Advocating for the Gifted Learner

Arizona Association for Gifted and Talented (AAGT)
AAGT Informs Webinar Series
September 2nd, 2020

Peter Laing
Policy Advisor
Arizona Department of Education
Thank you for joining Peter Laing for a dialogue regarding how to advocate for gifted students and programs in a time of limited budgetary resources. Practical ideas for implementing and supporting program and services models within K-12 schools, to include a review of potential funding sources, will be shared and discussed. Our shared goal is to encourage schools to raise expectations for achievement and future outcomes for all learners, become talent scouts for identifying talent and potential in all learners and to become champions for providing equitable access to rigorous, challenging, & relevant curriculum for all learners.

- One size does not fit all
- What does advocacy for Gifted Education look like?
- Sources of Financial Resources to Support Programs
- Key Local Advocacy Questions to Consider
- Questions
ATTITUDES

PERCEPTIONS

BELIEFS
Equity + Access = Excellence

Without **Equity** there can be no **Access**

Without **Access** there can be no **Excellence**

**Excellence** is derived from **Equity** plus **Access**

George Henry
East High School
Salt Lake City, Utah
EXPECTATIONS MATTER!
All students should have the opportunity to demonstrate their ability and potential (gifted characteristics) through multiple means and measures.
How do you identify a gifted learner?

The process of gifted learner identification should be a diagnostic one that provides useful information about how an individual child thinks and learns (acquires, processes, & applies information), that then informs appropriate curricular, instructional and assessment decisions for that individual child.
Connection Between Identification Systems, Models and Programs

Identification systems should allow for schools to equitably engage in **talent development** for high-potential learners and **talent enhancement** for high-achieving/performing learners – and the system should be one based on notions of **inclusion** (helping students to grow and achieve according to their demonstrated ability and potential) and **differentiation** based on **need**, rather than exclusion (single source cut-score).
Match the Program with the Needs of the Identified Child…

- High Ability + High Achievement
- High Ability + Average or Low Achievement

…While Developing and Nurturing Potential: The Talent Pool Model…

- High Potential + High Achievement
- High Potential + Average or Low Achievement

You Can’t Ignore the Data!
What do Gifted Education programs and services look like at schools?

Gifted Education program design and services delivery are necessarily a reflection of the **local needs and contexts** of each school district and school, to include:

- **Student population** *(size and demographics)*
  - All students
  - Identified gifted learners

- **District and School Vision and Mission**

- **Grade levels served and Staffing Models** *(early childhood, elementary, and secondary)*

- **Location** *(urban, suburban, rural and remote)*

- **Local Needs** *(current comprehensive strengths and challenges)*

- **Available Resources** *(teaching staff, fiscal resources)*
What does advocacy for Gifted Education look like?

Advocacy can take many forms. It can be focused on the needs of a single child or it can be focused on systems.
How to Get Started:
(Adapted from the NAGC Classroom Advocacy Tip Sheet)

- Talk with your child and identify your concerns. Be specific!
- Learn what the options are within your schools or district
- Prepare your talking points in advance
- Make an appointment to talk *first* with your child’s teacher
- Approach the meeting with positive intent and assume positive intent from the teacher. You both want what’s best for your child, but likely have different perspectives on how to get there
During the Meeting:
(Adapted from the NAGC Classroom Advocacy Tip Sheet)

- Start with a “Thank you!”
- Be polite and diplomatic – but firm and focused
- Remain objective and focused on the specific needs you identified for your child – rather than ‘philosophy’
- Try NOT to use phrases like “bored”. Describe your observations and the specific impacts you’ve identified (e.g.: frustration, anxiety, anger)
- Listen and consider perspectives and points of view
- Be solution-oriented, flexible and work for consensus
- Document the meeting and co-create a timeline and action plan for the solution(s) reached
After the Meeting:
(Adapted from the NAGC Classroom Advocacy Tip Sheet)

- Send a follow-up with the timeline and action plan that was developed
- Track progress toward meeting the plan, and follow up with the teacher, as needed
- Communicate! Talk regularly with the teacher to see how things are moving forward
- Be proactive – and ask the teacher “How can I help? What can I do at home to support you?”
What next?  
(Adapted from the NAGC Classroom Advocacy Tip Sheet)

- Sometimes additional support may be needed. If positive change hasn’t occurred, you may need to elevate your concerns to the Gifted Coordinator.
- If there’s not an identified Coordinator, you may need to speak to the Principal, or to a district leader, such as a Curriculum Director. For those conversations, the same tips apply!
Advocating for Gifted Programs in your Local Schools
(Adapted from the NAGC)

- Establish a rationale
  - School leaders may not fully understand the unique needs of gifted learners, or may not fully understand Arizona's state law and requirements

- Know what you want to happen
  - Understand Arizona's state law and requirements
  - Review current program models and options offered within the school
  - Identify opportunities for improvements - leverage the NAGC PreK-12 Gifted Programming Standards

- Build a bridge with administrators

- Reach out the community and network, network, network!
  - Become an active member of local school groups, such as PTO or Site Council, and volunteer for committees
  - Start a Parent Group – AAGT can help!
  - Craft your message and share your story!
Advocating for Laws, Policies and Funding
(Adapted from the NAGC)

- **Opportunities at the Federal Level**
  - National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)
    - [www.nagc.org](http://www.nagc.org)
    - NAGC Legislative Action Network
    - NAGC Advocacy Toolkit
    - Resources for Parents, Teachers and Administrators

- **Opportunities at the State Level**
  - Arizona Association for Gifted & Talented (AAGT)
    - [ArizonaGifted.org](http://ArizonaGifted.org)
    - Community Action Network – Legislative and Advocacy Updates email Listserv
Gifted Children’s *Bill of Rights*

**You Have a Right…**

I. …to know about your giftedness
II. …to learn something new every day
III. …to be passionate about your talent area without apologies
IV. …to have an identity beyond your talent area
V. …to feel good about your accomplishments
VI. …to make mistakes
VII. …to seek guidance in the development of your talent
VIII. …to have multiple peer groups and a variety of friends
IX. …to choose which of your talent areas you wish to pursue
X. …not be gifted at everything
## Sources of Financial Resources to Support Local Programs and Services

Leveraging Existing Funding Mechanisms (*Federal, State & Local*) Examples (*including but not limited to*):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Federal</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title I-A</td>
<td>ADM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title II-A</td>
<td>‘Group A’ Weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title III</td>
<td>Local M&amp;O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title IV-A</td>
<td>State Gifted Education Grant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title V-B (SRSA &amp; RLIS)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDEA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pandemic Relief Funds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(CARES Act)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Title I-A
Every Student Succeeds Act

Schoolwide Programs
Title I funds may be used to "implement reforms to upgrade the entire educational program of the school"

Targeted Assistance Programs
Title I funds used to support eligible Title I students
"Use methods and instructional strategies that strengthen the academic program of the school, increase the amount and quality of learning time, and help provide an enriched and accelerated curriculum, which may include programs, activities, and courses necessary to provide a well-rounded education."

Title I-A
Every Student Succeeds Act
"...identifying and serving gifted and talented students"

(Yes - it's for real: Sec. 1112(b)(13)(A))
Myths and Misunderstandings about the use of funds....

"Supporting School Reform by Leveraging Federal Funds in a Schoolwide Program"
USED: September 2016
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Misunderstanding</th>
<th>Explanation of Law</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title I funds may be used only to support reading and math instruction.</td>
<td>Title I funds may be used in a schoolwide program to support academic areas that the school’s needs assessment identified as needing improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title I funds may be used only to provide remedial instruction.</td>
<td>The purpose of a schoolwide program is to upgrade the entire educational program in the school in order to raise the achievement of the lowest-achieving students. This does not need to be achieved through remedial instruction, however. At times, this may be best achieved by preparing low-achieving students to take advanced courses - for example, providing an intensive summer school course designed to accelerate their knowledge and skills, offering an elective course to prepare them to take advanced courses, or providing after-school tutoring while they are taking advanced courses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title I funds may be used only to serve low-achieving students.</td>
<td>Title I funds may be used to upgrade the entire educational program in a schoolwide program and, in doing so, all students may benefit from the use of Title I funds. However, consistent with the purpose of Title I, the reason to upgrade the entire educational program in a school is to improve the achievement of the lowest-achieving students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Supporting School Reform by Leveraging Federal Funds in a Schoolwide Program"
USED: September 2016
"...shall address the learning needs of all students, including children with disabilities, English learners and gifted and talented students"
"...providing training to support the identification of students who are gifted and talented, including high-ability students who have not been formally identified for gifted education services, and implementing instructional practices that support the education of such students, such as—

(i) early entrance to kindergarten;

(ii) enrichment, acceleration, and curriculum compacting activities; and

(iii) dual or concurrent enrollment programs in secondary school and postsecondary education"
The purpose of the Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) grant is to improve students’ academic achievement by increasing the capacity of States, local educational agencies, schools, and local communities to provide all students with access to a well-rounded education, improve school conditions for student learning, and improve the use of technology in order to improve the academic achievement and digital literacy of all students. (ESSA Sec.4101)
ESSA: Additional Opportunities

- **Title I-D - Neglected & Delinquent**
- **Title III-A - English Language Learners**
- **Title IV-F - Jacob K. Javits Gifted Education Grant Program**
Rural Education Achievement Program

- **Small, Rural Schools (SRSA)**
  - All schools in LEA designated Rural
  - All schools in the LEA serve **600 or less students**
  - LEAs apply directly to USED

- **Rural, Low-Income Schools (RLIS) Designated Rural**
  - All schools in LEA designated Rural
  - LEA has poverty rate of 20% or higher
  - LEAs apply through their SEA

LEAs can be **Dual-Eligible**, but can only receive an award from **one program** in a given year.
# Rural Education Achievement Program

- **SRSA and RLIS funds are highly flexible:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RLIS</th>
<th>SRSA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESEA, Title V, Part B, Subpart 2, Section 5222(a)</td>
<td>ESEA, Title V, Part B, Subpart 1, Section 5212(a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title I, Part A</strong> (Improving Basic Programs Operated by LEAs)</td>
<td><strong>Title I, Part A</strong> (Improving Basic Programs Operated by LEAs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title II, Part A</strong> (Supporting Effective Instruction)</td>
<td><strong>Title II, Part A</strong> (Supporting Effective Instruction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title III</strong> (Language Instruction for English Learners and Immigrant Students)</td>
<td><strong>Title III</strong> (Language Instruction English Learners and Immigrant Students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title IV, Part A</strong> (Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants)</td>
<td><strong>Title IV, Part A</strong> (Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Involvement Activities</td>
<td><strong>Title IV, Part B</strong> (21st-Century Community Learning Centers)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Title V-B REAP**

Every Student Succeeds Act

**SRSA Alternative Use of Funds Authority**

- SRSA **eligible** LEAs can exercise this flexibility to use their Title II-A and Title IV-A funds for any activity that would be allowable under SRSA
IDEA

• Federal law supporting students with disabilities

• Twice-Exceptional Learners have federal legal protections
Key Takeaways:

• Federal funds can be used to support gifted and advanced learning. They, fact, encourage it! Reference the law!

• Be a part of the annual needs assessment process. Leverage your data to demonstrate your needs! Tell your story and evaluate your progress.

• Be a part of the local school and district planning process – and encourage your community to participate (and ask questions)!

• Create a plan that takes advantage of allowable uses of funds across multiple funding programs. See the whole field!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equity Factor</th>
<th>Key Local Advocacy Questions to Consider</th>
<th>Decision Makers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>What specific steps have been taken to address equity in identifying diverse gifted learners?</td>
<td>District and School Leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity</td>
<td>How are all educators and staff supported through ongoing professional learning to meet the unique academic, intellectual, social and emotional needs of all gifted learners?</td>
<td>State, District and School Leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity</td>
<td>What program and model opportunities are being provided and are they aligned to how students are identified and their needs?</td>
<td>District and School Leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>How is success in opportunity and excellence being measured, and how are those data used to inform ongoing system improvements and enhancements?</td>
<td>State and District Leaders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questions & Dialogue
Closing Reflection

List 3 things you’ve **learned** today

List 2 things that **surprised** you

List 1 **question** you still have
Leadership & Vision Matter: BE A CHAMPION!

Integrate Ongoing Talent Identification and Development into your School’s CORE MISSION

Have (and Maintain!) High Expectations

NO EXCUSES!
THANK YOU!

Please visit arizonagifted.org for
more information on future
AAGT Informs Webinars!

Peter Laing
Policy Advisor
Policy & Government Relations
Arizona Department of Education

www.azed.gov/gifted-education
Peter.Laing@azed.gov