children go through if the system does not recognize their unique abilities and the need to learn at an appropriate pace in their area of high ability. Sometimes an analogy brings the point home better than anything else. They will hopefully bring about a better understanding, empathy and insight into more appropriate

solutions. Here are a variety of analogies. Hope you find the one that works for you! And please share with others one that you have developed...we could ALL use help.

**SHOE SIZE** [this is good for the district that HAS a program, so why aren't you happy with it?] Going into the shoe store, the salesperson says..." Do you have a size 7 foot? I have a size 7 shoe that should fit you very nicely, and may be just what you need. No? You have a size 9 foot? Well, all I have are size 7 shoes. Just wear this one anyway." "I can't get it on."

"What's the matter with my shoe?" "Nothing is wrong with the shoe. It is a perfectly fine shoe.[i.e., program is great, just not a good fit. We are NOT putting down your program.]" "Well, maybe you would like my shoe if I put this pretty bow on it. Or maybe a shiny buckle? Now put it on. I don't understand why it doesn't fit. How about if I give you more size 7 shoes? Will three be enough [more of the same!]? Well, then something must be wrong with your foot. What's wrong with your foot?" "Nothing is wrong with my foot. I have a perfectly good foot." In order for shoes to work well for you, they have to be a good fit. And imagine what happens when you have to walk around all day in shoes that are too small--you get a little cranky, don't you? Or maybe you decide to stop wearing shoes altogether! Good programs and good kids need to be matched for a good fit.

**THE ELEPHANT** Highly gifted children learn not only faster than others, but also differently. Standard teaching methods take complex subjects and break them into small, simple bits presented one at a time. Highly gifted minds can consume large amounts of information in a single gulp, and they thrive on complexity. Giving these children simple bits of information is like feeding an elephant one blade of grass at a time - he will starve before he even realizes that anyone is trying to feed him. [Excerpt from "Helping Your Highly Gifted Child"

by Stephanie S. Tolan, ERIC EC Digest #E477, 1990]

**MARATHON** People get very uncomfortable with the idea of students getting ahead of

others through the use of acceleration. It is seen as an unfair advantage for gifted students. As if the whole process of education is in some way a race, with only winners being the ones across the finish line first. Look at it in terms of a marathon. How many people run in the Boston Marathon? Thousands. How many of those thousands believe that they have the slightest

chance of winning? eight? fifteen at the most? What on earth are those other thousands even doing there then? What do they gain by being part of such a hopeless venture? The value for them is in the process, being a part of the event, as each individual challenges him- or herself to a high standard, gaining in confidence and ability through training and improvement.

The speed and success of the winners IN NO WAY diminish the accomplishments of the other runners, or the value of what they gain by participating. Is it valid to recognize the success of the winners? Absolutely! They deserve our admiration and applause. Seldom does high

achievement come without hard work and dedication coupled with talent. By valuing excellence, society as a whole benefits.

**THOROUGHBRED RACE HORSE** Consider the thoroughbred race horse that is confined to a small corral. The horse doesn't know why it is uncomfortable--nothing seems to be right. It is very active, but what is there to do about it? How does it's "acting out" look to the owner (who never knew the breeding of the horse)? If the owner ever does try racing the horse, would it really perform well after being confined for years without proper training? And if it does race, is it performing as well as it could have if it had begun training at an earlier age? Do gifted children have to wait until high school to begin the race? What about all that lost training time?

**BASKETBALL** (being able to take pride in one's giftedness) Imagine a kid on the basketball team at the middle school. He is the star player, and one of the reasons is that he is thirteen inches taller than the next tallest kid on his team or any of the other teams in his division. He also has some talent, and he really enjoys the game. He is always the leading scorer, and everyone is always telling him he is great, and congratulating him on his fine performances.

He is on top of the world at first. The problem is winning is just so easy. It just doesn't take much effort, so the accolades seem like empty words. He starts feeling worse and worse about himself the more people praise him. He realizes that he does so well because he is tall. When he starts slacking off, people think they are putting too much pressure on him to score. Along comes a perceptive coach who understands about talent, and what having it can be like. He pulls a couple strings and gets the kid on a team that consists of mostly older players, taller, with more experience. The kid is so excited, but has a tough time--he's is no longer the star of the team. The coach has to work hard to get him over the rough spots. There are many shocks to his confidence and ego, but he is working very hard and learning a lot. Now he feels a sense of pride in his

accomplishments, even though to others his performance seems less outstanding than before. BEWARE of a child who continues to maintain his self-esteem through accomplishments too easily attained--the easy A's. It is a dangerously fragile situation. What you are able to do is only HALF as important as what you CHOOSE to do.

**THE RACE CAR** Envision a turbo-charged race car driving up a hill on a two-lane highway behind a large, overloaded truck. As much as it may want to "behave" by going at the same pace as the truck, it isn't at all easy. And what is happening to the engine? How long can this go on before permanent damage is done to the engine? Will it ever be the same?

**IS IT A CHEETAH?**

Is It a Cheetah?

Cheetahs are fast. They can run 70 mph.  
But cheetahs don't always run. Are they cheetahs when they don't run?

The cheetah's body design is useful. It also creates a need to run. If a cheetah is in a 10' x 12' cage, it may pace or fling itself against the cage. It won't run. Is it still a cheetah?

If given only rabbits to chase, it will only run as fast as the rabbit.  
Is it still a cheetah?

If a cheetah is fed Zoo Chow, it may not run. Is it still a cheetah?

If a cheetah is sick or has a broken leg, it may not even walk. Is it still a cheetah?

If the cheetah is only six weeks old, it can't yet run 70 mph. Is it a "potential" cheetah? Or is it still a cheetah?

A school system that defines giftedness (or talent) as behavior, achievement and performance is as compromised in its ability to recognize its highly gifted students and to give them what they need as a zoo would be to recognize and provide for its cheetahs if it looked for only speed. When a cheetah does run 70 mph, it isn't a particularly "achieving" cheetah. Though it is doing what no other can do, it is behaving normally for a cheetah.

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Keep in mind that the parent knows the child better than anyone else.

**HOW WOULD YOU REACT?** A savvy administrator was asking his staff about their feelings about in-servicing and educational coursework. Several replied that they really appreciate learning new methods to apply in the classroom. In fact the longer, more difficult classes that involved much hard work--the more satisfaction they derived from their efforts. The administrator continued, "And how did you feel the time when discovering as you listened to the presenter give an overview of the day--the in-service you had signed up for was an exact duplication of information you had previously learned?" The answers came shooting back—"I got up and demanded my money back," "I wasn't about to sit through THAT again," "I have better things to do with my time," "I stayed but fumed inside the whole time--how dare they waste my time!" The administrator then quietly asked, "And what did you tell your second grader who already knew the math (the reading matter, the social studies)?"

-Submitted by Marie Brucker, [m.brucker@comcast.net](mailto:m.brucker@comcast.net)

## THE PALCUZZI PLOY

This is an informational piece written by J. J Gallagher, and appeared in the PALS Newsletter, published by the Parents for Able Learner Students of Lakeland, Florida. Sometimes we have to reach people where they are.

### THE PALCUZZI PLOY

Mr. Palcuzzi, Principal of the Jefferson Elementary School, once got tired of hearing objections to special provisions for gifted children so he decided to spice an otherwise mild PTA meeting with his proposal for gifted children. The elements of the Palcuzzi program were as follows:

1. Children should be grouped by ability.
2. Part of the school day should be given over to special instruction.
3. Talented students should be allowed time to share their talents with children of other schools in the area or even of other schools throughout the state. (We will pay transportation costs.)
4. A child should be advanced according to his talents, rather than according to his age.
5. These children should have special teachers, specially trained and high salaried.

As might be expected, the Palcuzzi program was subjected to a barrage of criticism: "What about the youngster who isn't able to fit into the special group; won't his ego be damaged?" "How about the special cost; how would you justify transportation costs that would have to be paid by moving a special group of students from one school to another?" "Mightn't we be endangering the child by having him interact with children who are much more mature than he is?" "Wouldn't the other teachers complain if we gave more money to the instructors of this group?"

After listening ten or fifteen minutes, Mr. Palcuzzi dropped his bomb. He said he wasn't describing a new program for the intellectually gifted, but a program the school system had been enthusiastically supporting for a number of years – the program for "gifted basketball players".

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This is a gentle reminder to those who are advocates. Many of you have enjoyed the Palcuzzi Ploy which ended up talking about "basketball players" instead of "gifted students". As I sent this I could just hear those heads shaking, hand ringing and people saying, "Boy I'd love to do that to my superintendent/school board/whomever! I'll show them!" Here is the word of caution

from the email editor of “Staying Connected,” the email fanout of The Alliance (the Michigan Alliance for Gifted Education), Marie Brucker. <http://www.migiftedchild.org/>

**PLEASE, BEFORE YOU UTILIZE THE PALCUZZI PLOY...**think through how you can utilize this as a POSITIVE approach. Say...”Now that we have your attention, we just wanted you to realize that our district does already do things for our students who have special skills and abilities (thank them for what g/t programs they already have in place). Our children who are highly able or gifted in the academics also have special skills and abilities that need nurturing from where they are to where their potential leads them. They learn differently and think differently and so they need classrooms and opportunities that can accommodate this. For instance: teachers who “differentiate” the curriculum, classes that “stretch” them. They need to be with others who think like them so that they will feel like they are “on the right team” with “challenging teammates.”

Do that sandwich technique – turn it into a positive – don’t just throw the story in their face and say, “Now do something for us!” Say something positive, say something they OUGHT to be doing and then more thank yous. So, what do you ask for while you have their attention? (You probably have a long list -- narrow it down to one or two). Ask for them to study or research possibilities...and get back to you in writing in one/two weeks. With this story you are asking that they look at the program from a different perspective, not as an adversary.

You will offer to help in any way that you can (and get a parent group to help if they are not already organized).

Remember the advocate’s motto:

**Be There, Be Positive, Be Cooperative, and Don’t Go Away!**

## **“Proper Mindset” Needed for Effective Advocacy by Sandra Warren**

Do you struggle with ways to convince people that voicing concern for your gifted child does not mean that you're on an ego trip? Do you long for analogies that will get people to listen? If the answer is “yes,” then perhaps developing a proper mindset will help.

Advocating for the rights and needs of gifted children takes knowledge, perseverance, and commitment. It is often a thankless job that pits parents against teachers, administrators and school boards, all who seemingly have the best interests of the children at heart. Understanding gifted individuals—how to raise, educate, and make decisions concerning them—is a complex process. It becomes easier if you adopt a proper mindset.

A proper mindset gives advocates the courage, confidence, and emotional support to pursue appropriate services for their children. It turns concern for gifted children into a logical and more easily understood position, and it provides advocates with easily understood, powerful analogies to draw on when speaking to those less knowledgeable.

A proper mindset protects gifted children from decisions that are made for the wrong reasons. Too many parents allow friends, relatives, siblings and even the children themselves to make important educational and life-long decisions they should not be making. For example:

- Many gifted children are held back in school because another sibling (older or younger) might feel bad.
- Many gifted children refuse services because they want to be with their friends.
- Many gifted children are given the choice by parents of whether or not to get involved in a gifted program. Would these same parents allow their child the choice to have his or her appendix removed?

Following are two mindsets that can help you become a better, positive, more confident advocate for gifted children. Choose the one that makes the most sense to you—or create your own—and step into that attitude whenever you are faced with a decision regarding your gifted child.

### **The Sports Mindset**

When you are in the sports mindset you think of your child's or student's giftedness as an extreme athletic ability. In sports we all know and understand that an athlete's ability, no matter how gifted, will not grow without proper coaching, training and equal or greater levels of competition, they fail miserably because they are not properly prepared to meet the challenge.

If your child is a gifted athlete in soccer, whose talents many outshine all others on the team, it may not be too long before the coaches pull you aside, admit they don't have the coaching expertise to guide your child, and suggest that you move your child to a more competitive league. With great pride you would rationalize the sacrifices in time, energy, personal finances, and family life to make it happen. You would make decisions without concern for the reaction of siblings or friends who would be left behind. Nor would you balk at a reluctant athlete. Unless the reluctance was extreme, you would counsel and assure your child that change is difficult but necessary and that the new league will provide better experiences if he or she wants to grow in the sport. You would guide our child through his or her fears. You would do whatever you had to do to make the decision work.

Why is it so hard to understand that the same course of action might be appropriate for gifts of the intellect? In fact, for children gifted in non-sports areas, it is even more important because lack of proper encouragement, nurturance, and challenge adversely affects a gifted person's entire being—personality, ability to socialize, outlook on life, motivation to learn, and most importantly, self-esteem. It affects a gifted child's entire game of life.

## **The medical mindset**

Think about what you would do if your child were diagnosed with a rare condition, one that few doctors knew how to treat. Without a doubt, you would see out the experts, consult current research, and find the facilities where the latest techniques were being employed. You would go to great lengths, despite the cost, to provide appropriate healthy care for your child. Furthermore, if your child needed special medicines, procedures or an operation you wouldn't even consider withholding treatment because your other children might feel left out. Nor would you allow your sick child to decide for him or herself whether or not to undergo surgery or a procedure.

We need to start making decisions for our gifted children based on what our gifted children need, not on the needs of everyone else. One child may need orthopedic shoes. One child may need a hearing aid. And one child may need to attend a different school or skip a grade or two to receive appropriate educational experiences.

When we adopt a proper mindset, we no longer treat giftedness as something elitist or view a gifted program as a reward for being smart. A proper mindset helps us treat our child's giftedness as it is—a difference in the way the brain processes information. This difference requires appropriate curriculum, procedures, and practices. A proper mindset gives you the confidence, courage, permission, and perspective to talk about your gifted child's needs.

-Reprinted from NAGC, [www.nagc.org](http://www.nagc.org)

# **REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES**

## ROLE OF REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

**ROLE:** To be a contact person and source of information for the Michigan Alliance in particular 'regions' around the state. This person shall be the go-between for people, affiliates, districts who have concerns and questions regarding gifted children and their education. This person can appoint "committee people" to assist in this outreach. This is especially helpful in the larger or more populous areas of the state. As part of the Alliance Full Board, you will be asked to attend the 4 meetings a year.

**ACTIVITIES W/AFFILIATES:** Follow the contact form with each affiliate each month. The personal contact makes the difference between real support and "someone else just bugging me with an email." Maybe have a different topic of possible concern as an opener in the conversation—besides sharing updates on what is happening around the state.

**REACHING OUT IN YOUR REGION:** Always start with building a relationship with your district, then your county (ISD or RESA) which would encompass the other school districts in your county. Then look at the list of counties included in your region (ask for list if not given one). Know someone somewhere out there that can help be a link? Check out the members in the region—can they help you? Lots of ISDs actually coordinate with others combining efforts—thus combining and reducing the number of contacts YOU need to make. Like Livingston County's Interim Director of Achievement Initiatives, or it could be Curriculum or Professional Development. They come with many hats and names. Make a plan to 'reach out to one new county' or contact a new school district each month. Our Parent Representatives can also help in regional contacts.

**NEW MEMBERS:** From time to time you will receive a listing of members in your region (the Executive Secretary has this data). Prepare a blanket 'welcome to the MI Alliance' email that you can shoot out to them—and add them to your 'fanout' of contacts in your region. There will come times when we need to ask help from ALL MEMBERS. You will want to be ready. From this list you will also see 'who needs to renew'—and a personal contact makes a big difference. This is also a great job for a volunteer!

**ADVOCACY:** As you meet governmental and educational leaders and hear about leaders in your region, please inform our Advocacy Committee as to who are the important contacts of your area. If you are comfortable, ask the person for coffee, or meet at their office and explain your role and the role of the Alliance—in a non-demanding situation. Share information/flyers/newsletter. You may offer answers to questions that you feel comfortable in sharing, but you can always offer to have one of the lead officers get back to them regarding that question or piece of information.

**KNOWING ALL THE ANSWERS:** Please do NOT think that you have to answer all the questions you receive. Write them down and pass them along to the VP for Affiliates or some of the board members who are knowledgeable in various areas.

MI ALLIANCE FOR GIFTED EDUCATION  
2008-2009  
Regional Representative (RR) Program

The following information contains a guide to the **Regional Representative (RR) Program**, a very important role with the Alliance established to help foster the RR - Affiliate relationship.

Thank you for your willingness to help, support and guide affiliates as they try, and do, make a difference in the lives of gifted children and families locally. The Alliance is very thankful for our regional representatives (RR)!

As a RR, you ARE the light in the darkness to the affiliate member/leader who feels isolated and relates daily advocating for gifted children as fighting an uphill battle, alone, AND in Greek (since no one seems to understand, or speak, the same language as it relates to the gifted child.)

OK - not all affiliate members feel this way all of the time. Yet, we would argue that everyone who advocates for gifted children's needs has "that moment" where this scenario would fit.

The goal of the RR program is to support the affiliate leader in the conversation, whether they need action, suggestions, or simply psychological support. A relationship will be built with you, as their Alliance Rep., to become a resource, expert and the first person they call when they need to ask a question relating to gifted. It should not require a large amount of time for you (it is designed for minimal time on your part) - just follow up and a quick contact monthly. This is to be used as a tool.

To support the affiliates and YOU, we have added to our website an "Affiliate Handbook" that you should review for ideas. That way you can refer parents and affiliate leaders to this extensive resource.

The program requires 1) a monthly contact by email, or phone, to each affiliate in your region 2) a fall and spring regional gathering to get them all together.

**Monthly Contact** - During the monthly contact, please ask what events, discussions or activities each group has planned, what the Alliance can do to support them, if they need topic/discussion suggestions, etc.? Can we promote a speaker/event/activity state-wide to help them? Do they need a speaker from the Alliance for an event or meeting? Do they need more Alliance brochures/flyers to have available at each event or meeting? We have been trying to send a pack of 6 newsletters to each affiliate when they are published— for the purpose of attracting new members. Please ask them if they have received them.

A Monthly Contact Form needs to be filled out and emailed to Marie Brucker, [m.brucker@comcast.net](mailto:m.brucker@comcast.net), and current President, Ellen Fiedler, [EllenFiedler@comcast.net](mailto:EllenFiedler@comcast.net). If Alliance support is needed, at that time, Marie or the current Vice President for Affiliates will contact the Alliance board member necessary to assist the affiliate.

**Bi-annual Gathering** - The gathering of the regional affiliate groups is designed to be a "shot in the arm" and re-energize each member to keep the advocacy efforts going for gifted children. It is set to minimize the feelings of isolation and to share ideas. This can be held at a church, office, home, etc. with each affiliate giving a 10 minute recap of what their group is doing/planning and bring 2-3 questions of which they are looking for suggestions. Keep it simple and a time to share. Keep it positive! Redirect when necessary!

We are very excited to support you in the RR program and to see all of the benefits state-wide for all our affiliates, and therefore, Michigan gifted children! THANK YOU.

**Marie Brucker,**  
VP of Affiliates

**Ellen Fiedler,**  
President

**MI Alliance for Gifted Education**  
2008-2009  
Regional Representative (RR) Program  
**Monthly Contact Form**

*Mark your calendars - Please email or call each affiliate leader on the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month. This will allow enough time for email reminders and call backs, as needed, in order to **email your completed form BY THE 15<sup>th</sup> of each month** (Sept - May) to Marie Brucker, [m.brucker@comcast.net](mailto:m.brucker@comcast.net) and Ellen Fiedler, [EllenFiedler@comcast.net](mailto:EllenFiedler@comcast.net). Thank you very much for your dedication in helping to meet the needs of the gifted child! As we know, "One size doesn't fit all."*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Affiliate Name & City: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**1. What events/meetings or activities are planned in your group?:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**2. How can Alliance support your group?** (Can we promote a speaker/event/activity state-wide to help? Do you need a speaker from the Alliance for an event or meeting? Do you need more of our brochures to have available at each event or meeting?):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**3. Any questions or suggestions that you need** (topics for meetings, speakers, book, resources?):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**ACTION REQUIRED:**

Alliance Board follow up required as noted: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

RR Follow up required as noted (include date & time): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

General Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Remember: It's not about the content of the information that they share - it is about you being a consistent, monthly voice of encouragement to them throughout the year. It is the feel of being a part of something bigger than your school or district - to affect positive change for children. Thank you!**

## **REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE LOGISTICS FOR HELPING PARENTS START A GROUP**

For use by Regional Representatives (not by the group)

1. An evaluation of the situation comes first...most parents are calling because they are unable to get the needs of their children met and they have come up against some obstacles. **An Alliance officer must be contacted to help a group affiliate.**

### **Questions to ask when starting:**

- WHO in the district have the parents tried to communicate with?
  - What were the results? (Will you need to be SUPER positive to smooth over for difficult encounters?)
  - Review other options, chain of command? (gifted and talented coordinator, curriculum director, Superintendent, board members)
  - What are the parents' current goals? Do they need to brainstorm or just need information?
  - Are there other parents they know about who feel similarly? Suggest some places to find people. Go over how much more a positive force they will be if they organize themselves, establish a mission statement and set goals, join the Alliance.
  - Parents approach the administrator politely, cooperatively (what will parents offer the district to show they want to work together), getting specific date as a follow-up to requests. The number of parents should closely match the number of administrators at meeting (never overpower).
  - Send thank yous to those from administration attending, helping.
  - Are district goals/mission positive for gifted? Are achievement standards appropriate for gifted? How can parents align their goals for gifted to mirror the district's mission statement? Are advocates part of school improvement, g/t advisory committee, school board yet? Find allies – other parent organizations, businesses, community leaders, journalists.
2. Regional Representative – When first meeting with a group (can be as few as 3-5 people) and discovering that they DO want to get organized, offer Alliance handouts “how to get started”, application, “why join a group” and other handouts that they could use. See available handouts for them in Handbook.
  3. Emphasize ways to work cooperatively with district...sandwiching requests between thank yous for what district offers. The district can help BOTH parents and staff by bringing in speakers to tell about curriculum differentiation, needs of gifted, etc.
  4. If a brochure is not published already with list of enrichments at each school level, offer to help put that together so that ALL may know what is available (then you will know better what might come next). Makes good topic for first meeting.

Communication!

5. **Seriously wanting to affiliate? They will also need the EIN form AND they will need to have bylaws (they have 3 months to complete). Emphasize importance of being “independent” of district, yet cooperative.**

6. Share the load --many groups fail because it is all on one or two people's shoulders. Have TWO presidents, 2 vice presidents, a recording secretary and a corresponding secretary, treasurer (computer savvy). Dole out to others extra jobs. Each officer should be in charge of only ONE meeting a year. About 4-6 meetings each year— with info speakers, family fun/enrichment, crucial district hot topics, etc. See Handbook for meeting ideas. ALSO IMPORTANT--try to HAVE SOMETHING FOR KIDS at most of your meetings-- that is what brings in the parents (have sitters for little ones from high school students who are fulfilling community service, Honor Society, and Girl or Boy Scouts).

## **PAPERWORK...**

1. There is a 2-page group application to be completed (1) The current fee to affiliate (and annual renewal fee) is \$40.00. When a group is starting for the first time, that fee is "waved" if they have 5 NEW INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS (paying \$20 each--the reduced rate for members through an affiliate.) At large membership is \$30.00 annually. Group becomes "nonprofit" under Alliance's umbrella (a 501(c)(3) status).  
**Minutes of meetings MUST be kept.**
2. If this is a new group, a financial statement (2) form is not needed the first year. They should keep a copy of form so the treasurer will know how to designate/label the funds that go in and out. Financial statements and REAPPLICATIONS are due EACH YEAR. Group registration is CALENDAR YEAR...July 1 – June 30—MAKE NOTE OF IT. (All forms are online at [www.migiftedchild.org](http://www.migiftedchild.org))
3. They will also complete the agreement form (3) each year—to confirm alignment with The Alliance goals.
4. In order to be an affiliate in good standing, they MUST have their application to Alliance executive (their 3 forms), along with their EIN # and their by-laws. Sample by-laws are available. Renewals of those 3 forms are due each June 30 to maintain affiliation.
5. All of the paperwork, fees are mailed to Michigan Alliance for Gifted Education, 5355 Northland Dr. NE, Ste C-188; Grand Rapids, MI 49525, phone (616) 365-8230
6. Our Executive Secretary will input members into the computer list, deposit money, then photocopy paperwork and mail to the VP for Affiliates and their Regional Representative.

AS THE NEWBIE PARENTS ARE WORKING THROUGH THEIR FIRST CONTACTS with administration in establishing themselves as a viable parent group in the district, HAVE THEM CHECK WITH REGIONAL REP AND/OR VP FOR AFFILIATES OFTEN! Phrasing of the words is VERY important to prevent walls building between or offending teachers and administrators. Empathy and friendliness are very important, but so is smiling **persistently** as you ask for follow-ups and **how can we help**, etc. Never burn your bridges. Be flexible, watch for openings, be opportunistic.

SETTING GOALS AND REVISITING GOALS is also very important so that they maintain a viable focus. Don't stop when parents get a decent plan of identification, or when you do form clusters, or don't stop when you have a magnet class. There are lots of other ways of differentiating that will help meet the needs of the many gifted that don't make it into those classes. And then there is always the social and emotional needs...is there a special counseling group for g/t or trained teachers and counselors who KNOW what gifted and talented kids are all about? Is there ongoing support and in-service for staff? (see Brainstorming Form for help)

The regional reps need to be calling each affiliate or groups just starting every month to see how the Alliance can help support them. Vice versa communication also works!

Groups should also receive a small pack of newsletters, membership tri-folds and resource sheets each fall in time for school open houses. Call Executive Secretary for supplies for your region.

Be there... Be cooperative... Be positive...  
and don't go away!

# **MEETINGS AND PROGRAMS FOR PARENT GROUPS**

## MEETINGS AND PROGRAMS FOR AFFILIATES

Some groups prefer to plan the Affiliate's calendar for the following academic year in the spring or summer, with dates and topics. As the year progresses, find the speakers to cover the topics you've selected or change the topics if necessary. It is best to use general topics when you make long-range plans, then you can make the title specific when you find a speaker. For example, *The Social and Emotional Needs of the Gifted*, *How to Work with School Districts and Boards of Education*, *How Can Gifted also be Learning Disabled?* or *Curriculum Strategies for the Regular Classroom (K-12)*.

Be flexible and feel free to adjust topics according to current needs for your Affiliate. Do not overload yourselves with too many general membership meetings. Save time and energy for meetings with district administrators and your Executive Committee.

Distinguish between programs dealing with advocacy, general information about raising a gifted child, show and tell of children's projects, and social events. There is a place for all types of programs, and it helps to keep a good mix to appeal to a wide variety of needs.

Always write thank-you letters to visitors and speakers at your meeting. If appropriate, send a copy to the person's supervisor.

Many Affiliates offer free enrichment programs for children and some groups find that their children's programs can be run at the same time as the regular meeting, in a nearby room. This may increase attendance since the meeting then becomes something for the whole family and the parents don't have to leave children at home with a sitter.

Some examples of successful children's programs are *Creative Drama*, *Game Commission speaker*, *Games Tournament*, and *a Scavenger Hunt*. A bonus of children's programs is that the children look forward to seeing each other.

Field trips are a wonderful offering for families, and they allow the group to serve as a service organization. The group arranges for the group price and perhaps transportation. Parents pay a fee and your Affiliate picks up any extraneous costs.

Many Affiliates host Teacher Appreciation parties (punch and hors d'oeuvres, little gifts or appreciation certificates). Bring in your **free** Speaker's Bureau speaker (SEE SPEAKER LIST at [www.migiftedchild.org](http://www.migiftedchild.org)) and use this opportunity to help teachers learn more about gifted education.

Covered dish dinners and family picnics provide a good atmosphere for members to get acquainted and a great end of summer or fall starter idea.

Publicize the Affiliate's calendar of events in public newspapers, district's website, etc..

When funding is a problem, some Affiliates put out a can at the meeting marked, "Donations for Copies". Others use a sign: "Copies free to members...all others please pay \$.25 per copy."

# GOAL SETTING

Long-range planning is of utmost importance. Each Affiliate should examine their mission statements and determine a set of long range goals. These goals will then be used to determine the programs and committees which will be needed. A five-year plan seems to be a reasonable length of time to start with, although the goals must be reviewed and evaluated periodically.

A good set of long-range goals will help to determine the budget and give direction and a sense of purpose to the organization. It is important that the membership feel a sense of accomplishment when progress is being made, and it is easier to quantify the progress if goals are set and realized.

Some possible long-term goals might be:

- **To improve program quality** to include acceleration, enrichment, compacting, independent study, and credit by exam. (Michigan does NOT have any laws or state guidelines for gifted/talented.)
- **To encourage the district** to improve screening, parent education, teacher in servicing, and mentoring.
- **To educate parents** regarding their choices, IEPs and how to use them, and generally how to advocate for the appropriate education of gifted children. (See handout "Challenging Opportunities" on <http://www.migiftedchild.org>)
- **To develop a group** of parents who will volunteer to attend meetings as an advocate and support system.
- **To help parents** advocate for and support their gifted child(ren) and to find the joy in parenting these creative beings.
- **To research** a particular area of interest.

Some possible short-term goals might be:

- To raise funds for a particular project or to lobby
- To increase membership in your Affiliate
- To respond to immediate problems as they arise (e.g. issues regarding curriculum or legislative changes affecting gifted)
- To establish a fan out to notify members of the need for help on committees and/or upcoming events
- To plan a regional meeting or event
- To involve gifted kids in a meeting

As your Affiliate grows, it will become necessary for you to set long and short-term goals which will be tailored to your specific needs. The Alliance encourages you to set these goals based on individual difference within your school district. It is also recommended that you include your school district's administration in defining the goals of your Affiliate.

# Brainstorming

Everyone starts with their own 'brainstorming' paper. Leader picks topic? Write your own top ideas of what you would like to happen in squares #1, 2, and 3. Pass it to the right. On your new paper, write three MORE ideas in squares #4, 5, and 6. They can piggyback off of #1, 2, 3. Pass it to the right. Fill in squares #7, 8, and 9. Now star what idea (or two) on THIS paper really sounds **great**, 'doable.'

1)	2)	3)
4)	5)	6)
7)	8)	9)

*Thank you for sharing!*

## POSITIVE APPROACHES MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Whether you are problem solving a single issue or developing a prioritized list of goals in working with a school district, staying positive will ensure the likelihood of success. Parent advocacy groups have found it essential to establish from the beginning—no negative talk allowed. Maintaining a positive demeanor at all times is essential when approaching conversations and ‘negotiations’ with districts, teachers and with each other. No administrator wants to deal with a group that is known to have a few “bulls in the china shop.” At the same time, we have observed so many districts where positive parents of gifted actually refuse to take lead rolls in a parent advocacy group because of those same naysayers. What a shame that all should lose out when a few ground rules established from the beginning makes all the difference in the world.

Problem solving is something we have all learned to do. Putting everything in a positive format is the key to a broader acceptance of what is presented. The art of being politically correct requires such finesse. Such practice will enhance both the less formal brainstorming within a group for determining goals and the more formal presentations to school boards. As with all problem solving, results need to be prioritized. Determine which will be long or short term goals. Ascertain which are easy or more difficult to accomplish. Refine these goals to succinctly and positively state what is desired. When doing this process as a group, a group which stands behind the end results, your actions will be considered much more seriously than coming from one individual. Thus the importance of forming advocacy groups.

To help groups expand their list of positive action verbs, we offer some here:

expand	achieve	build	share
establish	attract	produce	work toward
invent	boost	develop	start
increase	find	stimulate	show
extend	improve	encourage	kindle
support	guide	promote	launch
design	handle	enhance	navigate

## IDEAS FOR PARENT GROUPS

Parent groups can add so much to the enrichment of the total educational environment within a district. With their positive ideas and pleasant prodding accompanied by helping hands, many opportunities become available to the students that would not have been possible without these parents and their stick-to-itism. Here are just a few of the things that have happened in other districts.

### **WORKING TOGETHER (parents and district) RESULTS IN...**

- 1) EVERYONE is more informed
- 2) Pleasant, cooperative relationship is developed
- 3) Heightened awareness of importance of servicing high ability students.
- 4) Communication bridges are built
- 5) Parent input enhances being in line with mission and vision of school district
- 6) Partnership ideas start blossoming
- 7) As a parent group INDEPENDENT from the district, BOTH parties have a sense of equal power and self-assurance in this relationship

### **ESTABLISHING A PARENT GROUP PROVIDES...**

- 1) a common voice for all parents
- 2) a channel, established pathway for voicing one's concerns
- 3) opportunities to learn and receive support concerning gifted children
- 4) a source of information about gifted, about district's efforts to meet their needs
- 5) a greater awareness of the parent's role in what the district's gifted and talented program provides
- 6) a source of enrichment opportunities for students, additional time to meet with intellectual peers

### **POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES OF AN ORGANIZED ADVOCACY GROUP**

#### **GROUP FAMILY FIELD TRIPS**

- \* Cranbrook Institute--groups can buy their own laser light show!
- \* Detroit Federal Reserve Bank & nearby downtown sights
- \* Impressions 5 in Lansing--deals for groups and overnights (check local museums)
- \* Gem & Mineral Shows -- kids love them, demonstrators love kids!
- \* Theater productions
- \* Band concerts, DSO children's series
- \* Henry Ford Museum and lots more
- \* Gardening, led by local club
- § <http://www.resa.net/dyd/> --summer programs

#### **MEETINGS ON TOPICS OF CONCERN**

- \* Peer Relationships
- \* Building Self Esteem
- \* Perfectionism
- \* ADHD and Gifted, 2E
- \* Management
- \* Emotional needs of gifted, talented, creative
- \* Fostering creativity
- \* Enrichment opportunities/competitions
- \* Learning Disabled/Gifted--it happens!
- \* Motivation
- \* Discipline
- \* Underachievement
- \* Stress
- \* MATS, MATSY info

- \* Sibling Rivalry      \*Curriculum  
Compacting
- \* Sensitivities      \*What helps challenge  
them?
- \* Learning Styles/teaching styles
- \* Problem Solving/decision making
- \* Creative child/different learner
- \* What's in store for M.School—academic  
sequencing, "to dos" leading to college

### **BRINGING KIDS TOGETHER**

- \* Picnic with nature exploration
- \* Exploration of deaf culture, handicapped
- \* Demonstration and playing of Academic games, science exploration
- \* Computer fun, introduce new game or program
- \* Science experiments you can eat (each family "teaches" one)
- \* Writing seminar, with local author/ teacher
- \* Math games, fun night or language fun
- \* Doodling seminar, or art with members of local art council
- \* Travelogue with activities, esp. in area of interest or study
- \* Potlucks with easy, fun activities for kids
- \* Clubs: Chess, Lego, math, writing, art, etc.
- \* And many more—just "brainstorm"!

Combine any of these with a Book Fair, Door Prizes to earn money

**NOTE: Becoming an Alliance parent group gives you non-profit status & source of info & help.**

*>>Your major source for support & resources:*

***MI Alliance for Gifted Education***  
[www.migiftedchild.org](http://www.migiftedchild.org); 616-365-8230

## **SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR MEETINGS**

### ***ACADEMIC TOPICS***

- ▶ Microcomputers and the Gifted
- ▶ Hands-on Science for Elementary Children
- ▶ Left and Right Brain Dominance – Influenced on Learning Styles
- ▶ Critical Thinking for the Gifted Student
- ▶ Poetry and the Gifted
- ▶ Research Skills for the Gifted
- ▶ Cognitive and Affective Processing
- ▶ Humanities: A Middle School Alternative
- ▶ Thinking Skills Continuum for the Elementary School Child
- ▶ Integrating the Arts into a Gifted Curriculum
- ▶ Higher-Level Thinking Skills
- ▶ Future Problem-Solving and the Gifted
- ▶ Theatre Arts for the Gifted
- ▶ Creativity and Creative Problem –Solving
- ▶ Philosophy: 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Course of Study for Gifted Students
- ▶ Olympics of the Mind Program
- ▶ Mathematics for the Elementary and High School Gifted
- ▶ Photography and Filmmaking Activities
- ▶ Puppetry for the Young Gifted Student
- ▶ Science for the Gifted
- ▶ Social Studies for the Gifted
- ▶ Language Arts for the Gifted
- ▶ Acceleration and curriculum compactions

### ***PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT TOPICS***

- ▶ Introduction to Nature of Gifted Programs
- ▶ Selling the Gifted Program to School Board in a Period of Declining Resources
- ▶ IEP Development and Due Process for Gifted Students
- ▶ Revolving Door Identification Model
- ▶ Enrichment Door Identification Model
- ▶ Enrichment Approaches to Gifted Programming
- ▶ Programming for the Senior High Gifted Student
- ▶ Effective Use of community Resources
- ▶ Administrating Quality Programs
- ▶ History of Gifted Programs (MI and US)
- ▶ Identification and Evaluation of Gifted Students
- ▶ Writing Curricular Objectives and Planned Course Statements for Programs
- ▶ Using Learning Centers in the Elementary Gifted Classroom
- ▶ Higher Education Provisions
- ▶ Assessment piece for acceleration and curriculum compacting

## **SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL TOPICS**

- ▶ Self-Concept for the Gifted
- ▶ Common Problems Faced by Gifted – Solutions Too!
- ▶ Importance of the Affective Component
- ▶ Counseling of the Gifted
- ▶ How to Help Your Gifted Child
- ▶ Study and Organizational Skills
- ▶ Dealing with Parents of Gifted and Non-Gifted Children
- ▶ Behavior Problems of the Gifted
- ▶ The Psychology of the Gifted
- ▶ Mentor Relationships for the Gifted
- ▶ The Nature and Needs of the Gifted

## **GENERAL TOPICS**

- ▶ Kids Working with Kids
- ▶ Characteristics of Kindergarten Gifted Children
- ▶ Underachievers Among Gifted
- ▶ Resources for the Gifted: Materials for Teachers and Parents
- ▶ Consortium Approaches to Programming
- ▶ International Approaches to Programming
- ▶ Organizing Effective Parent Groups
- ▶ Due Process Issues for the Gifted
- ▶ Parents and School Districts Working Together
- ▶ Public Relations for Your Gifted Parent Group

## **FREE OR INEXPENSIVE PROGRAMS**

- ▶ School personnel will often address a group at no charge. This may be a psychologist, school board member, teacher, gifted program director, counselor, superintendent, etc.
- ▶ Sponsor a Career Discovery Group which matches students with a mentor whom they can “shadow” for one day.
- ▶ Members of your Affiliate often know a great deal about giftedness and related topics. Ask them to report about what they learned at an ALLIANCE conference, Affiliate weekend, or other similar programs.
- ▶ Make audio or video tapes of your programs (with speaker’s permission) and share with other parents or Affiliates.
- ▶ Ask other neighboring Affiliate leaders to come to speak to your group. Return the favor.
- ▶ Sponsoring a regional event can be a great way to finance the presentation of a speaker who would ordinarily be too expensive for the Affiliate. Seed money is available from the Alliance, admission would be charged, and the seed money returned to The Alliance. The Affiliate is allowed to retain the profits. Contact your Regional Representatives for more information.

## CHALLENGING OPPORTUNITIES FOR MICHIGAN YOUTH

Michigan Academic Competition (Quiz Bowl, general knowledge)

[www.hsquizbowl.org](http://www.hsquizbowl.org)

Knowledge Master/Challenge Cup (general knowledge—similar to Quiz Bowl)

<http://www.greatauk.com/>

### **LANGUAGE:**

1) Junior Great Books <http://www.greatbooks.org/junior>

2) Linguistics Olympics <http://www.lingolym.org/>

We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution...<http://www.civiced.org/>

Future Problem Solving 800-256-1499; [www.fpsp.org](http://www.fpsp.org)

The JASON project; [www.mijason.org](http://www.mijason.org) Bringing to the classroom learning about what are the Earth's dynamic systems; how these systems affect life on Earth; and what technologies do we use to study these systems—all in line with National Science and Geography Standards.

MI Social Studies Olympiad sponsored by the Michigan Council for the Social Studies—this involves speaking, drama, 'music', poetry, posters, maps, a large variety of presentations both onsite (has been early May) and off site.

<http://www.michigancouncil.org/Olympiad/>

Model U. N. -- <http://www.nmun.org/>

Let's Get Real [www.LGReal.org](http://www.LGReal.org); an academic competition where teams take on solving a company's real business problem. 717-466-7173 [LCReal@usa.com](mailto:LCReal@usa.com)

### **MATH AREA:**

1) Continental Mathematics League (CML) Gr 2-h.s. ph.516-584-2016, St. James, NY; very challenging problem solving

2) Mathcounts (7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grades) 800-580-8973

3) Mathematics Pentathlon (gr k-8) 317-356-6284 [www.mathpentath.org](http://www.mathpentath.org)

4) The Michigan Math League (or Mathematics Leagues, Inc.) 201-568-6328 [www.mathleague.com/](http://www.mathleague.com/); levels 4,5,6; 7 & 8; high school

5) American Mathematics Competitions 401-472-2257

## SCIENCE AREA:

- 1) Science Olympiad, a laboratory activity contest, 516-584-2016
- 2) Physics Olympiad, a national competition, 516-584-2016
- 3) Chemistry Olympiad, national team competition, 202-872-6328
- 4) Westinghouse Science Talent Search: national science research competition, 202-785-2255
- 5) Tests of Engineering Aptitude, Mathematics and Science Team Competitions, 703-548-5387
- 6) Junior Engineering Technical Society (JETS): JETS activities are run at a local, district, regional, state, and national level. Activities include: individual and group tests in competitions in biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics, computer fundamentals and mechanical drawing; a National Engineer Aptitude Test; and an engineering design contest, 703-548-5387
- 7) National Science Teachers Association-National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NSTA-NASA). offers various student programs, 202-453-7100

SCHOOL SCRABBLE® Club and Kits...for club membership of \$20 for class of 30 students, mail \$20 to School Scrabble Club, PO Box 700, Greenport, NY 11944. For each School Scrabble Kit of \$49.95 (provides set up for 6 games--good for about 24 kids)...grades 5-8 <http://school.scrabble-assoc.com/> (site says only two teams of two people can represent each state in national competition. Team entry is \$100 per team.)

Summer Institute of Michigan—selection by high schools (usually counselors) from those who would like to be picked to attend a college “course” for 1 to 2 weeks—big variety of coursework. NO longer available due to drastically reduced funding for Gifted.

### Young Astronauts

<http://www.yac.org/yac/mission.asp?section=overview&age=adults> a five-unit printed science education curriculum for kindergarten through 9th grade through which children explore what's in space, how we get there, how we live there, and what we do while we're there.

Young Authors – often offered as a challenge from the Intermediate School District

Pre-College Programs and Activities for Pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> graders at [www.spartanyouth.msu.edu](http://www.spartanyouth.msu.edu)

Virtual University [www.vu.msu.edu](http://www.vu.msu.edu) Take advanced courses on line during high school.

Midwest Academic Talent Search & Midwest Talent Search for Youth  
MATS,MATSY (gr 3-9). visit <http://www.ctd.northwestern.edu/> Applications to  
participate available September

Destination Imagination [www.destinationimagination.org/](http://www.destinationimagination.org/)

Odyssey of the Mind in Michigan contact [www.odysseyofthemind.com](http://www.odysseyofthemind.com)

## WHAT IS HAPPENING IN YOUR COUNTY?

Contact your local county ISD or ESA for opportunities they provide, i.e., Summer Challenge, Girls+science+math=Choices, County Competitive Robotics, FIRST, leadership training, accelerated math and science, and more.

## WHAT IS HAPPENING IN YOUR DISTRICT?

Help with the sponsorship and coordinating of enriching opportunities in your district. Be delighted at what there is being offered. Work WITH them positively to develop more.

### *Potential means nothing in a starving environment*

WHAT DID WE FORGET ON THIS LIST? This is just a beginning. What is YOUR district offering or competing in that hasn't been mentioned. ARE THERE ERRORS IN PHONE NUMBERS OR WEBSITES? Please email your additions and corrections with correct updated contact phone or website information to the Alliance's current Website Coordinator found at our "Contact" link at [www.migiftedchild.org](http://www.migiftedchild.org)

# **PUBLIC RELATIONS**

## PUBLIC RELATIONS

Your Affiliate will have the most impact if the community it serves is knowledgeable of its activities. When the meetings, activities, philosophies, and goals of the group are presented in a positive manner, support for the group will increase. The support may take the form of new memberships, financial donations, donations of services such as the use of a copy machine or meeting room, materials for projects, refreshments for meetings or activities, free speakers for your meetings or special programs for the students.

The local media is a source of much-needed free publicity. Make a list of all local newspapers, radio, and television stations, including the proper contact person in each case. Be sure to update the list regularly, and note deadlines where appropriate. Each community publishes a free booklet of local services and non-profit organizations. Check with your local Chamber of Commerce to participate.

It is helpful to have a committee who will work on public relations. It is much more than a one-person job!

Send copies of all public relations material to your school district administrators, school board directors, principals, teachers of the gifted, teachers' union presidents and building representatives.

### ***Newsletters, Bulletins, and Brochures***

Newsletters are an important part of an effective parent group. Many parents who are unable to attend meetings will read and benefit from information contained in a newsletter.

Newsletters may contain the following:

- ▶ Report on the activities of your Executive Committee and Affiliate
- ▶ Announcements of meetings and upcoming events – local, regional and state
- ▶ Information provided by the Alliance
- ▶ List of Board members' names and positions, newsletter editor, and a contact person for further information
- ▶ A membership form in each issue
- ▶ Articles and columns written by local "experts"
- ▶ A Message from the President
- ▶ Reprints of articles from journals and other newsletters. Be sure to get permission and give credit.

The cover page of the newsletter may be used as a meeting notice. Sometimes using a different color or paper for the cover page is helpful as an attention-getter.

In addition to a newsletter, a single-topic bulletin can be a vital communication tool. A bulletin creates interest, promotes participation, and educates your members and others in your district who should know more about your special interest. It provides a visual yardstick of what your group is doing or attempting to do. It ties your local needs to a broader spectrum of information from state levels and legal issues to the research and studies of experts in the field.

An informational brochure may be used to introduce your Affiliate and advertise the calendar of events. Be sure to include a membership application. The brochure should be distributed at all fundraising events and meetings, and should be included in all press releases. Libraries, colleges and other community organizations often allow brochures to be placed in a lobby or on a bulletin board. A bi-fold or tri-fold design allows you to fold, staple, and mail without an envelope.

Use a professional looking masthead and be consistent by always using the same one on all bulletins, news releases, and meeting notices, in order to increase your identify and recognition factor. The Alliance logo may be duplicated and integrated into your masthead.

Brevity is the answer. Keep your information short and concise. Bullets are a great tool! A good practice would be to consult your Regional Rep or MI Alliance contact to review your correspondence before sending.

If you have access to a copy machine in your district, ask to use it and offer to supply your own paper. If the district will not allow the use of their copy machine, perhaps a member will let use one at his or her place of business. A local printer may offer a discount rate.

### ***Newspaper Opportunities***

A news release is an article which describes something specific such as an award given or received by the Affiliate, a special accomplishment achieved by the organization, an official comment on a new law or regulation, or an event sponsored by the group.

A news release should always include the words “news release” and the date of release. Print it on letterhead and include names and phone numbers of two contact persons. Submit the release at least two weeks in advance of the event, if possible.

Letters to the Editor are a wonderful opportunity to educate the public about your Affiliate on the issues concerning gifted education. Be sure to include information in your closing regarding a contact person and phone number.

Consider writing a guest opinion for the newspaper, or requesting that the newspaper do an interview.

Newspapers will carry meeting announcements in the Club News or similar section. Keep your announcements short, but include specific information about the program and a note that the public is welcome.

## **Radio**

Federal Regulations require that radio and television stations offer time to public and non-profit agencies for public service announcements. A public service announcement is usually a maximum of 60 seconds long. Be sure the station has the announcement at least a week before you want it to be aired. Some prefer two weeks.

Request that a member of your Affiliate be interviewed on a talk show. It may help to send literature about the group with your request.

Check local programming, possibly Michigan Public Radio that carries programs regarding kids and/or education.

## **Television**

News programs sometimes have a community calendar in which your event can be included. Submit the information as you would to a newspaper.

A Cable TV public access channel will air announcements for non-profit organizations free of charge. Be sure to request and follow the very specific guidelines. Review their program format so you can prepare copy that suits this format.

If you wish to have television coverage of an event, contact the assignment editor at the station and provide a written description of the event at least one week in advance.

A press conference is a pre-arranged interview and issued when the Affiliate has a major story which is of public interest. Schedule the conference before noon and prepare press packets for the reporters. The press conference is announced to the media with a news release at least one week in advance, and follow up calls to the news desk of the television stations and newspapers should be made before the conference.

## **Community Speakers' Bureau**

One of the best ways to increase the visibility of your Affiliate is to provide speakers for other community organizations such as men's and women's clubs, education organizations, fraternal organizations and Parent/Teacher Organization. A list of such organizations is available from your local Chamber of Commerce.

## **Other Publicity Ideas**

- Post meeting notices and bulletins on PTA and school bulletin boards, community centers, local libraries, churches and synagogues.
- Some Chamber of Commerce and local Municipalities provide calendars. Ask to have your Affiliate's activities included.
- Send a news release to each PTA for inclusion in their newsletters. Request that your meetings be listed in the PTA calendar. Check all deadlines well in advance so that you don't miss any.

- Displays of children's work may be lent to banks, office buildings, libraries, and restaurants. Be sure that the name of the Affiliate, address and phone number are visible.
- Have a booth at a local fair or sponsor a concession. Have posters and brochures available.
- Donate books and periodical subscriptions to the Local Public Library. Include a bookplate indicating that it was donated by your Affiliate (and the library becomes the gate keeper of your own lending library!).
- Hosting a regional conference or assisting with a State Conference is a wonderful way to advertise your Affiliate. Much interest is generated, and attendees often wish to join the sponsoring group(s).

## **PARENTS AND TEACHERS WORKING TOGETHER FOR ADVOCACY THROUGH PUBLIC RELATIONS**

**BY FRANCES A. KARNES, JOAN D. LEWIS, AND KRISTEN R. STEPHENS**

Public support for the education of gifted and talented youth has waxed and waned over the past three decades. Parents, teachers, and other advocates need to become knowledgeable and use positive public relations strategies on a continuing basis. Karnes and Lewis (1997) urged supporters of gifted education to go beyond talking among themselves and provide accurate information to a variety of groups. With the many changes taking place in education, it is imperative that a broad foundation on the nature and needs of gifted students be presented to other educators and the general public. Public relations provides the vehicle to increase local, state and national support.

Advocacy and public relations go hand in hand. The former is the act of writing or speaking in favor of an issue by providing support and recommendation. The latter, within an educational context, means a systematically and continuously planned, executed, and evaluated program of interactive communications and human relations. It employs paper, electronic, and people media to attain internal as well as external support for an educational institution. More effort must be given to the integration of advocacy and public relations for the benefit of gifted children and youth to meet their educational levels.

Reasons abound for the necessity for such a position. Over 10 years ago, Grika (1986) indicated a public resistance to funding special programs due to the far-reaching misunderstanding of the gifted population. Karnes and Riley (1991) agreed that the gifted are often victims of damaging stereotypes and myths. Renzulli (1993) also believed that short lived programs in gifted education were due to a lack of large cadre of persons who knew the need for such programs.

Dettmer (1991) indicated that the limited public support might result from the subordinate role that public relations has played in the field of gifted education as compared to other issues in the field. Riley and Karnes (1993b) concluded that public relations would lead to better understanding of the unique needs of gifted students, gain support for appropriate educational programs, keep all constituent groups informed on key issues, and build an knowledge base for advocacy.

### **Importance of Using the Media**

Media coverage that is supportive of gifted education is limited. Newspaper articles located using the NewsBank Electronic Index, a CD-ROM service with access to over 500 newspapers from all of states, have become less numerous over the years and tend to be limited in topics pertaining to gifted education (Meadows & Karnes, 1992; Lewis & Karnes, 1995). The Index included more news about problems than about strengths an benefits of gifted education.

For example, Lewis and Karnes (1995) found only one newspaper article about Javits programs, even though there are about 75 grants awarded around the country. The U.S. Department of Education National Excellence report issued in November 1993 elicited just one

listing in NewsBank. Unresolved problems relating to identification, minority enrollment, and funding were more likely to receive multiple listings (Lewis & Karnes, 1995).

Similarly, magazine articles about the characteristics and accomplishments of gifted children and youth are not very numerous and their number has declined. Too many of these features were written by people who were not specialists in gifted education and

the content was not always accurate (Lewis & Karnes 1996). They recommend that parents might write about their own positive experiences with their children, teachers could describe appropriate and effective activities for use at home and at school, and researchers and teacher educators need to write about their specialty areas for local, state, and national magazines focusing on a variety of audiences.

Appropriate education for gifted children has a history of perceived and actual elitism to overcome. Opponents are vocal; supporters need to speak out, too. Parents and teachers can write strong, factual articles in newspapers, magazines, and newsletters and provide appropriate news releases for television and radio so that the public can be presented with more than one point of view. Contact your local newspaper editor for publication guidelines and become familiar with the school and social editors. Call or write the editors of the magazines to which you want to submit articles and ask for guidelines and sample copies. Alvino (1991), Pentecost (197), and Steinke and Steinke (1987 offer useful “how to” suggestions.

When writing or speaking, it is important to recognize and advocate for the best quality education for all students while advocating for gifted children. The best way to counter negative publicity about gifted education is to address the issues logically and unemotionally with facts. Do not respond directly or refer to the erroneous information. Act, do not react. Work together as a group and respond with one voice. Building a strong knowledge base among the various constituencies in society about why gifted education is a reasonable and necessary component of the American educational system is the preventative component of public relations.

### **State Level Strategies**

Riley and Karnes (1993a) and Troxclair and Karnes (1997) studied the potential impact of two state gifted associations joining with similar groups serving educators and parents.

In both investigations, other educational state associations, totaling several hundred thousand individuals, voiced interest in gifted education for conference representations and information for newsletters and journals. The authors urged gifted organizations to assist other educational associations in forming special committees and position papers. They further proposed that networking with other state groups would forge strong alliances and offer a foundation for mutual trust and support.

A strategy used to determine the level of support of gifted education was employed by Karnes and Riley (1997). A telephone survey of a randomly drawn representative sample of residents in a southern state indicated a very positive attitude toward gifted education. When such studies are conducted, appropriate vehicles for dissemination of the information, such as news releases, press conferences, radio and television talk shows, and professional newsletters and journals, should be employed.

## Target Your Audiences

For your public relations efforts to be as effective as possible, select your audience carefully. The general public is a large, nebulous group that can be divided into individuals within the school system and those external to it (Dettmer, 1991). Each of these two groups can be subdivided into specific audiences.

Internal to the school are gifted and talented students and their parents and teachers. There are also all the other teachers who focus on other special needs students, different content, and grade levels; curriculum specialists; counselors; librarians and media consultants; the various building and district administrators; school board members; school support personnel, such as secretaries, custodial staff, and bus drivers; and all the other students and parents in the school system. Connected to the schools, but not actually a part of them are teacher educators and other college and university faculty and personnel, curriculum and textbook consultants, researchers, and theorists.

External to the schools is a very diverse group comprised of the following: local, state, and national governmental leaders, members of state boards of education, and other policy makers; business and industry leaders and members of financial institutions; members of the media; professionals such as architects, dentists, doctors, lawyers, and social psychologists; practicing artists and members of art associations professional sports figures and individuals who administer various leisure activities; spiritual leaders; social leaders in the community; and visionaries and futurists (Karnes & Lewis 1997; Lewis & Karnes, in press).

## Getting Started

There are many things to consider when initially planning an effective public relations campaign. However, a carefully planned campaign will ensure that every detail has been thoroughly and thoughtfully deliberated. Furthermore, strategic planning in the beginning may save time, energy, and money in the long run.

Strategic planning is composed of the following steps:

*Define the purpose, vision, or ultimate goal of your campaign.* What are you trying to make happen by initiating his campaign? Examples of a purpose of vision might be: establishing a mandate or other policies regarding gifted education; increasing public awareness of the importance of gifted education; and restructuring identification practices for the gifted program within a school district.

*Determine your budget.* What financial resources do you have to implement your campaign? Many public relations strategies are free or relatively inexpensive, while others require more substantial funds. It is important to be aware of your financial limitations early so that you may plan accordingly.

*Identify the objectives and activities that will help you accomplish your ultimate goal.* Who are your target audiences at the local, state, and national levels? What is the specific message for each group you are targeting, and what public relations strategies would best deliver this message and are most cost-effective?

*Establish a timeline and designate responsibilities.* When will you initiate each activity? When do you anticipate completing each activity/objective? Setting deadlines will help keep your activities on target. What person(s) will be responsible for each activity/objective? When delegating responsibilities, consider the talents and expertise of your group members. For example, one individual may be proficient in public speaking, while another has exceptional talent in graphic art or writing. Use these personal points of power to the advantage of the campaign.

*Develop a method for evaluating progress toward your goal.* When establishing your initial goals, make sure they are measurable and specific. In addition, develop ways to document and record progress throughout the duration of your campaign. Thorough evaluation will help you determine what strategies have been the most successful and which strategies need to be altered or eliminated all together. Knowledge of such information can help increase the cost-effectiveness of your campaign.

*Consider procedures for getting others involved.* Public relations campaigns require teamwork and commitment. The more people you get involved, the broader your campaign will reach. Consider ways of recruiting or increasing the involvement of others in your efforts.

By making the crucial decisions in the above steps, your campaign will be organized and ready for implementation. Organization is essential for a well-planned, successful public relations campaign (Lewis & Karnes, in press).

## **Possible Strategies**

There are numerous strategies that can be used to disseminate information regarding your campaign. Tactics should be selected depending on your budget and other resources, the audience you are addressing, and your intended message (Lewis & Karnes, in press).

## **Non-Print Media Strategies**

### Radio

Public Service Announcements

### Telephone

Hotlines

Answering machine recordings

Telephone trees/networks

### Television

- Talk shows
- Commercials
- News Reports
- Community channel
- Public Service Announcements

Videotapes, videodiscs, interactive videos

## **Print Media Strategies**

Advertising slugs (postal stamps used on postage meters for mass mailings)

Banners

Billboards

Bookmarks

Brochures, pamphlets, and flyers

Bus placards

Commercial message boards

Email, listservs

Electronic signs

Faxes

Letters

Magazines and journals

Multimedia presentations

Newsletters

Newspapers

- Op-ed articles
- Letters to the Editor
- Editorials
- Feature articles
- Paid advertisements

Novelty Items

- Buttons
- Pencils
- Note pads
- Tote bags

Piggy back mailings (information included in other groups' mailings)

Postcards

Posters

Stickers

T-Shirts

Web pages

Wire service

## **Other Strategies**

Displays

Presentations at conferences and meetings

Proclamations (by governor, mayor, etc.)

Special Events

- Ribbon cuttings
- Recognition ceremonies  
for supporters, teachers, parents, etc.

Workshops and seminars

Student performance or product displays

## Volunteering

The possibilities of the creative ways in which you can disperse your message are limitless. Whether you choose a simple, inexpensive route or a more elaborate, refined route, make certain you select the type of media that best delivers your message to the target audience.

### Identifying Points of Personal Power

Each of us has more contacts and skills than we realize. Identifying your strengths is the first step to becoming a strong advocate. Parents, you especially have more power than you know. You do not work within the school system, yet you have a vested interest because of your children. You can speak out when it may not be possible for teachers and other members of the school system to do so (Lewis & Karnes, in press). Teachers and other educators can work within the system much more than is currently common (Hertzog, 1998).

First, consider all the people with whom you are acquainted (Lewis & Karnes, in press). Label a large piece of paper with the headings "Points of Personal Power" followed by these categories: career, community, financial, school, social, and spiritual. Further divide community into the arts, business, governmental, leisure, media, and professional. Now, write the names of everyone you can think of in the appropriate section. Next, you need to identify your unique talents and those of this pool of possible supporters. On a separate page, list the following under the heading "Unique Skills:"

#### Creative skills

- Advertising
- Displays
- Slogans
- Videos

#### Development skills

- Annual giving
- Goods and services
- Grant proposals
- Scholarships

#### Interpersonal skills

- Build alliances
- Facilitate collaboration

#### Organizational skills

- Committees
- Governmental
- Plan projects
- Power brokers
- Special skills

#### Speaking skills

- Presentations
- Radio interviews
- Telephone calls
- Television interviews

#### Writing skills

- Advertisements
- Brochures
- Fact sheets
- Letters to legislators
- Letters to the editor
- News articles
- Surveys

Begin with yourself. Place your name next to the skills you feel comfortable doing. Put each of the names from your pool of contacts next to at least one of these categories. Use this list to develop a committee and to begin linking people with complementary skills, such as a good speaker with someone who writes well. The people and the skills you need will vary depending on the audience you plan to target and strategies you select (Lewis & Karnes, in press).

The future of gifted education rests on the abilities of parents and teachers working together to develop and enhance public awareness and support of gifted education. Each person has points of power, specific talents and expertise, and other contributions to develop to public relations and advocacy for our nation's most valuable human resources.

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# **WORKING WITH SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

## MEETING WITH ADMINISTRATORS

- Don't sit back and assume that the school district knows what is best for gifted children. Do your homework! Many parents of gifted children know more about gifted children than do the administrators who are making the decisions.
- Your research is just as valid as the administrator's research. If you have research or documentation to support your position, don't hesitate to present it at appropriate time a meeting.
- You do not have to know everything about an issue to bring it up and tell the school your thoughts about it.
- Your first meeting should be an introductory, courtesy meeting. Be cordial and explain that as a The Alliance Affiliate you are interested in gifted education and would like to work with the district. You may preface that with "we know that the state and the federal government have placed many demands on the schools, but..."
- When changing officers, the new Affiliate president should arrange for a courtesy meeting with administration also, even if the Affiliate has been in existence for a long time.
- Make copies of everything that is sent to the school district. Keep with your other Affiliate records.
- Keep an accurate record of all communications with the district, whether written or verbal.
- Put your request for a meeting in writing and prepare a written agenda for the meeting.
- Be sure to use letterhead for your correspondence. It helps to have the Executive Committee listed down the side of the page, as it shows that you really do represent an organization. Letterhead can be inexpensively prepared on a computer and can be changed as necessary.
- Keep in mind that it's your agenda. Cover the items and don't allow anyone to distract you from it. Keep the agenda short, prioritize and pace the meeting to cover all items in the time allotted. Time allotments could be noted beside each agenda item.
- When meeting with the school personnel, try to divorce yourself from your emotions and use only rational arguments. An emotional display could be detrimental to you and your Affiliate. Stay calm! ☺
- Meetings to discuss general issues should be equally balanced between administrator and parents (5-5, 4-4, 6-6). Be sure that some men, women, new members and experience members from the Affiliate attend the meeting. Get your group together a few days before the meeting to discuss your agenda and strategies. Contact the Alliance for advice on phrasing of requests to be 'politically correct.'
- A mix of personalities among your group will be helpful at a meeting. After a forceful persona speaks, a quiet person could follow (or vice versa).

- Ask to be on the agenda at School Board meetings. Have a statement prepared and be ready to answer questions if the agenda item is an issue to be considered and discussed by the Board.
- It is important that a member of your Affiliate attend and SPEAK at every School Board meeting. If a specific issue is not presented on behalf of the Affiliate, your statement should be a review of your activities and/or events in the future with an invitation to all.
- It is important to help the school administrators and teachers save face. Putting them on the defensive seldom leads to the kind of cooperation that insures the smooth delivery of a program or an IEP. You may choose to discuss agenda items or main points with your Regional Representative of VP or Affiliates as an uninvolved interpreter.
- It is imperative that you keep the child/children in the foreground of any discussion. Keep trying to elicit more ideas. Ask “What can **we** do? How can **we** achieve this? Is there another way that **we** should consider? Will the child’s needs be met? How could the child’s needs best be met?”
- Your persistence and willingness to follow up are the strongest motivators for the school to find a way to satisfy your requests. “Don’t go away!”
- An Affiliate member should be in attendance at **ALL** meetings such as District Council, Citizen’s Advisory Committee, School Board Instructional Committee, PTA, and School Board--meetings which relate to education in your district. This is where you find out what is going on in your schools. Ask Questions! (Introduce self as member of The Alliance; perhaps wear name tags.)
- Take notes at all meetings. Include who said what! If an administrator makes a statement such as “We don’t serve children who are in Kindergarten”, ask if that is policy or practice. **Policy is written** and you should ask to see it.
- It helps to volunteer your time at the school in PTA, parent aids (whether it be in the gifted or the regular class), or other committees. It is harder for school people to say NO to someone who is helping and is interested in much more than a single issue.
- Always write thank-you letters for such things as the vote, the letter, the appointment, the information, or the return phone call.
- Do not try to solve all the problems at once! Choose your battles wisely. There are many issues. Focus, work systematically according to your goals, and DON’T GIVE UP!

## KEY ISSUES TO DISCUSS WITH ADMINISTRATORS

- Students are not being identified until the end of the first or second grade.
- Very little is being done with diagnostic testing in reading and math (spelling and grammar also) in order to make appropriate instructional placements.
- Very little acceleration is being done in math. Some say they have “top groups” but these students are still being instructed at their chronological grade level.
- There is very little enrichment in social studies and science. In fact, science in Grades 1 and 2, and in some cases Social Studies, are only taught “if there is time in the day or week”.
- There is still too much “teacher talk” in the content areas, thus reducing thinking opportunities, as well as keeping students passive and dependent. Thinking and problem solving are important!
- There are still too many schools without advanced classes or sufficient AP opportunities in the basic academics areas--science, math, social studies and English, or IB programs.
- We need to increase in this district the development of an articulated, comprehensive plan for the gifted.
- Many school districts continue to use an IQ score as the **only** criteria for placement in a gifted program. It is important to get input from parents, teachers, the students, more.
- School districts have made little effort in committing a portion of their inservice training for administrators as well as **regular** education teachers. As a result, their knowledge about gifted education and instructional practices is greatly lacking.
- Many school districts are using “cooperative learning” and “heterogeneous grouping” as a panacea and rationale for no instructional grouping when evidence exists to the contrary, particularly in the skill areas.
- The majority of the IEP’s presented to parents do not include modifications to the regular classroom instruction, thus increasing the repetitive homework load for gifted.

\*Adapted by Pamela Miller from material developed by Dr. Kenneth Chuska

## WORKING WITH THE SCHOOL BOARD

The main function of the district school board is to set the policy governing school administration and programs. The board is thus largely responsible for deciding whether a school district does or does not provide a specific program for gifted and talented children. Since board members are either elected directly by the community or appointed by elected officials, they are accountable to the public. Whether or not school board members support providing educational services for the gifted therefore may be a political question (for example: "What will my constituency think?") as well as an educational issue. Furthermore, the scope of a gifted program – the number of grads and children served and the diversity of program alternatives and activities – will be affected by the support and funding by school board members.

Programs for gifted and talented students, by definition, are directed at a minority of children and adolescents. Therefore, teachers and parents must convince board members that even though gifted children are a minority, their educational needs are genuine and they must be served as part of a comprehensive educational program. How can educators and parents encourage board members to maintain a quality gifted program in a school district? The following are some suggestions for fostering support:

***Keep board members educated and aware.*** Before board members voted for that gifted program, parents probably attended meetings and, in a positive way, showed interest in gifted education. When the G/T program is in place, that communication process must continue. Teachers or coordinators may make yearly presentations on program progress. If an oral presentation is not feasible, a short written report is helpful. Brevity is critical, since board members often are overwhelmed with reports.

***Keep board members involved.*** One or two board members should be included on each district or school G/T steering committee. Board members can be invited to in service meetings, parent meetings, or student performances and shows. They also may be invited to speak at local or state parent meetings or other educational meetings.

***Help board members to be accountable.*** For board members to justify continued support and funding for gifted programs, they absolutely must be assured that the program is being evaluated and that the evaluation indicates that the program is achieving its objectives. Educators therefore must keep board members informed of the effectiveness and accomplishments of the G/T program.

***Encourage school boards to have a written policy.*** Board policy is a formalization of philosophy and should be incorporated into a formal policy manual. The written policy becomes the basis by which the school administration and teaching staff can justify decisions favorable to gifted education. An example of a written school board policy is shown in Table 1.

***Be patient, but not too patient.*** Board members need time to gather support and plan resources for a comprehensive gifted program. Furthermore, they logically must view the gifted program in relation to the total needs of the district. At the same time, however, parents and

educators must not permit board members to forget or indefinitely postpone the needs of gifted children, regardless of the stresses of educational problems and too-small budgets.

**Remember that all board members should be encouraged to support gifted education.** On the school board there always will be a variety of viewpoints on gifted education. Some members will be active supporters, and it may be tempting to believe that they alone can keep programs going. It is necessary, however, to also focus one's attention on those less-willing potential supporters, those who require further convincing. Note their doubts and questions and make a special effort to personally give them the information they need to convince them that gifted education truly is legitimate, important, and a widespread national movement. Even if they cannot be converted into strong supporters, the strength of their opposition might at least be reduced. In the long run, even a small victory may help a gifted program survive.

**Help board members be answerable to their public.** Board members will be asked by constituents why they support gifted education. They will also be presented with reasons why they should not help gifted students. In raising their awareness of the needs to the gifted, give them the information they will allow them to justify to their constituents the existence of special programs for gifted. The issues they will need to debate may not always seem reasonable, but they nonetheless must be prepared with answers. Some questions school board members must answer are shown in Table 2.

**Support school board members who support gifted education.** When school board members visibly endorse a program, they need to know there is a public "out there" supporting them. Be vocal in expressing your appreciation to board members who assist with the education you believe in. You can also help them as an individual (NOT as an affiliate) in their campaigns, both formally and informally (for example, by telling your friends what a fine job you believe they are doing). Keeping supporters of gifted education in office will help them to provide appropriate educational opportunities in your community.

**TABLE 1**

<b>SAMPLE SCHOOL BOARD POLICY</b>
<p>The Board of Education and professional staff members are dedicated to developing a comprehensive program for the identification and education of the gifted and talented child. Empathy and understanding are of paramount importance for all personnel having contact with such a child, and are basic to achievement of the district goals.</p> <p>The gifted and talented child is an individual who, by virtue of outstanding abilities, is capable of high performance. This child possesses demonstrated or potential intellectual or specific academic abilities, leadership capabilities, creativity, or talent in the performing or visual arts. This child may need educational services beyond those being provided by the regular school program in order to realize his/her potential.</p>

To provide a comprehensive program for the gifted and talented child, the board recognized that:	
1.	Early identification of the gifted and talented child is necessary to maximize the opportunities for the child's own self-realization. This shall be accomplished through the application of several criteria.
2.	The educational program should provide for continuity and overlap among the elementary, junior high, and high school levels. The program should specify long-range goals for the district, with major emphasis on differentiated curriculum and programming.
3.	The objective of the educational program shall be to meet the gifted and talented child's needs, whether they be intellectual, social, physical, or emotional.
4.	Active parental involvement is viewed as an integral and crucial ingredient of a quality gifted and talented program. Every effort should be made to foster parental involvement in all aspects of their child's educational program.
5.	Qualified instructional and administrative personnel with appropriate knowledge, training, and experience are required to implement an effective program of education for the gifted and talented.
6.	The achievement of a quality gifted and talented educational program demands the presence of a competent ancillary support staff, particularly for the early identification of the gifted or talented child.
7	The administration of the gifted and talented program shall provide leadership and coordination in developing and maintaining a comprehensive district K-12 program.
8	The placement and progress of the gifted or talented child will be continually evaluated and documented, with periodic progress reports issued to the parents of the child.

**TABLE 2**

<b>SOME QUESTIONS SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS MUST ANSWER</b>	
<b>Q.</b> <i>Isn't gifted education elitist?</i>	<b>R.</b> Gifted education only provides appropriate education for children who need a special challenge. These children come from all neighborhoods and economic backgrounds. Children from poor families often need G/T education the most because their families frequently cannot afford enrichment opportunities for them. Also, difficult financial circumstances and backgrounds sometimes prevent parents from having higher expectations for their children. If we are to keep our country a place where people can achieve regardless of their economic background, gifted education can help us. It provides a special challenge to all very bright and talented children, regardless of their cultural or economic background.
<b>Q.</b> <i>We have special programs for the low-ability and the high-ability child – but what about the average child?</i>	<b>R.</b> Most educational programs are geared to the needs of the average child. In a real sense, most money is now spent on the average child. We agree that the average child should never be short-changed in the educational process, but neither should the gifted child.
<b>Q.</b> <i>Aren't all children really gifted, so don't we need to provide for all their gifts?</i>	<b>R.</b> In a sense, yes, all children certainly do have special gifts and talents. Some may play basketball well; some sew well; others have marvelous personal charm. The purpose of a gifted program is to provide for students' academic and creative needs not met by the regular educational program.
<b>Q.</b> <i>Why should we spend more money for kids who will make it anyway?</i>	<b>R.</b> While many gifted kids will “make it anyway”, it is nonetheless unfair to hold them back and make them succeed in spite of the system. More importantly, many gifted children do not “make it anyway”. Their lost talent is both a personal tragedy for them and a loss to society. Studies of high school dropouts have found that between 15 and 20 percent are in the gifted IQ range – certainly many more than one would expect based on their <b>ability</b> ?(right word? Performance?), and certainly a waste.  Schools often turn off gifted children because they do not provide appropriate challenges. Further, when children become bored they sometimes use their creative energy and their giftedness in inappropriate, antisocial, and even destructive ways. They need special help and guidance.
<b>Q.</b> <i>Can we afford to pay for more special education?</i>	<b>R.</b> Gifted programs can be very inexpensive, compared to all other kinds of special education. Also, we save money in the long run by investing small amounts to help make school more meaningful. This small investment helps insure us against larger problems that can be more

costly – for example, bored, apathetic, or even anti-social students, to say nothing of lost talent development.

**Q.** *What do the rest of the kids get out of it?*

**R.** Teachers who become involved in gifted education learn to stimulate creative development, to use questions effectively, to foster good self-concepts and humanistic attitudes, to individualize instruction, and other valuable concepts and skills. Much of this can be – and is – applied in the regular classroom. They become better teachers, and this benefits other children as well.

Also, when there are gifted programs in a school, it becomes apparent to all that excellence is rewarded and valued. When excellence is valued more children become motivated to achieve, and we sometimes discover giftedness where we might not have expected to find it. For example, if there has been peer pressure not to achieve, some students will hide their abilities and talents. Gifted program encourage these children to achieve too. So while providing for the special needs of gifted children, we also encourage hard work and excellence in our schools for all children.

# APPENDIX

## APPENDIX A

# PARENT BIBLIOGRAPHY

for Understanding and Action

- Adderholdt-Elliott, Miriam, **Perfectionism: What's Bad About Being Too Good?** Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing Company, 1987. Writing directed toward student to give understanding and then tips on how to take control of their own life and savor success, overcoming perfectionism.
- Clark, Barbara, **Growing Up Gifted.** Up to 6th edition. A huge volume of information for developing children at home and school. Insightful! "Children are either PROgressing or Regressing in learning."
- Cline, Foster and Jim Fay, **Parenting with Love and Logic: Teaching Children Responsibility.** Common sense approach of child-rearing, practical strategies shared—a MUST for talking with young "lawyers".
- Galbraith, Judy, **The Gifted Kids Survival Guide** [various ages in each version], Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit. Written for kids--10 & under, or 11-18 and more.
- Halstead, Judith Wynn, **Guiding Gifted Readers.** Columbus, OH: Ohio Psychology Press.\*, 1991. Great source of good books and bibliotherapy to help too.
- Kerr, Barbara, **Smart Girls.** Scottsdale, AZ: Gifted Psychology Press\*, 1995. This book really debunks many myths that women perpetuate about their intelligence. Besides role models, it provides suggestions on how to realize who you are. Also—*Smart Boys*.
- Piierito, Jane, **Understanding Those Who Create.** Scottsdale, AZ: Gifted Psychology Press\*, 1998. Some children are hard to understand because their genius is not in the academics. This book covers so much: definitions, testing, creativity in all areas, how to develop creativity. Lots!
- Rogers, Karen, **Re-Forming Gifted Education.** She has put together a huge amount of information and resources for both parents and teachers to enable making a better match between ability and education.
- Smutny, Joan Franklin. **Stand Up for Your Gifted Child,** Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit, 2001. A highly practical book on being your child's advocate, suggesting resources and action! Wonderful!
- Webb, J., Meckstroth, E., and Tolan, S., **Guiding the Gifted Child,** Columbus, OH: Ohio Psychology Press.\*, 1982. Practical advice for parents on motivation, discipline, stress-management and much more. Used as basis for SENG ([www.sengifted.org](http://www.sengifted.org)) Guided Parent Discussion Groups.

## WORKING WITH THE SCHOOLS...

- Smutny, Joan F., Walker, Sally Yahnke, and Meckstroth, E., **Teaching Young Gifted Children in the Regular Classroom [ages 4-9].** Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit. ISBN# 1-57542-017-7. A good follow-up to Winebrenner's book especially for the younger students, great descriptions of 'who' they are.
- Tomlinson, Carol, **The Differentiated Classroom.** ASCD publication, [www.ascd.org](http://www.ascd.org). Used by consultants to train cluster teachers to meet the needs of gifted.

Winebrenner, Susan. **Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Classroom**. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit. Very practical guide for 3rd, 4th grades up with easy to follow charts and ideas to make a difference.

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\*Ohio Psychology Publishing Co. became Gifted Psychology Press, now Great Potential Press, Inc., --Free Spirit Publishing, [www.freespirit.com](http://www.freespirit.com), 1-800-735-7323

**Other resources:** [www.giftedbooks.com](http://www.giftedbooks.com) [www.hoagiesgifted.org](http://www.hoagiesgifted.org) [www.nationdeceived.org](http://www.nationdeceived.org)  
[www.sengifted.org](http://www.sengifted.org)

## APPENDIX B

### ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER

<http://www.robertsrules.org>

#### Introduction to Robert's Rules of Order

##### What Is Parliamentary Procedure?

It is a set of rules for conduct at meetings that allows everyone to be heard and to make decisions without confusion.

##### Why is Parliamentary Procedure Important?

Because it's a time tested method of conducting business at meetings and public gatherings. It can be adapted to fit the needs of any organization. Today, Robert's Rules of Order newly revised is the basic handbook of operation for most clubs, organizations and other groups. So it's important that everyone know these basic rules!

Organizations using parliamentary procedure usually follow a fixed order of business. Below is a typical example:

1. Call to order.
2. Roll call of members present.
3. Reading of minutes of last meeting.
4. Officers' reports.
5. Committee reports.
6. Special orders --- Important business previously designated for consideration at this meeting.
7. Unfinished business.
8. New business.
9. Announcements.
10. Adjournment.

The method used by members to express themselves is in the form of moving motions. A motion is a proposal that the entire membership take action or a stand on an issue.

Individual members can:

1. Call to order.
2. Second motions.
3. Debate motions.
4. Vote on motions.

There are four Basic Types of Motions:

1. Main Motions: The purpose of a main motion is to introduce items to the membership for their consideration. They cannot be made when any other motion is on the floor, and yield to privileged, subsidiary, and incidental motions.
2. Subsidiary Motions: Their purpose is to change or affect how a main motion is handled, and is voted on before a main motion.
3. Privileged Motions: Their purpose is to bring up items that are urgent about special or important matters unrelated to pending business.
4. Incidental Motions: Their purpose is to provide a means of questioning procedure concerning other motions and must be considered before the other motion.

#### How are Motions Presented?

1. Obtaining the floor
  - a. Wait until the last speaker has finished.
  - b. Rise and address the Chairman by saying, "Mr. Chairman, or Mr. President."
  - c. Wait until the Chairman recognizes you.
2. Make Your Motion
  - a. Speak in a clear and concise manner.
  - b. Always state a motion affirmatively. Say, "I move that we ..." rather than, "I move that we do not ...".
  - c. Avoid personalities and stay on your subject.
3. Wait for Someone to Second Your Motion
4. Another member will second your motion or the Chairman will call for a second.
5. If there is no second to your motion it is lost.
6. The Chairman States Your Motion
  - a. The Chairman will say, "It has been moved and seconded that we ..." Thus placing your motion before the membership for consideration and action.
  - b. The membership then either debates your motion, or may move directly to a vote.
  - c. Once your motion is presented to the membership by the chairman it becomes "assembly property", and cannot be changed by you without the consent of the members.
7. Expanding on Your Motion
  - a. The time for you to speak in favor of your motion is at this point in time, rather than at the time you present it.
  - b. The mover is always allowed to speak first.
  - c. All comments and debate must be directed to the chairman.
  - d. Keep to the time limit for speaking that has been established.
  - e. The mover may speak again only after other speakers are finished, unless called upon by the Chairman.
8. Putting the Question to the Membership
  - a. The Chairman asks, "Are you ready to vote on the question?"
  - b. If there is no more discussion, a vote is taken.
  - c. On a motion to move the previous question may be adapted.

Voting on a Motion:

The method of vote on any motion depends on the situation and the by-laws of policy of your organization. There are five methods used to vote by most organizations, they are:

1. By Voice -- The Chairman asks those in favor to say, "aye", those opposed to say "no". Any member may move for a exact count.
2. By Roll Call -- Each member answers "yes" or "no" as his name is called. This method is used when a record of each person's vote is required.
3. By General Consent -- When a motion is not likely to be opposed, the Chairman says, "if there is no objection ..." The membership shows agreement by their silence, however if one member says, "I object," the item must be put to a vote.
4. By Division -- This is a slight verification of a voice vote. It does not require a count unless the chairman so desires. Members raise their hands or stand.
5. By Ballot -- Members write their vote on a slip of paper, this method is used when secrecy is desired.

There are two other motions that are commonly used that relate to voting.

1. Motion to Table -- This motion is often used in the attempt to "kill" a motion. The option is always present, however, to "take from the table", for reconsideration by the membership.
2. Motion to Postpone Indefinitely -- This is often used as a means of parliamentary strategy and allows opponents of motion to test their strength without an actual vote being taken. Also, debate is once again open on the main motion.

Parliamentary Procedure is the best way to get things done at your meetings. But, it will only work if you use it properly.

1. Allow motions that are in order.
2. Have members obtain the floor properly.
3. Speak clearly and concisely.
4. Obey the rules of debate.  
Most importantly, *BE COURTEOUS*.

**APPENDIX C**

**PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE  
AT A GLANCE**

*Based on Robert's Rule of Order*

| <b>TO DO THIS</b>                            | <b>YOU SAY THIS</b>                             | <b>May you interrupt speaker?</b> | <b>Must you be seconded?</b> | <b>Is the motion debatable?</b> | <b>What vote is required?</b> |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Adjourn the meeting                          | "I move the meeting be adjourned"               | No                                | Yes                          | No                              | Majority                      |
| Recess the meeting                           | "I move the meeting be recesses until ..."      | No                                | Yes                          | No                              | Majority                      |
| Complain about noise, room temperature, etc. | "Point of Privilege"                            | Yes                               | No                           | No                              | No Vote (chair decides)       |
| Suspend further consideration of something   | "I move to table to motion"                     | No                                | Yes                          | No                              | Majority                      |
| End Debate                                   | "I move the previous question"                  | No                                | Yes                          | No                              | 2/3 vote                      |
| Postpone consideration of something          | "I move this matter be postponed until..."      | No                                | Yes                          | Yes                             | Majority                      |
| Have something studied further               | "I move this matter be referred to a committee" | No                                | Yes                          | Yes                             | Majority                      |
| Amend a motion                               | "I move that..."                                | No                                | Yes                          | Yes                             | Majority                      |

## APPENDIX D

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR MICHIGAN YOUTH

Michigan Academic Competition (Quiz Bowl, general knowledge)

[www.hsquizbowl.org](http://www.hsquizbowl.org)

Knowledge Master/Challenge Cup (general knowledge—similar to Quiz Bowl)

<http://www.greatauk.com/>

#### LANGUAGE:

1) Junior Great Books <http://www.greatbooks.org/junior>

2) Linguistics Olympics <http://www.lingolym.org/>

We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution...<http://www.civiced.org/>

Future Problem Solving 800-256-1499; [www.fpsp.org](http://www.fpsp.org)

The JASON project; [www.mijason.org](http://www.mijason.org) Bringing to the classroom learning about what are the Earth's dynamic systems; how these systems affect life on Earth; and what technologies do we use to study these systems—all in line with National Science and Geography Standards.

MI Social Studies Olympiad sponsored by the Michigan Council for the Social Studies—this involves speaking, drama, 'music', poetry, posters, maps, a large variety of presentations both onsite (has been early May) and off site.

<http://www.michigancouncil.org/Olympiad/>

Model U. N. -- <http://www.nmun.org/>

Let's Get Real [www.LGReal.org](http://www.LGReal.org); an academic competition where teams take on solving a company's real business problem. 717-466-7173 [LCReal@usa.com](mailto:LCReal@usa.com)

#### MATH AREA:

6) Continental Mathematics League (CML) Gr 2-h.s. ph.516-584-2016, St. James, NY; very challenging problem solving

7) Mathcounts (7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grades) 800-580-8973

8) Mathematics Pentathlon (gr k-8) 317-356-6284 [www.mathpentath.org](http://www.mathpentath.org)

9) The Michigan Math League (or Mathematics Leagues, Inc.) 201-568-6328 [www.mathleague.com/](http://www.mathleague.com/); levels 4,5,6; 7 & 8; high school

10) American Mathematics Competitions 401-472-2257

## SCIENCE AREA:

- 8) Science Olympiad, a laboratory activity contest, 516-584-2016
- 9) Physics Olympiad, a national competition, 516-584-2016
- 10) Chemistry Olympiad, national team competition, 202-872-6328
- 11) Westinghouse Science Talent Search: national science research competition, 202-785-2255
- 12) Tests of Engineering Aptitude, Mathematics and Science Team Competitions, 703-548-5387
- 13) Junior Engineering Technical Society (JETS): JETS activities are run at a local, district, regional, state, and national level. Activities include: individual and group tests in competitions in biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics, computer fundamentals and mechanical drawing; a National Engineer Aptitude Test; and an engineering design contest, 703-548-5387
- 14) National Science Teachers Association-National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NSTA-NASA). offers various student programs, 202-453-7100

SCHOOL SCRABBLE® Club and Kits...for club membership of \$20 for class of 30 students, mail \$20 to School Scrabble Club, PO Box 700, Greenport, NY 11944. For each School Scrabble Kit of \$49.95 (provides set up for 6 games--good for about 24 kids)...grades 5-8 <http://school.scrabble-assoc.com/> (site says only two teams of two people can represent each state in national competition. Team entry is \$100 per team.)

Summer Institute of Michigan—selection by high schools (usually counselors) from those who would like to be picked to attend a college “course” for 1 to 2 weeks—big variety of coursework. NO longer available due to drastically reduced funding for Gifted.

### Young Astronauts

<http://www.yac.org/yac/mission.asp?section=overview&age=adults> a five-unit printed science education curriculum for kindergarten through 9th grade through which children explore what's in space, how we get there, how we live there, and what we do while we're there.

Young Authors – often offered as a challenge from the Intermediate School District

Pre-College Programs and Activities for Pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> graders at [www.spartanyouth.msu.edu](http://www.spartanyouth.msu.edu)

Virtual University [www.vu.msu.edu](http://www.vu.msu.edu) Take advanced courses on line during high school.

Midwest Academic Talent Search & Midwest Talent Search for Youth  
MATS,MATSY (gr 3-9). visit <http://www.ctd.northwestern.edu/> Applications to participate available September

Destination Imagination [www.destinationimagination.org/](http://www.destinationimagination.org/)

Odyssey of the Mind in Michigan contact [www.odysseyofthemind.com](http://www.odysseyofthemind.com)

## WHAT IS HAPPENING IN YOUR COUNTY?

Contact your local county ISD or ESA for opportunities they provide, i.e., Summer Challenge, Girls+science+math=Choices, County Competitive Robotics, FIRST, leadership training, accelerated math and science, and more.

## WHAT IS HAPPENING IN YOUR DISTRICT?

Help with the sponsorship and coordinating of enriching opportunities in your district. Be delighted at what there is being offered. Work WITH them positively to develop more.

### *Potential means nothing in a starving environment*

WHAT DID WE FORGET ON THIS LIST? This is just a beginning. What is YOUR district offering or competing in that hasn't been mentioned. ARE THERE ERRORS IN PHONE NUMBERS OR WEBSITES? Please email your additions and corrections with correct updated contact phone or website information to the Alliance's current Website Coordinator found at our "Contact" link at [www.migiftedchild.org](http://www.migiftedchild.org)

## APPENDIX E

# Curriculum Differentiation Strategies for Gifted Students in Michigan

## Introduction

Schools that implement the Michigan Curriculum Framework must provide all students, including the exceptionally able, with appropriate challenges, commensurate with the student's ability and potential. Because gifted students remain in regular classrooms, teachers face the challenge of accommodating the gifted student in those regular classrooms and differentiating their instruction. Teachers must increase the depth and complexity of learning in order to implement Michigan's teaching and learning standards.

In the past, the term "gifted" described people with high scores on IQ tests. Today, new concepts connected to creative thinking models and multiple intelligences have expanded the definition of intelligence to include other dimensions. Giftedness reflects a multifaceted, multicultural, and multidimensional perspective and is defined by aptitude, traits, and behaviors. These students are found in all cultural groups and across all economic levels.

Gifted learners are often overlooked in classroom instruction. Consequently, some students find school boring and uninspiring because they have already mastered many of the concepts being introduced in the regular classroom.

- (1) The term "gifted and talented students" means children and 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.

ESEA as amended by Public Law 100-297

## Accommodations for Gifted Learners

"Differentiating the curriculum" refers to appropriate adjustment to structure, content, teaching strategies, and scope and sequence. In a differentiated classroom, students work at different paces and depths, follow different interests, and generate different products.

Accommodation strategy categories include district structures for acceleration, classroom instructional strategies, enrichment, and grouping options. The examples on the following pages provide a variety of accommodations within these categories. The support services necessary for implementing these strategies are the final item.

### *District Structures for Acceleration*

District Structures for Acceleration involve adjusting the timing of instruction to match learner readiness.

- *Acceleration*—changing the method of presenting the curriculum to enable the students to learn material at their instructional level. Acceleration may affect rate, depth, or complexity of learning in any subject area.
- *Advanced Placement Classes*—offering college-level courses and examinations to high school students at their local school. These are coordinated by the College Board.
- *Continuous Progress Curriculum*—coordinating and using a school district’s sequence of learning outcomes with each student’s assessed levels.
- *Credit by Examination*—Using a comprehensive examination or demonstration of mastery to waive a required course.
- *Dual Enrollment*—Extending educational learning options for students who meet state criteria by allowing them to take classes at a postsecondary institution while attending high school and to receive high school and college credit for those courses.
- *Early Entrance to College*—Admitting a student to college without a high school diploma.
- *Early Entrance to School*—Admitting a student to school prior to age five.
- *Early Graduation*—Allowing a student to graduate in less than four years, after the student completes a district’s other graduation requirements
- *Grade Skipping*—Promoting a student two or more years after they have demonstrated mastery of knowledge at each level.
- *International Baccalaureate (IB)*— A two-year international program consisting of courses and a set of exams. IB prescribes the organization of the curriculum as well as requiring the mastery of certain approaches in each of the courses to be examined.

### *Classroom Strategies*

Classroom Strategies include a variety of methods to allow students to progress through the curriculum at their readiness level.

- *Content Acceleration*—increases the pace at which the material is offered.
- *Contracts*—begins with an agreement between student and teacher, the teacher grants certain freedoms and choices about how a student will complete tasks. The student agrees to use the freedoms appropriately in designing work according to specifications.
- *Curriculum Compacting*—modifies the regular curriculum in order to eliminate repetition of previously mastered material.
- *Flexible Pacing*—adjusts the rate of instruction to respond to learner’s needs.
- *Independent Projects*—establish a process through which student and teacher identify problems or topics of interest, plan a method to investigate that choice, identify the product

the student will develop to demonstrate the student's mastery of learning.

- *Interdisciplinary Units*—use several content areas in studying a problem or topic.
- *Interest Centers*—physical sites in the classroom with materials for independent enrichment for students who have demonstrated mastery of the required work.
- *Teaching and Learning Standards*
  - (1) Higher Order Thinking Skills
  - (2) Deep Knowledge
  - (3) Substantive Conversation
  - (4) Connections to the Real World
- *Tiered Assignments*—varying activities in a heterogeneous classroom to ensure that students explore ideas at a level that builds on their prior knowledge and prompts continued growth.

### *Enrichment*

Enrichment is the elaboration of a curricular area through the addition of relevant experiences.

- *Academic Competitions*—events such as Science Challenge, Science Olympiad, Odyssey of the Mind, Destination Imagination, Quiz Bowl, Future Problem Solving, and Math Counts! used for students to compete within academic domains.
- *Academic Fairs*—showcase events which provide students with an opportunity to share their products and performances with the public.
- *Advanced Thinking Processes*—assignments modified to emphasize complex thinking processes
- *Alternate Learning Activities/Units*—opportunities to pursue alternate activities or to engage in new learning after mastery of the curriculum has been achieved.
- *Alternate Resources*—materials from a higher grade level; access to business, university, and community resources (such as laboratories, libraries, and computer facilities) when appropriate.
- *Apprenticeships*—training through on the job activities with the option of receiving credit for those activities.
- *Distance Learning*—opportunities to take courses by correspondence, email, long-distance labs, mail, computer, fiber optic networks, or technology.
- *Exchange Programs*—students attend schools in a different community or country to enrich educational experiences.

- *Guest speakers*—utilize others who supplement the teacher’s expertise. University faculty; parents; business, government, and industry leaders; or other teachers in specific areas may be used as resources.
- *Independent Study*—planned, self-directed research projects monitored by a teacher. Prerequisites include instruction in field-based and library research skills, the scientific method, and other authentic types of inquiry.
- *Internships*—opportunities for students to receive compensation (credit or money) for work experiences.
- *Mentorships*—students are paired with an resource person in an area of expertise or mutual interest to develop and carry out a project or task.
- *Service Learning*—volunteer activities to enhance learning through community service.

### *Grouping*

Grouping is a flexible process used to help students of different abilities and experiences learn.

- *Ability Grouping*—flexibly assigning students into learning or work groups according to ability. This is not the same as tracking.
- *Brain Compatible Teaching*—using teaching techniques which match the student’s specific learning style.
- *Cluster Grouping in the Regular Classroom*—placing small groups of gifted students in an otherwise heterogeneous class and providing differentiated curriculum and instruction accordingly. This is often between 4 and 6 students, sometimes 8, together.
- *Cross Grade Grouping*—placing students of various ages together to study a topic or course.
- *Flexible Grouping*—grouping that changes based on content, learner readiness, learning profile, or product assignment.
- *Honors Classes*—advanced classes offered in any discipline at the middle or high school level.
- *An Individual Student Plan*—a document and process used to tailor a program for an individual student (also known as IEP).
- *Pullout Programs*—gifted and talented students leave their regular classes two or three hours per week or more to participate in special enrichment activities.
- *Magnet Schools*—schools within a large district or consortium, which have a special academic or performance focus—can be ‘gifted, by grades’ or by subject area, i.e., math-science center.

- *Multi-Age Classes*—classes composed of students of various ages in a single work or learning group.
- *Self Contained Classes*—classrooms of special needs or gifted students with a teacher who is trained appropriately to meet those needs.
- *Seminars*—formal classes for small groups of students to study intensively or do research.
- *Supplemental Learning Centers*—locations designated for study beyond that provided in the regular classroom.

### *Support Services*

Support Services promote the development of the individual learner and the provision of accommodation strategies. Support services necessary for implementation of these strategies include but are not limited to guidance and counseling, transportation, and technology.

- *Guidance and Counseling*—The counselor must make adjustments in services which acknowledge the unique needs of gifted learners regarding career development, college planning, course selection, multipotentiality, and program articulation.
- *Preservice and Inservice Education*— When teachers are first hired or are working to maintain their teaching certification, they attend these types of classes. If staff members are providing services to all students, they must understand the particular needs of gifted students as those needs apply to the service area. Training in the particular needs of gifted and talented students must be provided to teachers during their preservice and inservice education requirements.
- *Technology*— Technology must be available to support information gathering and long distance learning when the district does not have on site resources or classes appropriate for gifted students. Districts are encouraged to provide those resources as adjuncts to on site programs.
- *Transportation*— Transportation may be necessary to allow students to participate in magnet programs, mentoring, or other appropriate programs as determined by the Individual Student Plan.

**Methodologies that Facilitate Success for ALL**

- ✓ **Integrate higher-order competencies**
  - **critical thinking**
  - **problem solving**
  - **communication skills**
- ✓ **Use interdisciplinary/thematic units**
- ✓ **Develop authentic assessment**
  - **real-life projects, problems to solve**
  - **criterion-based evaluations (with student input)**
  - **portfolios (challenging self to improve)**
  - **quality products**
- ✓ **Further increase knowledge of students**
  - **learning styles/disabilities (learning differences)**
  - **abilities (7+ intelligences)**
  - **interests (interest surveys beginning of year)**
- ✓ **Extend depth and breadth of learning**
  - **independent research (include 'skills' lessons)**
  - **curriculum compacting/acceleration**
- ✓ **Utilize pretesting for instructional planning**
- ✓ **Utilize flexible grouping**

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## APPENDIX G

# COMMON ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

*As compiled in part from Cheryl L. Poole (ACISD)*

|                          |                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>EDP</b>               | Educational Development Plan                                                                        |
| <b>ISD</b>               | Intermediate School District                                                                        |
| <b>G/T</b>               | Gifted and Talented                                                                                 |
| <b>IB</b>                | International Baccalaureate                                                                         |
| <b>IEP</b>               | Individual Educational Plan                                                                         |
| <b>G/T / LD</b>          | Gifted children with a learning disability or learning difference                                   |
| <b>LEA</b>               | Local Educational Agency (a school district or ISD)                                                 |
| <b>MDE</b>               | Michigan Department of Education ( <a href="http://www.michigan.gov/mde">www.michigan.gov/mde</a> ) |
| <b>MEAP</b>              | Michigan Education Assessment Program                                                               |
| <b>MY DREAM EXPLORER</b> | (formerly MOIS) Michigan Career Exploration Program                                                 |

**ABILITY GROUPING** – flexibly assigning students into learning or work groups according to their ability.

**AT-RISK** – refers to any student who, for whatever reason, may not experience success in the K-12 system and may be in danger of abandoning education prior to graduation.

**AUTHENTIC LEARNING** – learning which is meaningful because it involves the student in real-world problems and concerns.

**BLOCK SCHEDULING** (a.k.a. FLEXIBLE SCHEDULING) – scheduling the school day/high school into various “blocks” of time as opposed to the 6 to 7 single hours per day.

**BRAIN-COMPATIBLE LEARNING** – learning which results from teaching techniques which parallel the student’s specific learning style.

**CA60** – the cumulative records of a child’s time in school kept on file in the school’s office. They will contain grades, health concerns, discipline actions, IEP records, notice of official school awards, and any information deemed necessary or appropriate from the child’s teachers and school administration. A parent has the right to see this information or request a copy of the entire file (for which a copy charge might be made). Some elementary records are purged when moving to middle school or high school. Teachers “may” refer to the file.

**COMMUNITY SERVICE** – refers to student learning through volunteer activities or internships which is required as some type of school or community service. Some districts require this for graduation or for a special endorsement diploma.

**CURRICULUM COMPACTING** – eliminating some lessons from the curriculum because a student or a group of students already demonstrate(s) that knowledge through pre-testing.

**DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE CURRICULUM** – coordinating a school district's sequence of learning outcomes with the physical and intellectual ability of their students.

**DIFFERENTIATING CURRICULUM** – the act of changing a curriculum to fit the individual needs of one student or a group of students.

**DISTANCE LEARNING** – any kind of learning where the student is located in a different location than the teacher, i.e. the lesson is delivered by cable television, satellite, computer or telephone.

**DUAL ENROLLMENT** – a student attending a college to obtain credit while also enrolled in his/her own high school—both high school and college credit are given with successful completion.

**EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS** – a list of abilities that are recommended by business/industry to enhance a student's ability to perform well on the job.

**FLEXIBLE GROUPING** – assigning students into different work or learning groups at different times and for different purposes.

**MULTI-AGE GROUPING** – assigning students of various ages to a single work or learning group

**IEP** – Individual Educational Plan, something that is soon to be required for all Michigan students, is a guide for a child's education as determined by a group consensus. The group could include the child's current teacher, principal, counselor, social worker, parent, and other involved educational personnel.

**INTEGRATING CURRICULUM** – usually refers to combining curricular areas (i.e. English, Math, Art) when teaching so that students learn the interrelationship of information.

**INTERDISCIPLINARY THEMATIC INSTRUCTION** – refers to combining content areas and presenting them in the context of a theme. (For example, science concepts explored along with artistic concepts while studying the theme "Conserving the Earth's Environment.")

**INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE** – IB is a rigorous, comprehensive program that enhances and extends the quality of the 11th- and 12th-grade course offerings. The internationally recognized IB curriculum provides students with a comprehensive background in English, a foreign language, the social sciences, physical and life sciences, mathematics, and the arts. This program is started at the elementary levels in some schools. To learn more: <http://www.iatoday.org/> or [www.hoagiesgifted.org](http://www.hoagiesgifted.org)

**MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION** – Department of Education includes an office for Advanced & Accelerated learning. To learn more: <http://www.michigan.gov/cepi/0,1607,7-113-21423-175514--,00.html>

**MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES** – generally refers to the belief that human beings have more than one type of intelligence. Specifically, this refers to Howard Gardner’s theory that there are many types of intelligence, such as mathematical/logical, musical, spatial, verbal/ linguistic, body/kinesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal.

**MY DREAM EXPLORER** (formerly MOIS) M.O.I.S. –This is a free State career planning tool online hosted by Michigan Virtual High School To learn more: [www.mivhs.org](http://www.mivhs.org)

**PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT** (sometimes referred to as authentic assessment) – especially popular terminology. It refers to evaluating a student by what he or she performs using rubrics. It emphasizes evaluation that results from more than paper-and-pencil tests.

**PORTFOLIO** – a collection of items which shows that he/she knows or is able to do certain skills. A portfolio might include transcripts, certificates, journals, videotapes, ribbons, the student’s writings, etc.

**PROFICIENCY TEST** (State of Michigan) – passage of this exam required by all high school 1997 seniors and following in order to receive a state diploma. The exam tests the ability to perform in reading, writing, math and science.

**PUBLIC ACT 25** (a.k.a. P.A. 25, Quality Initiatives) – refers to a 1990 state law requiring all public schools to:

- Prepare and send out an annual educational report
- Be involved in a continuing process of educational improvement
- Be involved in acquiring accreditation by the Michigan Accreditation Program
- To be in the process of developing a core curriculum based on outcomes which is required of all their students

**SCHOOLS OF CHOICE** - simply stated, this refers to parents being able to choose which school that their child attends. Aspects of this topic, such as “in-district or out-of-district choice”, cost of transportation, the possibility of a voucher system, etc., are questions to be addressed.