Positive Advocacy
Supporting Our Gifted Children

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What Do You SEE?

Old woman or young lady?
When her parents see...

- A folksy singer-song writer who wants to change the world
- A lawyer-in-training who strongly values fairness
- A lover of animals who once designed blueprints for an amazing shelter
- A quick-witted, hysterical person who makes me think and laugh every day
- A perfectionistic student and athlete (softball pitcher) who puts an immense amount of pressure on herself
- A team leader who tries to pick up when her teammates when they are down
- A loving daughter who holds my hand and watches old episodes of *Gilmore Girls.*
What her teachers see...

• A sad student hunched over her desk sending signals that she wants to be left alone.

• A student who needs to be more assertive in making friends.

• A student who needs to participate more and not be afraid of wrong answers.

• A sweet, bright student who can be a leader if she wants to.
What she sees...

- Up until recently (braces), a girl with crooked teeth who doesn’t look like the popular girls
- A so-so pitcher who should throw in the towel
- A strong student
- A talented song writer
- A girl who worries constantly about making and keeping friends
- A student who is embarrassed to get the answers wrong, especially in front of classmates
- A student and athlete who wishes she could stop putting so much pressure on herself
- A person who cares about the world and wants to make a difference
Hearing and Seeing

• We need to **HEAR** one another and **HONOR** each other’s perceptions.

• Perceptions are **VALID** even if we don’t agree with them.
  
  • I need to understand how teachers see my child.
  • Teachers need to understand how I see my child.
  • Both teachers and parents need to understand a child sees him/herself.

• **HEARING** and **SEEING** one another is the first step to a **POSITIVE** collaboration.
## Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How Do You See Your Child?</th>
<th>How Does Your Child’s Teachers See Him/Her?</th>
<th>How Does Your Child See Him/Herself?</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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Let’s Avoid Blame

• Sometimes, unintentionally or intentionally, we place blame on others and ourselves.
• Blame often relieves us of stress.

BUT

• Blame only gets us so far, and it’s a dead end.

Awareness and Self-Awareness are not the same as blame.
The Band-Aid Cycle

1. Relaxation
2. Realization
3. Reaction

Relaxation → Realization → Reaction
Although federal law recognizes the special needs of gifted students, it does not require schools to identify or offer services for these students!

• There are only 4 states that mandate and fully fund g/t education.

• 12 states neither provide a mandate nor fund g/t education.
Only 1 state (Nevada) statutorily requires all teachers to receive training in gifted and talented education through a separate course before beginning their classroom service.
From a Teacher’s Perspective…

Out of a classroom of 25 students

- 10% of students may have a disability (2-3 Students)
- 3-5% of students may be identified gifted (1-2 Students)
- 20% of students may be economically disadvantaged (5 Students)
- 10-12% of students may be English Language Learners (2-3 Students)
Ideas for a Successful Collaboration
Ten Basic Steps

1. Prepare for the parent-teacher meeting
2. Initiate the parent-teacher meaning *(Be Proactive!)*
3. Collect information \textit{INDIVUALLY/TOGETHER}
4. Isolate the problem/area of need \textit{TOGETHER}
5. Identify the problem/area of need \textit{TOGETHER}
6. Generate solutions \textit{TOGETHER}
7. Form a plan \textit{TOGETHER}
8. Evaluate process and progress \textit{TOGETHER}
9. Follow-up on the situation \textit{INDIVUALLY/TOGETHER}
10. Meet again as needed \textit{TOGETHER}
A Word About Engagement…

Types of Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Behavioral          | “I complete homework on time.”  
                      | “I work hard to do well.” |
| Emotional           | “I feel happy to be part of my school.”  
                      | “I enjoy the classes I am taking.” |
| Cognitive           | “I want to learn as much as I can at school.”  
                      | “School is important for future success.” |

(Fredricks et al., 2011)
How This Might Look…

Angie pretends to be sick to get out of anything school related…

- Set up a meeting with your child’s teacher(s)
- Start to gather information concerning the underlying cause of your child’s behaviors
- Try using emotional literacy techniques at home

1. Prepare for the parent-teacher meeting
2. Initiate the parent-teacher meaning (Be Proactive!)
3. Collect information individually/together
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In ________</th>
<th>I feel...</th>
<th>This means...</th>
<th>Here are some examples:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Subject</td>
<td>frustrated, annoyed, angry</td>
<td>What I am learning is too hard. I might not be able to make it.</td>
<td>(add your own)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>(add your own)</td>
<td>(add your own)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>challenged, interested, positive</td>
<td>What I am learning takes extra effort, but I can handle it.</td>
<td>(add your own)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(add your own)</td>
<td>(add your own)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>confident, sure of myself</td>
<td>What I am learning is just right for me.</td>
<td>(add your own)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(add your own)</td>
<td>(add your own)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>bored, annoyed, distracted</td>
<td>What I am learning is too easy for me.</td>
<td>(add your own)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(add your own)</td>
<td>(add your own)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How This Might Look…

Communicate with One Another

• Avoid **BLAME**.

• Share the information you’ve gathered and listen. The teacher(s) might have a **DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE**!

• Encourage the child to share what he/she is **FEELING**. This will lead to **SELF-ADVOCACY** in the future.

• Stay focused and narrow down the **ISSUE**.

3. Collect information **INDIVUALLY/TOGETHER**
4. Isolate the problem/area of need **TOGETHER**
How This Might Look…

Collaborate on a Plan
• Come to consensus on the issue
• Brainstorm possible solutions
• Create a plan!
  • *Meaningful Engagement Plan*

5. Identify the problem/area of need **TOGETHER**
6. Generate solutions **TOGETHER**
7. Form a plan **TOGETHER**
A Sample Plan

Create a Meaningful Engagement Plan

After brainstorming solutions, help the child complete the Meaningful Engagement Plan, which helps the child understand why he is intrinsically motivated to try this idea.

**MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT PLAN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This week I will try this idea:</th>
<th>Reading a book that is harder and more interesting.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I want to try this idea because...</td>
<td>I want to like in-class reading time and become a stronger reader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is how I plan to try this idea...</td>
<td>I will talk to my parents and teacher about things that I like, so they can help pick better books for me. I will give the new book a chance and if I still am not happy with in-class reading, I will tell my teacher and parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher(s) will support me by...</td>
<td>My teacher will listen to the things I like to read about and use the tests I have taken to come up with books for me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My parent(s) will support me by...</td>
<td>My parents will also listen and help my teacher pick books for me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This should happen if I try this idea...</td>
<td>I should be happy during in-class reading time, finish the new book, and do well on the test I take on the book.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Child Signature

Parent Signature

Teacher Signature

Use the Collaboration Guide to brainstorm solutions and create a plan together.
How This Might Look…

• Determine how you will know progress is being made.
• Establish “check-ins” with teachers and your child.
• Meet again and revise as needed.

8. Evaluate process and progress TOGETHER.
9. Follow-up on the situation INDIVIDUALLY/TOGETHER.
10. Meet again as needed TOGETHER.
We Need to Help Our Children Advocate Too…
Rationale for Self-Advocacy

• Students don't typically know how to ask, don't know what to ask for, don't even know that they can ask (Douglas, 2004).

• Self-advocacy is about encouraging self-confidence, independence, and empowerment.
This might be hard to believe…

But as children get older and become more independent, they tend to \textit{not} want their parents to ask for things for them.
They may **TRY** to self-advocate in school to **no** avail.

"All I'm saying is we plug these into Excel, let it do its thing, and then we can all play until lunch!"
With That Said…

• They still need **OUR HELP**.

• Although self-advocacy has to be the work of the **INDIVIDUAL**, we need to help teach children how to effectively **COMMUNICATE** and to realize and share their interests, **NEEDS**, and rights (Douglas, 2004).
We Want Our Kids To…

• Know Their Rights
• Know Themselves
• Know What Their Options Are
• Know How to Ask for What They Need

Table the past and future. Focus on the present. What can I do today, now?
Help Them Know Their Rights

• **TALK** to your children about self-advocacy. **EXPLAIN** what it is.

• Give them *The Gifted Kids' Survival Guide* by Judy Galbraith *(There is also a teen version)*
  • **Tab pages** that connect to what is currently bothering them.
  • **Talk to them** about what they read.
Help Them Know Their Rights

• Ask the school for copies of your district's mission statement, goals, gifted education plan, and state mandates for gifted education *(you can also find this information on the web!)*

• Share the “Gifted Children’s Bill of Rights.”
Help Them Know Who They Are

What makes him/her unique?
• Share gifted characteristics charts;
• How he/she got identified gifted;
• What people saw in him/her that began the identification process
  • Encourage them to informally interview people to collect data
Help Them Know Who They Are

What is he/she interested in?

• Your child can simply rank his/her school subjects by interest and describe the best learning experience he/she ever had, list the things that made it so enjoyable;
• Take interest inventories.

Two Tips

• Nonprofit educational organizations are often the most reliable sources for assessments/inventories.
• Do the assessments yourself! This could lead to a great discussion with your child!
Help Them Know Who They Are

**What are his/her strengths?**

**Interview your child...**

- What are your strongest academic subjects? Why?
- What parts of your personality do you like the best? Why?
- Would others say this is a realistic view of your strengths? Why or why not?
- Are their strengths that others see that you don’t see? Tell me more about this.
Help Them Know Who They Are

**What are his/her areas of need?**

*Interview your child...*

- Which subjects do you struggle most with? Why?
- What parts of your personality would you want to improve? Why?
- Would others say this is a realistic view of your needs? Why or why not?
- Are there other needs you might have that others see that you don’t see? Tell me more about this.
Help Them Know Their Options

- Students need to be **AWARE** of the opportunities that exist within the school district and their community.

- Advanced Placement
- IB courses
- Classroom enrichment
- Subject and grade-based acceleration
- Independent study
- Mentorships
- Summer programs
- Service-learning projects
- Concurrent enrollment, ETC.
Help Them Know Their Options

• Brainstorm research-based **STRATEGIES** with them that might be available at their school.
• Work **TOGETHER** to ensure what they want to ask for is reasonable and **FEASIBLE**.

- Curriculum compacting
- Independent investigations
- More challenging readings work
- Enrichment
- Anchor activities
- Bibliotherapy
- Affective discussion groups (maybe during lunch), etc.
Help Them Know *How to Ask for What They Need*

- Read and discuss Galbraith and Delisle's, "*Ten Tips for Talking to Teachers*" with your child.
- At the beginning of the school year, ask your child to write a letter to his/her teacher(s) sharing needs, concerns, strengths.

*We Want to AVOID this*
Help Them Know How to Ask for What They Need

• Role play respectful adult-child interaction

• Keep the other adults in your child’s life INFORMED. It takes a village to raise a child!!! We all need to work TOGETHER!
Self-Advocacy Travels Beyond the Self…

• “Rippling often happens unintentionally… We never fully realize the POWER we have to IMPACT others’ lives in a positive way.” (Jim Webb)

• We can positively influence the actions of others through our actions.
Strategies for You

• If needed, give yourself a “time out” when you get frustrated.

• Always remember… I can’t control your actions, but I can control my reaction.

• Keep in mind that awareness is not the same as blame. The latter is not productive.

Don’t forget to put your oxygen mask on first!
Contact and Livebinder Information

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