

How Do I Work with My Child's School?

Winter Super Saturdays 2014 Parent Seminar

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BE INFORMED...

1. Know the facts

1. About your child
 - Strengths and weaknesses
 - Objective data: achievement test results, ability test results, etc.
 - Anecdotes and examples of work done at home or in extracurricular activities
2. About gifted children in general
 - Characteristics
 - Asynchronous development
 - Needs: social, emotional, and cognitive
3. About gifted education
 - Myths
 - Effective strategies
 - Reports
 - ^ *A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America's Brightest Students*
 - ^ *Talent on the Sidelines: Excellence Gaps and America's Persistent Talent Underclass*
4. About gifted education in the district and the school
 - State law, regulations, and statutes
 - District policy
 - School policy
 - SBDM policies
 - Identification procedures
 - Services offered
5. About the terminology
 - *Nurturing Our Future* pamphlet
 - *Communicating Effectively with Your Gifted Child's School* article

2. Know your rights

1. *Gifted Children's Bill of Rights*
2. Gifted Regulation
 - Identification
 - Primary Talent Pool vs. Formal Identification
 - Gifted Student Service Plan
 - Services
3. Other regulations
 - Early Entrance to Kindergarten
 - Educational Enhancement

3. Know the protocol

1. Teacher
2. Gifted and Talented Teacher
3. Principal
4. Gifted Coordinator at Central Office
5. Superintendent

How Do I Work with My Child's School? continued

4. Know how to communicate effectively

1. The wish list
2. Understanding the educator
 - Lack of formal training
 - Differentiation for struggling learners
 - Belief in the myths
 - Emphasis on accountability and high-stakes testing
3. Formal versus informal
4. The conference
 - Suggestions for Effective Conferences (Whitney & Hirsch, 2011)
 - ^ Control your emotions.
 - ^ Thank one another for taking the time to meet.
 - ^ Listen first.
 - ^ Make eye contact.
 - ^ Wait before you respond.
 - ^ Paraphrase.
 - ^ Be courteous.
 - ^ Stress “we,” not “you.”
 - ^ Keep an open mind.
 - ^ Write a note of thanks to the teacher that summarizes the key points of your discussion and the decisions or agreements that were made.
 - ^ Understand that you will probably need more conferences.
 - Tips for Your Gifted Kids' Parent-Teacher Conferences (Berger, 2014)
 - ^ Plan ahead.
 - ^ Establish a feeling of teamwork.
 - ^ Listen carefully for positive and negative ways the teacher describes your child.
 - ^ Clarify expectations – yours and the teacher's.
 - ^ Don't assume that the teacher has a great deal of experience with educating gifted children.
 - Tips for Talking to Teachers (Walker, 2012)
 - ^ Make an appointment. Don't just drop in.
 - ^ Document what your child has done, said, or read.
 - ^ Plan what you're going to say.
 - ^ Choose your words carefully. Try to start with something positive.
 - ^ Build a partnership and negotiate solutions. Work as a team.
 - ^ Be diplomatic, tactful, and respectful.
 - ^ Focus on what your child needs.
 - ^ Listen.
 - ^ Bring along your sense of humor.
 - ^ Summarize what you have discussed and a time line. Plan a follow-up meeting.

5. Know the questions to ask

1. Questions Parents of Gifted Children Should Ask Schools (Gallagher, 1998)
 - What services are available for gifted students in this school and school system, and what are the goals of such services?
 - How much time each week will my child spend in the gifted education program or receive services?
 - Have the teachers in the gifted education program received specialized training?
 - Has my child received an assessment?
 - Are there specialized materials (e.g., software) used in the gifted education program or services?
 - How will the school know if the gifted education program or services are working?
 - How can I help the program?

2. Important Questions to Ask the Teacher (Berger, 2014)
 - What are your academic goals for the year?
 - What do you see as my child's strengths? Can you give me some examples?
 - What are some areas that my child needs to work on?
 - How would you evaluate my child's learning profile?
 - How can I help?

6. Know how to partner

1. Volunteer
2. Acknowledge varied perspectives
3. Listen
4. Share information and opportunities
5. KAGE <http://www.kagegifted.org/>
 - Be a member
 - Encourage teachers and school to be members
 - Give individual or institutional memberships

Resources

- Berger, S. (2014). Tips for your gifted kids' parent-teacher conferences. *familyeducation*. Retrieved from <http://school.familyeducation.com/gifted-education/parent-teacher-conferences/38665.html>
- Colangelo, N., Assouline, S. G., & Gross, M. U. M. (2004). *A nation deceived: How schools hold back America's brightest students* (Vol. 1). Iowa City: The University of Iowa, The Connie Belin & Jacqueline N. Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development. Retrieved from http://www.accelerationinstitute.org/nation_deceived/
- Plucker, P., Hardesty, J., & Burroughs, N. (2014). *Talent on the sidelines: Excellence gaps and America's persistent talent underclass*. Storrs, CT: Center for education Policy Analysis. Retrieved from http://cepa.uconn.edu/uconncepa/assets/File/AG/excellence2013/Excellence%20Gap%2010%2018%2013_JP_LK.pdf
- Rimm, S. (1994). *Keys to parenting the gifted child*. New York, NY: Barron's Educational Services, Inc.
- Shoplik, A. (2009-10). *Tips for parents: Advocacy – working with your child's school*. Davidson Institute for Talent Development. Retrieved from http://www.davidsongifted.org/db/Articles_id_10558.aspx
- Walker, S. Y. (2002). *The survival guide for parents of gifted kids: How to understand, live with, and stick up for your gifted child*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.
- Whitney, C. S., & Hirsch, G. (2011). *Helping gifted children soar: A practical guide for parents and teachers* (2nd ed.) Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.