



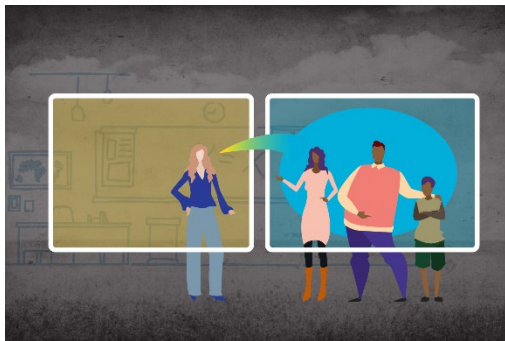
Nebraska Department of Education

300 Centennial Mall South ♦ Lincoln, Nebraska ♦ 68508

High Ability Learning

January 2022

Family and Parents of HAL Students



In recent years, the importance of including families in classrooms conversations has come to the forefront. HAL students and families are no exception. Research shows that parents of HAL students may experience more stress and unique challenges posed by raising a gifted child (Dirks, 1979). One scholar says, “Whether giftedness is identified and labelled, there is no escape from the impact of giftedness on the family or the impact of the family on

giftedness” (May, 2000, p. 59). Stressors for families of HAL students may include lack of family alliance or understanding of other families without a gifted child, managing sibling relationships, finding strategies, and difficulty explaining giftedness to others (Rentai, Salvator Bonfiglio, & Pfeiffer, 2016).

On top of their unique differences, parents and families of HAL students are crucial to the success of their child. Parents and families are “the most critical component in translation of talent, ability, and promise into achievement for gifted individuals” (Olszewski, Kulieke, & Buescher, 198).

Parents are crucial to the development of talent in their children (Bloom, 1985), but parents often do not feel equipped to manage the needs of their HAL student. The home environment is important in encouraging self-competence and promote positive relationships (Jolly & Matthews, 2012).

Not only are parents and families important at home, but they are important in the school as well. Parents often have information about their child that is not shown in school. This can be critical when identifying students for HAL services (Jolly & Matthews, 2012). Because parents have such



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an important view of their child they should be included in all decisions and procedures. That being said, it is our responsibility as educators to not only help ALL students, but to help parents advocate for their children.

This edition of the HAL newsletter will discuss steps to share with parents and families on appropriate advocacy and how to find resources to help with their HAL student.

HAL Spotlight: Kristen Job

The purpose of the HAL Spotlight is to allow you to connect and meet your counterparts across the state. Feel free to reach out to one another! Establishing a cohesive network is super important, and it reminds us that we all have one common goal—serving HAL students.

This month's spotlight is Kristen Job. Kristen is the executive director of the Nebraska Association for Gifted (NAG). NAG is an NAGC affiliate aiming to serve the HAL students, educators, and families of Nebraska.



Kristen Job
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The Nebraska Association for the Gifted has been in existence since 1956 and began as a parent and teacher group and evolved into a grassroots advocacy group that has membership across the state and board representation from across the state. NAG has continuously worked with the Nebraska Department of Education, the state school board and has often provided testimony at legislative committees to further our aim of meeting the unique needs of high ability learners in Nebraska. Membership is open to anyone who is interested in our mission and goals. A one-year membership is \$25.00, and all conference attendees are members for one year. All of this information and more can be found on our website: www.negifted.org.



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What is your favorite part about working with High Ability Learners?

EVERYTHING! Life is never boring when high ability learners are in the room! I worked in a school district for 17 years with high ability learners and not a single year was anything like the previous. High ability learners keep you young, keep you curious, keep you moving, keep you creative and challenge everything you ever thought you knew about teaching!

What are some upcoming things you are excited about?

The NAG Virtual Learning Series have been amazing, and we have one coming up Saturday January 29th from 8:30-1:30. As much as we all love the annual conference, COVID keeps making that difficult. The Board does realize how much that one on one time at the conference means to teachers across the state and we hope to be able to bring that back in some form very soon. On a personal note, I am also excited to get further in my Doctoral program...and show our university system that they too have been a little behind the times in meeting the needs of this population!

What is something you would like to tell other HAL people across the state?

The state of NE is a unique one, we have two very unique populations, urban and rural, meeting the needs of rural HAL students is a focus of NAG and personally within my PhD program. I would like to see the state of NE work together to create some unique learning opportunities that reach all of our HAL students. I would ask that if you are doing something unique and amazing in your rural communities to meet the needs of your HAL students, please reach out to NAG so that we can work together to see if these programs could benefit other rural HAL kids!

If you were in the Winter Olympics, what sport would you compete in?

Lodge Activities – those of you who know me well, know I do not like winter.

Check out the NAG Virtual Learning Series on Saturday, January 29th from 8:30am-1:30pm.

Can't make it on that day? Register and receive a link to the recordings that will be live for 60 days after the conference!

REGISTER AT <https://bit.ly/NAG2022>



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Advocating for a HAL Child: Where to Start



Families of HAL students may want to advocate for their child but may not be sure where to start. Due to the lack of community and knowledge of resources, it can be intimidating to ask for what they need for their child.

One of the most important steps is talking to the appropriate person. Each person within the school has a set of responsibilities to each student. Depending on the student's needs, the point of contact may differ.

Roles of School Staff and Who to Go to: *Carpenter & Hayden, 2018*

Classroom Teacher:

If your child expresses they are bored, needs more challenge, or should be referred for the gifted program, always start with the classroom teacher. It is important to understand that classroom teachers are stretched thin. Additionally, in one study, they showed that as many as 67% of teachers have had little to no training on students who have mastered content (Farkas & Duffett, 2009). The classroom teachers are often asked to differentiate for multiple levels within one classroom. If a HAL students' needs are not being met, it is not intentional.

Therefore developing a strong working relationship with the classroom teacher is crucial. Starting here and raising awareness of your child's needs may be sufficient. Many times the classroom teacher is able to make an adjustment to the academic difficulty and sufficiently serve the child. Having an open conversation with the classroom teacher respects their expertise of the curriculum and creates a two-way relationship and opens a line from home to school.

HAL Teacher:

It is the responsibility of the HAL teacher to provide services, as outlined for by the district, to students identified as HAL. Each district is different in the way they serve HAL students. The HAL teacher is often responsible for providing instruction during gifted class, developing curriculum and enrichment activities to extend the students' thinking, and evaluate students for qualification into the gifted program.

The HAL teacher can be a great resource for parents and families. They can be a bridge between the family and the classroom teacher. The HAL facilitator works with the classroom teachers and the student, so they can help speak with the teacher and decide on an appropriate plan for the child. HAL teachers are also a great source of knowledge for resources!

Events

◆
Nebraska Association for
Gifted Virtual Learning
Series

January 29th
8:30-1:30

Recordings available for
60 days

<https://bit.ly/NAG2022>

◆
Equity in High Ability
Learning State Report
Webinar

February 15th
4:00-5:00

<https://bit.ly/EquityHALNE>



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HAL Coordinator (District Level):

The gifted coordinator is often overseeing all of the HAL identification and services for the district. Not every district has a full or part-time HAL person at the district level.

You may not find a need to speak with the district coordinator often. They would be the person to contact to inquire about district policies, resolve a concern that has not been met by the school, appeal an identification decision, or start a parent advocacy group.

School Administration:

The job of school administration is to keep all students safe, meet district and state requirements, and ensure the school is running efficiently. Administrators delegate responsibilities, so often there are teachers in the building that they defer the HAL questions to.

You should contact the school administrators if you have made multiple attempts to resolve a problem with the teacher(s), you are concerned that the implementation of the HAL program is not being done with fidelity, or you feel that grade skipping may be appropriate option for your child.

School Psychologist/Counselors:

Most school psychologists or counselors may be responsible for multiple buildings within a district. Psychologists administer testing that may be used for the gifted program, and the counselor may be on the identification committee as well. If the child also has a disability, the school psychologist and counselor will be a main point of contact.

You should contact the school psychologist if you have questions about a test they administered, if you are concerned that your child may have a disability, or if you would like mental health referrals for your child.

Steps to Advocacy: Having a Plan

One of the most important pieces to effective advocacy is having a plan. Being prepared and knowing the steps can improve satisfaction with outcomes and confidence for parents and families. When advocating for your HAL student, follow three simple steps (Isaacs-McLeod, 2013):



Prepare

When preparing to meet with a teacher or other school staff, preparing is a crucial step. The first thing to do is become familiar with your state and local policies. Know what your rights are and how the HAL program works to make an informed decision. Gather data about your child's performance and needs and try to make an objective decision. Going in with data that are not based on feelings can be a powerful way to ask for what your child needs.



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Finally, know your goals going in. What program modifications would you like to see for your child? Below is a chart of some common strategies that you could research:

GIFTED STRATEGIES TO PROPOSE TO YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL		
STRATEGY	WHAT IS IT?	EXAMPLES
PRE-TESTING	A way to find out what your child already knows before the teacher starts teaching. If you suspect your child already knows the material, ask if they can be pre-tested.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a version of the post-test • Asking an open-ended, big concept question • Asking the essential questions • Asking students to perform a skill • Questioning students verbally • Having students rate themselves on the unit objectives
CURRICULUM COMPACTING	A strategy that streamlines and eliminates previously mastered grade-level curriculum for students who are capable of completing content at a faster pace.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name it: Identifying content the student might have mastered • Prove it: Assessing the student on the content • Change it: Replacing the typical activities or content in some way
ACCELERATION	A strategy that allows the same content to be covered at a faster pace than typical.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole grade skipping • Early entrance to kindergarten • Subject acceleration • AP classes • Dual enrollment
GROUPING	A strategy that groups gifted students with their academic peers, making it easier for teachers to provide enrichment and acceleration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability grouping • Performance grouping • Academic or enrichment cluster grouping • Grouping by specific subjects or talent • Grouping by interest
ENRICHMENT	Activities that go beyond the regular curriculum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diving deeper into the curriculum standard • Researching and presenting a topic of interest • Participating in an academic competition • Designing a science experiment • Proposing an alternative assignment • Undertaking real-world problem solving
ACADEMIC COMPETITIONS	A strategy that can be incorporated as a club, enrichment cluster, curriculum for a gifted class, or an individual enrichment opportunity. Parents can volunteer to coach a team after school or help during the school day.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Destination Imagination • Future City • Future Problem Solving Program International • Global Math Challenge • Math Olympiad • National History Day • Odyssey of the Mind • Science Olympiad

Act:

Your plan of action should include with whom you will talk. Generally, this will start with the classroom teacher. When meeting with the teacher you may include the HAL teacher or other school staff that work with your child. Together with the team, you should create an actionable plan that can be evaluated. This plan should be written out either in a document or in an email to hold one another accountable.



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Follow-Up:

One of the most important things you can do as a parent is express your appreciation to the teacher for their willingness to listen and accommodate the student. This connection can go a long way!

The next step is to follow through on any agreed upon changes at home or at school. After a couple of weeks, revisit the plan with the teacher. If the plan is not successful, discuss problem areas and brainstorm solutions.

If the plan is not being followed appropriately, you may have to appeal to a higher person in administration.

You can use these same steps with your child to promote self-advocacy skills. Guiding them through planning, acting, and following through will teach them the importance for asking for what they need.

Parent Resources

Finally, there are plenty of resources if you are a parent of a HAL student or if you are an educator that works with families of HAL students. One of the main points of stress for parents of HAL students is the lack of knowledge of resources and lack of parent and family alliances. Here is a list of places that they can find information regarding parenting HAL students:

Books:

[A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children - Webb, Gore, Amend, DeVries](#)

[Emotional Intensity in Gifted Students: Helping Kids Cope with Explosive Feelings - Christine Fonseca](#)

[Smart but Scattered - Dawson & Guare](#)

[Gifted Teen Survival Guide - Galbraith & DeLisle](#)

More book recommendations at <https://bit.ly/GiftedParentBooks>

Online Resources:

Nebraska Department of Education High Ability Learning - <https://www.education.ne.gov/hal/>

Nebraska Association for Gifted - <http://107.182.234.62/~negifted/>

National Association for Gifted Children <https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources-parents>



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Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted - <https://www.sengifted.org/parenting>

Belin-Blank Center at University of Iowa -
<https://belinblank.education.uiowa.edu/educators/#students>

Vanderbilt Programs for Talented Youth - <https://pty.vanderbilt.edu/>



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