

WAETAG

Washington Association of Educators of the Talented and Gifted

WAETAG Newsletter

Winter 2014

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Gifted Education Day

Please plan to attend
Gifted Education Day on
February 28, 2014
in Olympia!

Sponsored by the Washington Coalition for Gifted Education, this is a great day for kids and adults to learn about the legislative process, talk with legislators, and meet others from around the state for a rally at the state capital. For details, inquire at wagifted@earthlink.net.

Celebration of Talent

March 22, 2014
Whitworth University

Don't miss this third annual event designed to enlighten children,

Dear Jan,

The Strength of a Team

Charlotte Akin
WAETAG President



Those outside of Washington often ask how it is that we have moved steadily forward with programs for gifted. The answer is that we have the strength of a team. I think of it as a three-legged stool. Loss of any one leg would cripple the function of the stool. But the three together create something quite strong. Washington is blessed with multiple organizations for gifted children.

[Northwest Gifted Child Association](#) is a parent advocacy group, and it was our first organization in Washington, dating to 1963. One of the great things NWGCA does is send people out to districts to speak to parent groups about appropriate and effective advocacy for their gifted children. And it is free!

Next on the scene was [Washington Association of Educators of the Talented and Gifted](#) in 1984. WAETAG is the state professional association devoted to equipping educators of gifted children and also to helping those children find summer activities and other learning opportunities.

[The Washington Coalition for Gifted Education](#) was soon to follow in 1985. This is a lobbying organization that first got funding for highly capable programs in the state and more recently has been responsible for the legislation making programs for highly capable learners part of their basic education. Those of us in the know, call WCGE simply, "the Coalition." Would you like a peek at what the Coalition does? Their ongoing mission is to make sure that all highly capable students across Washington receive equitable access to an appropriate education, and that the state fully fund their basic education. Each year they have Gifted Education Day in Olympia. Some teachers bring whole classes for a tour of the capitol, and some parents bring their kids. Some districts organize groups to come. Why do so many come? It is just a great day! There are opportunities to talk with legislators. Sometimes we meet the governor or the Superintendent of Public Instruction. We may also see Legislative action from the balcony, when the Legislature is in session. Our students were thrilled to see the State Senate pass a Resolution proclaiming Gifted Education Day 2013. Consider coming this year - it's on February 28 in 2014. Please go to their website (click on the above link) for more information, or find them on [Facebook](#).

I had the opportunity this last fall to make a presentation to a regional

parents and educators on the subject of giftedness and the unique challenges and benefits that it brings. Gifted students will participate in a variety of fun and unique learning experiences with like-minded youth. Parents and teachers will attend presentations and interact with other parents and professionals on the challenges and joys of raising and educating gifted children. There will be presentation strands for elementary, middle school, and high school students as well as for parents and educators. Find more information [HERE](#).

Summer Scholarship Opportunity

This year WAETAG will again grant scholarships to students in grades 3-11 wishing to attend summer university programs. Up to four \$500 (not to exceed tuition costs) scholarships will be awarded.

To apply, students must complete and submit an application packet, which includes an information sheet, an essay and a teacher recommendation.

For more information, including criteria and application packets, please visit the [WAETAG website](#). Look under the "Resources" tab, and choose "for students."

Please forward this information, and/or copy and distribute the forms to interested students, 3rd to 11th grades.

The application deadline is March 1, 2014.

Distinguished Colleagues Honored at WAETAG Conference

We all know we have many, many heroic and talented colleagues in gifted land. Two standouts were honored at our October conference.

group of the Washington State School Directors Association. I was asked about funding for highly capable programs to go with the new mandate. Unfortunately, I had to say that there was no new funding.

There is a funding formula that was put forward by the legislative created committee called the HCP Technical Working Group. It was adopted and recommended to the Quality Education Committee, a legislative group that gives input to the whole legislature. Of all the things in basic education, the only thing that was not funded according to the QEC recommendations was highly capable programs. It wasn't for lack of effort by the Coalition and its supporting members and groups. We worked hard on it, and the work will continue. This is a work that affects each of the educators in the state, each of the districts, and each of the highly capable children.

Through the years, WAETAG, NWGCA, and the Coalition have worked together supporting each other in multiple ways. There is even a [joint membership form](#) (find it under the "Joining WAETAG tab) for those who want membership to one, two, or all three organizations.

We also have a newcomer on the scene of Washington organizations. [Prodigy Northwest](#) was founded in Spokane in 2010. PRODIGY is an acronym for "Providing Resources & Opportunities Designed to Inspire Gifted Youth". A non-profit 501c3 organization, they partner with Whitworth University in offering events and activities for highly capable students. The Invent Washington State Competition has become an annual event that is growing in participation numbers. Prodigy NW hosts an annual "[Celebration of Talent](#)" conference for high potential children, their parents and educators. [SENG](#) Model Guided Discussion and Support Groups for Parents of Gifted Children are offered annually to interested parents. Prodigy Northwest publishes a monthly e-newsletter and manages a Prodigy NW Facebook page. They consult with parents offering ideas and resources to support gifted youth in the inland northwest region. Prodigy Northwest has also become partners with WAETAG and NWGCA, as we keep moving forward in our state. You may contact Prodigy Northwest by e-mailing [Deb Johnson](#).

Let's keep growing and supporting each other!

WAETAG Conference Report

By Kari DeMarco
WAETAG Vice President



It was a beautiful mid-October, yet again, when administrators and teachers from around the state gathered in Tacoma for the 2013 WAETAG conference. Perhaps we should have seen it coming, due to changes in the Washington Administrative Code, but we were still shocked when, in the last few weeks before the event, registration suddenly swelled to about double of recent years. This is fabulous news, as it shows highly capable students in our state are finally getting some of the attention they have long lacked. And we believe a lot of learning took place, too.

According to evaluation forms, our keynote speaker, Dr. Linda Silverman, was much appreciated. People commented on the depth of her knowledge, as well as her passion for serving gifted students. People also really loved Roger Fisher, a local gifted guru, and his creative, well-delivered ideas. In addition, people seemed to truly appreciate the abundance of excellent breakout sessions. "I often couldn't decide which one of many great choices to go to!" was a common comment on our feedback forms.



Dr. Kathryn Picanco

was honored as Distinguished Leader for many reasons, but especially for her role of hosting the ESD Training Cadre at Whitworth University. She jumped right in to help when asked, offering the university's facility and her own expertise. She is a pleasure to work with, and is always humble in sharing her vast knowledge.



Roger Fisher

was honored as Distinguished Teacher for his many years of serving gifted children in the classroom and as a consultant. He, too, pitched in unselfishly when asked to speak to the ESD Training Cadre this summer. He shared not only what he has learned as an educator for gifted children, but also as a professional development speaker for other educators.

We want to honor all our colleagues who work tirelessly for our nation's future, and these two in particular. Please join us in thanking them.

WANTED: Distinguished Scholars

WAETAG annually honors students who have distinguished themselves in academic achievement and leadership, work ethic, citizenship, or interpersonal skills.

Anyone can nominate a K-12 student for this honor. To nominate, write a brief one-page

Complaints were logged about crowded rooms, especially for the more popular sessions. Again, we were surprised at the quickly swelling enrollment, and did add an extra room for each session, but this is something we will seek to alleviate next year. Thank you for that feedback.

Another concern was that the food was not healthy enough. We can fix that! Attendees wanted more salads and water, less carbs. Can do!

People also requested more days, more breaks, and more social time. At our upcoming board meeting we will look for ways to do this, perhaps incorporating the fun Tacoma sights and attractions you suggested.

Other miscellaneous suggestions were more vendors, better parking, clarification of Speed Lessons, quieter lunch entertainment, and asking presenters to more actively engage the attendees rather than letting them "sit and get" for so long.

We've heard you. Thank you for taking the time to fill out the evaluations. **Overall we received way more positive remarks, "thank you's," and compliments than suggestions, and by listening to where we can improve, we commit to creating an even better WAETAG for 2014!** See you then.

Ongoing Issues in Identification & Designing Program Services: How Should We Address Them?

Register now for a two-day interactive institute for educators to learn best practices in identification practices & procedures and programming options for Highly Capable Programs, presented by Whitworth University Center for Gifted Education.

Spokane Area Institute
January 27-28, 2014, Whitworth University

Seattle Area Institute
January 30-31, 2014, Shoreline Conference Center

Vancouver Area Institute
March 6-7, 2014, ESD 112

For detailed information and registration, [CLICK HERE](#).

Donors Choose

By Laurie Dye
ESD 114 Representative

For years I struggled with how to fund my "crazy" ideas and projects for my highly capable classes. There are no funds available from my school district and our school doesn't qualify for any of the high poverty grants available. Unfortunately, that meant I had to spend my own money or my students would go without challenging, innovative learning

nomination on why you feel this student is worthy and send it to your area ESD representative. Find your representative by visiting the [WAETAG](#) website and choosing the "WAETAG Board" tab.

Be sure to include:

- * student's name and grade
- * the name and address of the student's school
- * your name and contact information
- * the ESD region of the scholar being nominated
- * narrative expressing the reason for the nomination and why this person should be a Distinguished Scholar.

Nominations are accepted beginning January 30. The **deadline is April 1** for acceptance of nominations. Winners will be announced by May 1.

Seabury Presents National Gifted Education Expert

The Fourth Annual Seabury School Speaker Series presents national gifted education expert Dr. Dan Peters on "Parenting Your Gifted Child for a Successful School Year (and life)." The free event will be Jan. 23 at 7 P.M. at the Greater Tacoma Convention and Trade Center. For reservations [click HERE](#)

From Washington Coalition for Gifted Education: Contact Your National Legislators

According to [Council for Exceptional Children](#), a nation-wide advocacy group for special and gifted education, there there is an opportunity for reinstatement of the Javits funding in ongoing budget negotiations. Please contact your Senators and Representatives about this issue. To make it easy, use [CEC's Legislative Action Center](#). You can use their letter, write your own, or use this one that has been tailored to WAETAG:

As your constituent, and a member of WAETAG (Washington Association of Educators of Talented and Gifted), I urge you to

experiences.

One day I was attending a science workshop and the instructor mentioned [Donors Choose](#). This is an organization in New York that helps teachers fund materials for their classrooms. The instructor found the process to be really easy and she had successfully secured many grants for her science students. I decided to try it.

I wrote my first request following the clear directions on the website and waited to see what would happen. Soon people from all over the United States started to make donations to my project. It was so encouraging to see total strangers donate money for my special project. It took a couple of months but finally it was fully funded. In just a few weeks the materials arrived at my school. The kids were thrilled and surprised that people cared so much about their education that they donated money. As required by Donors Choose, we sent pictures of the kids using the materials and wrote thank you notes to the donors.

Over the years I've had twenty-six projects funded. I've received everything from mini greenhouses to science trade books for my class library. I've be able to teach my students ancient Chinese writing by receiving thirty traditional sumi brushes along with the needed supplies for students to grind their own ink.

When you submit your grant, you are able to select the exact items you need from a variety of vendors. I love selecting just what I want and need. Another bonus is these items belong to me and not the school. If I were to leave my school or district the items go with me.

I've learned that people like to donate to creative projects which are exactly what I like to develop and implement in my highly capable class. I've had the best results when my grant revolved around science or art. There are many companies like Disney that donate money for specific topics like ecology. When I see one of these specific offers, I write a project that will fit both the company's interests and my curriculum. Often the business funds the majority of the grant. I love it when this happens.

I also let my students' parents know when I have a project posted. They love to donate, and many grandparents like to be involved, as well. They feel it's a way to support the highly capable program, and they compliment me on having the initiative to get grants.

I am so glad that I took the risk and tried Donors Choose. It doesn't take long to write a grant, and my students benefit each time I receive one. The parents think I'm wonderful, and my students are excited about learning. I encourage you to think of a great project, make a list of materials you need and write a Donors Choose grant. You won't be sorry.

ESD 105 Mid-State Region Report

Suzie Bennett
ESD 105 Representative



With the reality of gifted education becoming a part of basic education K-12, districts in our region have been seeking information to help put the best program together for their students. ESD 105 members had the opportunity to participate in four days of training and were fortunate, as we had four dynamic and knowledgeable trainers: Marlene Hughes and Allison Carpenter, gifted education

support increased funding for gifted education programs.

While I recognize the severe budget constraints under which Congress is operating and the difficult decisions you face, I believe that a healthy federal investment is critical to ensuring that children and youth with special educational needs due to exceptional gifts and talents are able to thrive in school and life.

Specifically, I urge you to increase funding for the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act.

Please vote to increase funding for gifted education programs. Education programs cannot afford to absorb more funding cuts. Thank you, and I look forward to your response.

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teachers from the Ellensburg school district; Wendy Clark, a gifted education teacher from the Naches School district; and Dawn Sparks, an ESD 105 staff member. These ladies shed light upon the many changes in gifted education, program models, testing, the nature and needs of gifted students, differentiation strategies, creative thinking skills and critical thinking skills. In our final session, districts were to bring teams and we were given a detailed planning template to guide us through our program planning. This final session was attended by Gayle Pauley from OSPI, who graciously answered questions and helped direct districts in their planning. The districts within our ESD 105 region had very positive comments about the training days and our wonderful presenters.

ESD 113 Parent-Teacher Forums

By Susan Casey
ESD 113 Representative



Another creative outgrowth planned from our summer session with the cadre of highly capable program trainers at Whitworth will be the initiation of educational forums for parents, as well as educators and coordinators of highly capable/gifted student learners. From January through May, 2014, four forum meetings will be offered through ESD 113 Capitol Region, located in Tumwater, WA.

WAETAG board members Laurie McGovern and Susan Casey, HC coordinators for Pioneer School District in Shelton, are coordinating efforts with staff from their regional ESD in order to host these informal sessions.

Previous forums held in Thurston County and Mason County demonstrated the many advantages for networking with others in our local regions concerning meeting the needs of HC and gifted student learners.

These four ESD 113 forums, which will be offered January through May 2014, will serve to:

- INTRODUCE parents and teachers of highly capable and gifted learners to experienced teachers in their local area;
- INFORM parents and teachers of the organizations, research, and resources they may not know exist;
- UPDATE parents and educators of the recent state mandates for this subpopulation of student learners;
- OFFER SUPPORT to parents and teachers via communication with educators, guest speakers, and other parents as they learn about identifying and meeting the needs of HC students;
- GENERATE IDEAS AND HELP PROBLEM-SOLVE.

The dates to note for the ESD 113 HC Parent/Teacher forums are January 22 and May 21.

The forums for HC Teachers and Coordinators in the ESD 113 Capitol Region will be held February 12 and March 12.

All meetings will take place from 6:00--8:00 PM in the ESD 113 Capitol Region Building in Tumwater at 6005 Tyee Drive SW. For information about registration, and/or starting up HC parent/teacher forums in your local ESD region, please contact [Susan Casey](#) (360.490.863). You may also contact [Kathy Jacobson](#), Capitol Region ESD 113 (360-464-6722; Fax: 360-464-6900) or visit [Capitol Region ESD 113](#) online.

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Not Every Tissue is a Kleenex ®

by Kathleen Casper
 ESD 121 Representative



When I talk about my job running a highly capable program, one of the first things some people respond with is a statement such as "well I think all kids are highly capable." It's a phrase that I understand is meant with good intentions... that they say because they really mean that all kids are wonderful and capable of performing at high levels, or even excelling at the top of their classes and in life.

But the problem with phrases like "All kids are GIFTED," or "All kids are HIGHLY CAPABLE" is that they are inaccurate. Those words are technical terms, and although those words can be confusing and are often misunderstood, it is clear through research that all kids are not like the kids who are correctly labeled as possessing the traits that gifted children have. Not all kids have the struggles gifted kids have. And not all kids think like gifted kids. This is why they need support. But if we dilute the message and say all kids are highly capable or gifted, it is like saying all kids have learning disabilities, or all kids have brown hair, or all kids are incredible athletes.

One of the misconceptions that have plagued gifted education in our nation is that "highly capable" or "gifted" is a label that is often used to sometimes mean "better-than-others." This "all kids are gifted" statement is an argument likely created from the best of intentions, and probably originally was meant to counteract the elitist stereotypes that some people have about gifted programs (due to some gifted programs stressing only the top performers who have had advantages in life, and programs made up with very little diversity or lower income students represented...) And the phrase "all kids are gifted" is an interesting statement because it is true if you look at it at face value - just looking at the words in isolation without realizing that the speaker is using a technical term. Yes - all kids are amazing. All kids are wonderful and all have tons of potential. All kids should all be accelerated to the extent possible to help them grow and to push them, and all kids have the potential to learn and should have access to the highest level of schooling available.

But the problem with the phrase is two-fold. First of all, we have to deal with the issue of people not understanding gifted characteristics and challenges, and secondly we need to caution the people who say this that what they are saying may be hurtful and downplay the real needs of gifted people.

What our highly capable programs across the nation have done in some instances is perpetuate the misconception that highly capable is always the same as high achieving - that all students who are gifted should act "smart" or do better than others on academic tasks. This is not always so. Gifted kids have the potential to learn quickly and to explore concepts deeply because their brains are wired differently, but many of them do not take advantage of that ability. And at the same time, there are also some really bright non-gifted kids out there who have great skills and they can achieve higher than the highly capable/gifted kids because they work hard. So we have to strike this misconception right away in our programs and fight to keep our programs open to the gifted ones who are underperforming and help them find reasons to work harder and achieve higher. Sometimes underperformance has more to

do with a student's situation in life (chaotic homes, parents who work long hours to pay the bills and who can't help with homework, limited access to computers or educational materials, or even a teacher who is not able to reach the child because of personality types or inexperience or even just plain inefficient teaching...) Some gifted kids are gifted at working at the middle level where they don't have to work really hard, but they work hard enough not to cause any alarms.

In other words, highly CAPABLE does not always mean high ACHIEVING. All kids can achieve at high levels. All kids are amazing. But not all kids are "highly capable" or "gifted."

There is a famous case in the world of writing and media- the Kleenex case, as it is most often referred to as, where the corporation has threatened to sue writers or others for using the word Kleenex to mean just any tissue, and they do use lawsuits to enforce this. This is because as Wikipedia states, "the Kleenex name has become, or as a legal matter nearly has become, genericized: the popularity of the product has led to the use of its name to refer to any facial tissue, regardless of the brand." Using a trademarked name for another product that is similar in many ways but not the exact product "dilutes the distinctiveness of the trademark...and if a trademarked name becomes the generic name, the trademark becomes worthless." [1] The same thing happened with Xerox brand copy machines. Different copy machines have different internal structures, and different tissues are made with different materials and methods. Just as some gifted children may appear to be a lot like other kids on the outside, there are enough differences in their minds and the ways they process the world that by saying all kids are gifted, it dilutes their needs and their unique characteristics.

The label name can be hard to explain... it sounds so wonderful to say that a child is gifted or highly capable so people want to say it about all kids. Yet "gifted" or "highly capable" are technical terms. What we are saying when we say a child is highly capable or gifted is that this child needs what is considered a special education class. Sure, not all gifted programs are paid for under special education funding in all states. But the realities are that the kids who need highly capable classes are those who need support services. Otherwise they wouldn't be pulled out of their regular classes or labeled differently than others.

There are multiple articles on brain research that show that gifted kids think differently than others. If you visit a gifted class, you can see kids who otherwise would possibly not do as well socially or even academically in general education classes, yet are thriving with each other. Here they find like-peers and explore things at their own paces and to depths that their other classes may not allow. Here, they aren't afraid to raise their hands and give creative answers, or to stand out and appear "too intellectual," or "different." There is a real difference between gifted children and bright children that one can see by spending time in gifted classes where students are screened for aptitude, rather than just for achievement. Sometimes it's the bright children (not the gifted ones) who are higher achieving and following directions better than the gifted kids; many times it's the hard working, bright students who hand in all of their homework and score high on classroom tests, while the gifted kids are busy disrupting their friends, challenging authority and routines, and asking "too many" questions.

We essentially have two gifted groups of children- those who have figured out how to "do school," who are often socially adept and well-liked, can be leaders and achieve at high levels. And then those who don't want to jump through hoops, who may find it is more interesting to misbehave, or who have slid through school so long that they barely picked up the skills they need, but they have gifted characteristics that make them anxious and procrastinators and questioners, etc. In other words, the underperforming gifted kids are

the ones in our programs (or who haven't been adequately identified but who belong in our programs,) who need the most help, but yet we also need to support the highly capable/gifted characteristics in the high achieving side of the program because schools don't always do a great job with acceleration either.

It is important, as we work toward improving gifted education and fighting the good fight to keep programs funded and full of teachers who understand highly capable children, that we also fight the misconceptions and misinformation. We need to be aware of the research that's out there and not be too quick to discount the education and experience of brain scientists at top universities, such as Johns Hopkins, who recognize that there are some students who deserve different supports that will help them achieve instead of drop out. We need to not discount the fact that, although the labels make gifted students seem to have a "monopoly on potential," that is not the reality of what gifted children live every day. They may have high intellect, but they also have struggles and need support. We need to fight to teach others that these are technical terms that serve to identify children, who often feel they cannot function well enough for themselves or for the world, and sometimes give up when they do not fit the mold and the high pressures. We need to teach people what giftedness is, share our love of these kids, and help them be more aware, so they will understand that, just as every tissue is not a Kleenex, not every gifted child is a high performer, and not every child has the struggles and challenges or amazing complexities of the gifted.

Please see these articles:

[Article on brain research on gifted children](#)
[Brain research from Johns Hopkins](#)
[Myths about all kids being gifted - see myth #8](#)

About the author: Kathleen Casper is an educator who is currently the Highly Capable Program Facilitator for Tacoma Public Schools, is a part time attorney specializing in family and education law, as well as is the mother of four gifted children of her own. She is a board member of WAETAG as well as a director on the board of SENG and she speaks and writes nationally on parenting, education and gifted issues.

[1] <http://www.iusmentis.com/trademarks/crashcourse/limitations/>

WAETAG Mission Statement

WAETAG was formed by educators dedicated to the improvement of educational opportunities for gifted students, by strengthening services to and providing information for professionals serving these students in all settings. Toward that goal, WAETAG has adopted the following aims and purposes:

- Increase public and professional awareness of the need for appropriate educational opportunities for talented and gifted students.
- Encourage development of programs for professional preparation and growth in gifted and talented education.
- Assist with national, state, and local legislation to provide consistent challenge for all students.
- Cooperate with other groups to organize and to enhance educational opportunities for all students.
- Support quality programs which increase challenging educational opportunities for all students.

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