



AAAGT

PARENT HANDBOOK

Version 1.0



Version 1.0 of the AAGT Parent Handbook was created by AAGT board members Stephanie Newitt and Laura Dorrell. Some material was obtained or moved from the AAGT Affiliate Handbook 4.0 in order to provide a document that provides support to individual families.

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PARENTING RESOURCES

Parenting a gifted child is an adventure. Your first step should be to join the Arizona Association for Gifted & Talented (AAGT) and take advantage of the myriad of resources available to you. We encourage you to visit our website arizonagifted.org to learn about such information as the definition of giftedness according to Arizona guidelines, the terms used by educators, the characteristics of gifted children, common myths about gifted children, tips for helping your child succeed, educational program options that you can ask for in your district, resources for outside learning opportunities, suggestions for how to advocate for

your child's needs, and information about websites, books, articles, catalogs and membership in AAGT.

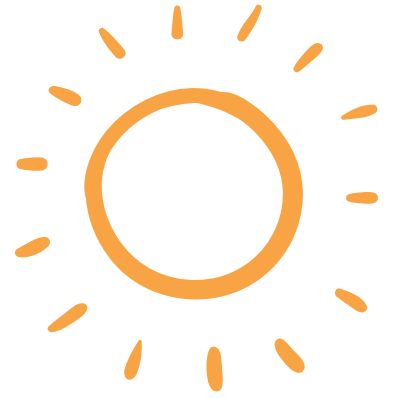
To begin your online search for resources, start with the Parent page at the AAGT website: arizonagifted.org/parents-and-students/. There you will find a list of valuable internet resources.

If you are looking for a parent group, go to the Affiliates page at arizonagifted.org to locate any groups that may be organized in your area. If there is no parent group in your area, consider contacting a representative from the closest parent group that is established, or contact the AAGT Affiliate Coordinator. These groups can offer support, information, and discussions with other parents of gifted children and are a wonderful way to pool resources for the benefit of gifted children.

If there is not a parent group in your area, we invite you to review the AAGT Affiliate Handbook and consider forming a group in your community with the guidance of the AAGT Affiliate Coordinator. The AAGT Affiliate Handbook is found on the Affiliate page of the AAGT website (See arizonagifted.org/about-us/affiliates/). Please contact AAGT at officemanager@azgifted.com to reach the Affiliate Coordinator with any questions you may have about affiliates.

ADVOCACY 101

When faced with the need to speak on behalf of your gifted student, you will quickly learn that what is happening with your child is linked to the larger context of education – what is happening in the classroom, the school, the district, etc. When your child needs challenge, help, or support at school, the kind of response you will get is affected as much by the quality of leadership as by the quality of teaching and parent support, not to mention available resources. Most parents of gifted students eventually discover their own child is one of many who need help.



INVESTIGATE



The first step in the process is to investigate. Read books, peruse periodicals, and visit websites about gifted children and gifted education. Know your facts! Become an educated and informed parent. Begin to familiarize yourself with information so that someday you will be able to refer to recent, relevant, and expert research results, as well as examples of what other districts are doing. Some helpful questions to guide your investigations are:



WHAT IS GIFTEDNESS?

- What are the characteristics, strengths, and challenges of gifted students academically as well as socially/emotionally?
 - During your investigations, strive to answer the question, “Which of these characteristics does *my student* demonstrate?”
- What is asynchronous development?
 - How does my child demonstrate asynchronous development?
- What are the emotional intensities or “overexcitabilities” common among gifted children?
 - Strive to answer the question, “Which of these emotional intensities does *my student* lead with?”
- What are the learning needs of gifted students?
 - Strive to answer the question, “What are the learning needs of *my student*?”
- What are the myths surrounding gifted education?
- Resources:
 - The Parent page on the AAGT website: arizonagifted.org/parents-and-students
 - The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) provides Parent Tip sheets on their website - [Nagc.org/resources-publications/resources-parents/parent-tip-sheets](https://nagc.org/resources-publications/resources-parents/parent-tip-sheets)
 - The Hoagies Gifted website: www.hoagiesgifted.org
 - The SENG website (Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted): sengifted.org



- AAGT Parent Handbook
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WHAT IS GIFTED EDUCATION?

- What are some of the programming models used? How does gifted education strive to meet the learning needs of gifted children?
- How does your district identify and serve gifted students? What is their rationale for these services?
- What are some of the programming models used? How does gifted education strive to meet the learning needs of gifted children?
- How does your district identify and serve gifted students? What is their rationale for these services?
- Become familiar with your child's school setting and the people in charge. Learn how your school and the school district are organized. Familiarize yourself with what is supposed to be happening in the classroom, in the school, and in the district.
- Check the Arizona Department of Education's Gifted Education webpage www.azed.gov/gifted-education for information about gifted programs and services in Arizona.
- Learn a little about the terms used in education in order to communicate with teachers; educate yourself by looking at <http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/parents.htm>
- Become familiar with Arizona law on gifted education. (See "What is the law?" page 8)

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

Establish yourself as an ally to education, through your words and deeds. You can begin by making an effort to meet the teachers, counselors, librarians, nurses, secretaries, custodians, and principals at your child's school.



Demonstrate your support for the school and win allies in the building by volunteering in some capacity that will help many children. Project a positive image and respect the efforts of all those involved in education—you'll win more allies

Ask questions rather than complain.

Connect with other interested parents in your school or district. Craft an email inviting parents of gifted children to connect and exchange contact information. Ask your child's teacher or the district Gifted Coordinator to send the email to parents of gifted children.

Will you join or form a local parent support group? Visit the Affiliate page of the AAGT website to see if there is a parent group near you. As you build your connections with other parents, consider meeting in person at a local cafe to further your connections and to discuss the needs of gifted students in your school or district.

Contact AAGT to see what other guidance and assistance is available.

- Contact other parent groups in your area.
- Review the AAGT Affiliate Handbook and discuss the benefits of forming a parent support group.

Consider involving all parents who support able learners (i.e., parents who want higher academic standards for their kids).

Contact your school administration and/or your Gifted/Talented (GT) Coordinator if you have one. Test the waters to determine receptivity. Listen.

ADVOCACY IN YOUR CHILD'S CLASSROOM



The first step to ensuring that your child's needs are addressed in the classroom is to talk with your child's teacher. Make an appointment with the teacher to discuss the matter. Be specific about what you want to talk about. If you don't hear back after three documented tries, contact the principal for a meeting.

Remember, you all want what is best for the child. Be persistent. Be diplomatic. And always, always be respectful and polite. You are modeling good behavior for your children. Treat others as you would like to be treated.

There are many online resources for how to help your child at school. The article "Advocating for Appropriate Education for your Child," by Colleen Elam of the Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented covers the following: Learn the Status Quo, Establish Yourself as an Ally to Education, Know What Should be Happening, Give Credit for Jobs Well Done, Choose your Battles, Prepare your Case, and Present your Case. Here is an excerpt from "Present your Case:"

For a classroom problem, contact the teacher first. For a school problem, speak with the principal. Follow the established chain of command in your district. Traditionally it is: teacher>principal>instructional specialist or gifted coordinator>superintendent>School Board. If you are unsure of the protocol in your district ask a secretary in the principal's office.

Many districts may have gifted specialists that work directly with teachers: meeting jointly with the gifted specialist and the classroom teacher can be a good way to start. Developing a friendly relationship with the school secretary is always a good idea. The following excerpt from "Present your Case" suggests meeting strategies.

Call for an appointment first, but be prepared in case the person is able to speak with you at that time. Leave a message with your name, your child's name, your telephone number at work and home (or cell phone), and the reason for requesting a return call or appointment..... Allow 24 hours for your call to be returned, and then call again. If your call is not returned after three tries, move up the chain of command.

Greet the person warmly. Your tone of voice can set the tone of the entire conversation and the consequent actions and reactions. Thank the person for returning your call or meeting with you. Then come immediately to the point. State your facts calmly and in order. Ask your questions or make your request. Then listen without interruption. Take notes on the response. Briefly repeat back your interpretation of what was said; if you need clarification of a point, this is the time to ask. If it is necessary for you to respond with an answer, agree on a time when you will communicate again.

Build bridges; do not burn them. No two people have the exact same beliefs on all issues. Supply data to support your position and back it up with personal stories. Include yourself in the suggested win-win solution.

If you are happy with the result of the meeting, say so and say thank you. However, if you are not happy, take your case to the next higher level on the chain of command and then the next. Keep trying and don't be discouraged.

Consider Compromises.

Through this entire process, you are teaching your children. First and foremost, you are demonstrating in actions that you love them and consider their education a priority. Second, you are modeling some of the most important lessons in life: every human counts, so respect others as well as yourself; problem-solving involves creativity, logic, protocol, challenge, time, and commitment; think before you respond; take control of any situation as it occurs in your life; act, don't react; be positive and persistent and fight for what you believe in.

Advocating for an appropriate education for your child is a continuous process. Your positive, persistent, involvement will foster your child's success in school and life.

(Excerpted from "Advocating for Appropriate Education for your Child," by Colleen Elam of the Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented.) <http://eric.ed.gov>.

ADVOCACY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Advocacy for your own child often leads you to consider what is needed in your district. If you have the time and commitment, join your local parent group, PTO, or other groups that can foster change. Attend School Board meetings and become knowledgeable about such things as the district Acceleration Policy. Check for district websites about gifted and talented services. Meet your Gifted Coordinator and find out what he or she needs to improve services to gifted students.



If there are no gifted services in your area, begin by getting involved with your school. This will show your school administration that you are an ally to their education efforts. Consider approaching your principal about your willingness to sponsor or host an extra-curricular club that will meet the needs of high-ability students. This will also help you network with other parents. As you interact with these parents, discuss the intellectual as well as the social-emotional needs of high-ability students. Mention that a word that well describes high-ability students is “more.” They need more of an academic challenge in order to stay engaged in learning (this does NOT mean more busy work!). They also can have more intense emotional responses that require more emotional energy on the part of the parent. Discuss what is working in the schools to address these needs and together identify gaps.

Here are some other things that you can do to get involved with advocating for gifted education at the local level:



Get to know the decision-makers on a personal basis and communicate with them frequently.

This will allow you to build a relationship of trust and make you the "go-to" person on a particular issue. It also allows you to get a feel for the person and the district's hot-button issues.



Get to know your local School Board.

They need to know your group exists and that you are current on your information. If your district has a policy committee, a task force on something, a forum, or any other policy-making body, make sure someone represents the gifted view. Decisions are often made only from the perspective of the people sitting at the table. So make sure you get a seat at the table! Never let a myth surrounding your issue go unanswered. Be prepared to educate at every opportunity.



Parent groups can be very effective, even in small numbers.

By developing a reputation for a reasoned approach as well as a fierce commitment to appropriate education for gifted children, many gifted parent groups have facilitated change in the district, regional, and state policy. A tremendous satisfaction comes from knowing you have made a difference in the lives of many children.

If there is not a parent group in your area, consider connecting with other parents in your community to form a parent group. To connect with other interested parents in your school or district, write an email or create an electronic flyer inviting parents of gifted children to connect and exchange contact information. Ask your child's teacher or the district Gifted Coordinator to send the email to parents of gifted children. Invite the parents to gather virtually over video or at a local cafe to meet in person in order to discuss the needs of gifted students in your school or district.

To learn about the benefits and steps to forming a local parent group, you can review the AAGT Affiliate Handbook or contact the AAGT Affiliate Coordinator through the AAGT Office Manager at officemanager@azgifted.com. The Affiliate page of the AAGT website will have more information: arizonagifted.org/affiliates

ADVOCACY AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

As you become more knowledgeable about district services, you realize that they are affected by regional issues, especially in rural areas. AAGT is building its regional network across Arizona. Contact AAGT to connect with other groups in your region and to find out what is happening in your part of the state. You will be able to meet with parents who share your concerns, and you can share knowledge and gain from one another's experience.



Here are some other ideas to be more informed:

- Attend any AAGT meeting or event in a regional area, such as a nearby Affiliate Chapter meeting.
- Visit the AAGT website to find nearby parent groups.
- Join the AAGT Facebook discussion groups, where you can ask questions of other parents and teachers.
- Develop business partnerships to benefit your district and regional area.
- Build relationships between districts' gifted coordinators and parents by inviting coordinators to Affiliate Chapter meetings.
- Maximize regional resources to build capacity for parent groups. Connect with other groups to share strategies, bring in speakers, and co-host larger functions.
- Join with PTO's for meetings and to bring in speakers.
- Network with non-public schools - parochial, charter, independent, home school networks.
- Communicate among parent, coordinator, and teacher groups to share information.

ADVOCACY AT THE STATE LEVEL



As you become more aware of issues at the regional level, you realize that the big picture solutions come at the state level. AAGT, as a statewide organization, is involved in educating legislators, as well as sharing information and resources with the Arizona Department of Education. AAGT also sponsors annual conferences where vendors, presenters, and gifted educators of all sorts, including parents, can learn and grow. AAGT is an affiliate of NAGC, the National Association for Gifted Children, and therefore AAGT becomes informed of national issues that impact gifted education.

The first, most important step to becoming aware of state issues is to join AAGT and to subscribe to the AAGT Community Action Network (CAN List). One of AAGT's most influential tools in educating legislators about the needs of gifted students and gifted education funding are the individuals on the CAN List. When AAGT has a call to action due to an important state or national issue, it will seek to mobilize members of the CAN List, providing members with sample email content and an email recipient list.

Whenever an important legislative matter comes up that will affect gifted education, keep in mind the following tips so that you can have an impact and make a difference:

- ✓ Visit the Advocacy page of the AAGT website to subscribe to the AAGT Community Action Network: <https://arizonagifted.org/about-us/advocacy/>
- ✓ Know who your representatives and senators are at both the state and federal levels. Know where they stand on various issues. Visit www.azleg.gov to identify your elected officials and learn about them.
- ✓ Encourage fellow parents to sign up with the AAGT Community Action Network (CAN List)
- ✓ Consider helping parents in your community to organize and become an affiliate chapter of AAGT, as there is strength in numbers.

WHAT IS THE LAW?

Arizona is fortunate to have a legal mandate for gifted education. The law, ARS 15-779 et seq, provides specifics for mandatory gifted education for kindergarten through 12th grades. Districts are required to involve parents and the community in the development and evaluation of gifted programs and services.



Spearheaded by parents, the gifted education community succeeded in having new legislation drafted, sponsored by the chair of the House K-12 Education Committee, and passed (HB 2552) in 2006 that strengthened the existing mandate and doubled funding. AAGT has continued to monitor state funding efforts and has advocated for funding when dollars for gifted education have not been included in the state budget. Though funding levels at times have been zero, the mandate is still in place and AAGT and members of its CAN network continue to advocate at the state level for funding and support. See the AAGT website for a history of our advocacy efforts.

Key points in the legislation include:

- (1) changing the definitions of gifted and gifted education to recognize that students are gifted 24/7 and service must be appropriate, an integral part of the regular school day, an integrated and differentiated experience, and commensurate with ability;
- (2) requiring that administrators, teachers, counselors, and school psychologists have professional development to understand giftedness and gifted education modifications;
- (3) declaring it to be in the public interest to assist high achieving and underachieving pupils identified as gifted (i.e. a top-down declaration of its importance to our state);

- (4) requiring governing boards to modify the course of study and adapt teaching methods, materials, and techniques for gifted students, including those who may have a disability or difficulty with the English language;
- (5) making it easier for gifted transfer students to receive services without unreasonable delay in their new school;
- (6) requiring that the state board of education develop written guidelines to assist governing boards in identifying gifted pupils and providing appropriate programs and services from kindergarten through 12th grade;
- (7) requiring that Scope & Sequences be developed that include specific criteria based on the National Gifted Standards and be updated annually if changes have been made or every 5 years if no changes have been made;
- (8) requiring districts to conduct annual evaluations, and include parents in the development and evaluation of, programs and services; and
- (9) requiring the active involvement of the State Superintendent in the development and implementation of gifted professional development, programs, and services.

In addition, the supporting Administrative Code provides additional guidelines for the ADE, school district governing boards, teachers, and parents in meeting the mandate.

To read the statute and administrative code, visit “Mandatory K-12 Gifted Education” at <https://www.azed.gov/gifted-education/>. This law is important for all parents and educators of gifted children to know about and understand. Please take the time to read the law and understand how it impacts your child(ren), your school, and your school district. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact AAGT. We will refer you to a knowledgeable board member who will try to answer your questions or even arrange to have a speaker come to your area to discuss the law.

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KEY POINTS OF THE LEGISLATION INCLUDE:

DEFINITIONS

(1) changing the definitions of gifted and gifted education to recognize that students are gifted 24/7 and service must be appropriate, an integral part of the regular school day, an integrated and differentiated experience, and commensurate with ability;

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS

(2) requiring that administrators, teachers, counselors, and school psychologists have professional development to understand giftedness and gifted education modifications;

PUBLIC INTEREST DECLARATION

(3) declaring it to be in the public interest to assist high achieving and underachieving pupils identified as gifted (i.e. a top-down declaration of its importance to our state);

GOVERNING BOARD REQUIREMENTS

(4) requiring governing boards to modify the course of study and adapt teaching methods, materials, and techniques for gifted students, including those who may have a disability or difficulty with the English language;

GIFTED TRANSFERS

(5) making it easier for gifted transfer students to receive services without unreasonable delay in their new school;

WRITTEN GUIDELINES REQUIREMENT

(6) requiring that the state board of education develop written guidelines to assist governing boards in identifying gifted pupils and providing appropriate programs and services from kindergarten through 12th grade;

SCOPE & SEQUENCES

(7) requiring that Scope & Sequences be developed that include specific criteria based on the National Gifted Standards and be updated annually if changes have been made or every 5 years if no changes have been made;

ANNUAL EVALUATIONS AND PARENT INCLUSION

(8) requiring districts to conduct annual evaluations, and include parents in the development and evaluation of, programs and services; and

STATE SUPERINTENDENT INVOLVEMENT

(9) requiring the active involvement of the State Superintendent in the development and implementation of gifted professional development, programs, and services.

In addition, the supporting Administrative Code provides additional guidelines for the ADE, school district governing boards, teachers, and parents in meeting the mandate.

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PARENT SELF-CARE

Parenting a gifted child has its joys as well as its challenges. At times it can be exhausting physically, mentally, socially and emotionally, so it's important to care for yourself as well as for your child.

Be kind to yourself and take time to rejuvenate on a regular basis. Developing a creative outlet is often a good form of rejuvenation.

As you were learning about the characteristics and emotional intensities of gifted children, did any of them resonate with you about yourself?

Often the parents of gifted children are gifted themselves and they also have intense emotions. Intense emotions can be difficult to navigate, especially for gifted children and teens. As parents, we will get farther in our advocacy efforts if we are able to keep our own emotional intensities in check. One of the greatest gifts you can give your gifted child is to both model and teach emotional literacy - how to name and appropriately process those intense, and sometimes overpowering, emotions.

**PARENTING A
GIFTED CHILD HAS
ITS JOYS AS WELL
AS ITS CHALLENGES**

Understand that your child's ability to accept their own giftedness and the intensities that come with it, will depend on your family culture.

As a family, learn about giftedness and embrace the gifts of one another, wherever they are in their growth journey.

It is easy and common for parents of gifted children to worry and feel anxious about past decisions as well as your future decisions and the decisions of your child. You will have a greater positive impact on your child if you are able to be fully present here and now. By doing so, you will be able to support them in exploring their interests, both inside and outside the classroom. Strive to guide them in naming their emotions and to express them in appropriate ways. Gifted children are better able to grow emotionally when they can channel their intensities through compassionate service opportunities.

A great tool in self-care is finding other parents of gifted kids who are on this same journey.

AAGT supports the work of SENG (Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted). SENG trains caring individuals to be facilitators to run eight-week SENG Model Parent Groups in which understanding is shared and parenting strategies are discussed. You can learn more about SENG parent groups and view a listing of groups in your area by visiting the SENG website:
<https://www.sengifted.org/smpg>



**Do you want to connect with other parents in your community for a longer term?
Do you want to effect positive change in your community?**

Consider joining or forming an AAGT affiliate/parent group.

AAGT affiliate chapters provide a forum for mutual understanding among parents and can also have positive impacts at the local, regional and state level. To learn more, visit the Affiliate page of the AAGT website: <https://arizonagifted.org/about-us/affiliates/#!directory> and download the AAGT Affiliate Handbook.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

**JOIN US AND CONNECT WITH
FELLOW PARENTS WHO ARE
ALSO ON THIS UNIQUE GIFTED
JOURNEY**

**Welcome to the world of
giftedness!**

Be sure to visit the Parent page of the AAGT website to find out about the next AAGT parent event: <https://arizonagifted.org/parents-and-students/>

Those of us at AAGT look forward to connecting with you soon.