

WAETAG

Washington Association of Educators of the Talented and Gifted

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WAETAG Newsletter Spring 2016

www.waetag.net

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Hotel Murano
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Call for Presenters

Dear Jan,

President's Message

Kari DeMarco



I am winding down my term as WAETAG president, passing the torch to Vicki Edwards this summer. I will stay on the board in an advisory role as past president, and watch as Vicki and incoming vice president, Wendy Clark, take the reins.

I've learned so much from serving on this board for several years now, and I've made some amazing friends. Gifted education truly attracts big-hearted, hard-working people, and it's a privilege to know them.

That brings me to ask why is it that gifted education, somewhat counter-intuitively, does not attract those driven by ego and accolades? Why are HiCap educators and advocates so often the type to be servant leaders, not "elitist" folks who are in it just to broaden their careers?

Well, I think that's because highly capable programs are kind of the "red headed step child" of education. We have a state mandate (thankfully) to educate gifted kids, but we are given a virtual pittance with which to get that done. We have the full potential of the nation's brain trust in our classrooms, and yet No Child Left Behind left our gifted kids' needs quite behind for ages now. There are strong laws and ready lawyers seeing to the needs of the lowest 3% on the academic "normal" curve, but no such ready help for the highest 3% of outlier learners. As has been said, gifted ed does not exactly have a poster child kind of thing going on.

So, I think only those who truly care about ALL kids learning something new each day are drawn to this field. Those who can empathize with an eight year old craving some mental interest in his seven hours of schoolwork or the ten year old who is always off task and in trouble, because she already knows most of what is being taught. We see these kids as the least-served underdogs, despite many of our legislators, administrators and colleagues not quite getting that same sense.

But in my job as HiCap Coordinator in Wenatchee, this year alone I have worked with a mom whose middle school child went from moody, depressed and withdrawn to "the girl I used to know" when we whole-grade accelerated her and got her some challenge. I've been told by an elementary child that our [woefully insufficient] one hour per week pull-out for gifted readers is the one hour he looks forward to each Tuesday. I have fielded a phone call from a parent looking to move to our city because she saw the diverse HiCap offerings we have at our high school, and she knew her kids needed that rigor and wouldn't get it if their family didn't move somewhere offering it. I've worked with a first grade kiddo who is six but has a Mental Age Equivalent of 16, and his parents don't know how to help him navigate his small body and first grade's low-level curriculum that are so mismatched with this brain that could easily do high school. It can be painful, complex stuff, with no easy answers. Just this week I heard about gifted kids who



Interested in speaking at the 2016 Conference? We encourage you to submit a proposal. Your expertise and experience bring much value!

Presenters will receive a discount on the conference!

Call for Proposals is open now until July 15th.

[More Information](#)

Sponsorship & Exhibitor Opportunities



WAETAG would like to invite you to join us as a Sponsor or Exhibitor at the 2016 Conference where teachers and administrators like to shop.

[More Information](#)

Students in Highly Capable Program Gifted, but not Perfect

Rafael Guerrero, Yakima Herald

NACHES - Naches Valley teacher Wendy Clark unfurls a blank banner - well, a mostly blank

were not having their social/emotional needs met, who ended up taking their own lives.

So, even if "The Powers That Be" don't always see the fierce importance of serving gifted children, we do. You do. And hopefully some day the legislature and our school boards will see it, too. Until then, thank you for being the big-hearted, hard working servant leaders that so many of you are. The kids are counting on you.

What's in a Name? NCLB vs. ESSA

Wendy Clark



Although I speak a comfortable amount of Spanish, I don't think of myself as bilingual. That was, until I considered my acquired second language of Teacher-ese. If your vocabulary is filled with acronyms like IEP, TPEP, OSPI, GT, and SBAC you know what I mean. Recently in the world of education we replaced one acronym for another. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was, in effect, left behind to become Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), also referred to as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). But what does this mean for those of us in the field of gifted education? Is it yet another policy that could result in the focus being even further removed from our highest-achieving students? Thankfully, no!

Not only was the JAVITS grant retained but, for the first time, ESSA/ESEA was also written to include several provisions for gifted and talented students. These provisions come from the TALENT Act (S.363/H.R. 2960), a lengthier acronym which stands for To Aid Gifted and Talented Learners by Empowering the Nation's Teachers. This legislation recognizes that in order for success in the 21st century, there are numerous fields that need high levels of talent. It also states that our top students are not performing at internationally competitive levels. Importantly, it addresses the serious imbalance of students of color or from poverty being included in the percentage of top students. Not only does it address needs for students currently performing at high levels, but also those with the potential and ability to become high achievers. This is such promising news for those of us that have long been advocating for the needs of ALL gifted and talented students, rather than those that seem to fit a stereotypical mold.

According to the Fordham Report, in the era of NCLB the highest achieving students made only minimal gains, while also receiving some of the lowest levels of attention from their teachers. "Were Congress to accept teachers' views about what it means to create a 'just' education system, i.e., one that challenges all students to fulfill their potential, rather than just focus on raising the performance of students who have been 'left behind,' then the next version of NCLB would be dramatically different than today's." (Fordham, 2008) It appears somebody was listening. The TALENT Act, introduced these four key emphases:

- * Support Educator Development to Ensure Academic Growth for High-Ability Students
- * Confront and Address Excellence Gaps
- * Provide Public Transparency of Student Achievement Data
- * Continue Research and Dissemination on Best Practices in Gifted Education

Encouragingly, the support mentioned above also comes with avenues for possible funding. Title I funds may be used to identify and serve gifted and talented students, while Title II funds may be used to provide professional development in the area of gifted education. All districts and states will be required to include the advanced level students as a subgroup in their reports for achievement data. Additionally, districts applying for Title II funds must include information as to how the learning needs will be met for gifted and talented students. Both Washingtons (state and D.C.) seem to agree. We (Washington state) have decreed that highly capable services are part of basic education. Similarly, ESSA specifically states that the

banner. It has one lonely phrase: "What I wish my teachers knew about being gifted in middle school."

Sometimes it surprises people that gifted students face challenges, too.

Clark knows. A teacher for more than two decades, she was labeled a gifted child.

"The number one myth is, 'Oh, they're gifted. They'll be fine,'" Clark told her group of five Naches Valley seventh-graders on Monday. She is meeting with them during her prep time; Clark teaches third grade at Naches Intermediate School.

[Continued](#)

needs of "all students" include the gifted and talented.

So, what's in a name? When the WASL became the MSP, those of us in the classroom didn't feel like there was much of a difference. Had we simply swapped one assessment for another that looks and feels the same? Will the same be true for NCLB vs. ESSA? I think not. This seemingly small name change comes with exciting and promising aspects for our best and brightest. I encourage all advocates for gifted and talented students to learn more about how these changes, set to start taking effect in the 2016-2017 school year, will improve our abilities to meet our students' unique needs.

For more information, visit [NAGC's website](#).

"High-achieving students in the era of NCLB." (2008). Washington, D.C.: Thomas B. Fordham Institute.

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Endorsed by WAETAG (Washington Association of Educators of the Talented and Gifted)

HiCapPLUS Jacob K. Javits Program Equity and Access for All Highly Capable Students

Jody Hess
HiCapPLUS Project Director

The Washington State Basic Education Act of 2010 established the education of gifted and talented students-from all student subgroups. It reads: "The legislature finds that, for highly capable students,

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Visit our [website!](#)

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:

access to accelerated learning and enhanced instruction is access to a basic education."

In practice, most identified Highly Capable students receive services in general education classrooms from teachers who may have little or no opportunity for training or experience in gifted education. Two-thirds of the state's school districts are small, rural and/or remote. Gifted students with disabilities, those who are English Learners (ELs), and those who live in poverty are significantly underrepresented in Highly Capable programs.

To meet a critical need to support teachers and administrators, Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is in the first year of HiCapPLUS, a three-year project to develop a user-friendly, online environment on the OSPI web server, and host the project's professional learning and technical assistance content.

Extensive surveys of district and ESD needs were conducted, including surveys submitted by 90+ participants of WAETAG's October, 2015 conference. Dr. Nancy Hertzog of University of Washington and Dr. Jann Leppien of Whitworth University are content developers. Dr. Caitlin Scott of Education Northwest, Portland, is project evaluator. Eight pilot districts and three pilot ESDs represent the range and variety of geography and demography in Washington State. Educators using the modules will provide feedback to help shape the format and delivery system, adding content and context.

The project goals are: (1) launch a user-friendly, navigable online environment on the OSPI web server, and produce content for professional learning modules; (2) produce content for technical assistance units; and (3) promote HiCapPLUS by sharing information and knowledge with districts, ESDs, school and educational partners statewide. Contact Project Director, [Jody Hess](#), for information.

And the Momentum Continues! A Brief History

Charlotte A. Akin



I remember several years ago when we got an evaluation back from our fall conference that said, "What has happened to WAETAG?" It was during the Great Recession. We, the beleaguered leaders, had lost our volunteer registrar, Bob Sailor, who had served WAETAG for many years, in fact, since its beginning. In addition we had lost the ability of teachers to chair the conference, because clerical support in districts had dried up. Worst of all, we lost a lot of attendance, as districts no longer could support sending teachers to the conference. We made some serious adjustments. The Board, under Mary Freitas, took on conference planning, and we expanded the Board to include a representative from each ESD, with the theory that many hands make light work. We scaled the conference back to just a Friday night and Saturday event and had to hire a professional planner to be our registrar. Board members didn't get reimbursed for mileage. One of our Board meetings was at my house! Finally, the length of Board meetings was trimmed back. And then we waited.

In 2010, under the direction and guidance of Margo Long, the State Standards Board approved a voluntary endorsement for teachers of gifted children. In 2011, Whitworth University began the first classes toward that endorsement. In 2011, new legislation made programs for gifted children mandatory. The recession was showing signs of waning. We added an Administrator Day to the conference to help folks ramp up for the new mandate, under Stephen Martin's leadership. Thirty came to that day. Total conference attendance was just over 200. A Technical Working Group was formed at the State level to re-write the WACs to reflect the new law. WAETAG was represented in this effort.

By 2013 we had professional developers in all of the ESDs. WAETAG was the largest contributor to this project, but other significant contributions came from the ESDs and from Whitworth University. The conference expanded to a two-day conference again with teacher

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

workshops on Friday and an administrator strand. Eighty-five administrators came. By 2014 we had participation from the academics around the state from Whitworth and the University of Washington - at both our conference and at workshops they offered across the state. Our conference kept the same Friday/Saturday format and one hundred seventy six administrators participated. Total conference attendance approached 450.

In 2015 we had an online document handbook available to all districts across the state offering ideas and templates for program administration. The University of Washington funded this initiative. We got a request to help a teacher bring our professional development model through the ESDs to Spain, where it was introduced in January 2016. Although they are not ready to move forward with it, the fact that leaders in Spain were able to learn about it is a significant step. WAETAG was also approached by leaders in Oregon about ways to strengthen their professional association. In the fall of 2015, OSP, working with the University of Washington and Whitworth University received a Javits grant, which is for research into better outcomes for gifted students.

WAETAG Election

Please submit your [VOTE](#) by June 1, 2016.

Secretary: Dominic Kehoe

Dominic Kehoe is a math, science and technology teacher at NOVA School in Olympia. NOVA School is a private school that serves gifted students in grades 6-8. Dominic is also an administrative intern and is pursuing his PhD at Seattle Pacific University. His research interests are gifted education and instructional coaching. He previously served as ESD 113 rep on the WAETAG Board.

Private Schools Representative: Sandi Wollum

Sandi Wollum is head of school at Seabury School (www.seabury.org) in Tacoma, WA. Seabury is the only PK-grade 8 independent school in the South Puget Sound area with a program specifically designed for gifted students. Sandi has been head of school since 2005, and during this time, Seabury has redesigned its early learning program, designed and launched an innovative middle school program, redeveloped its elementary program, and begun providing curriculum for a partner organization in South Korea. Prior to her work at Seabury, Sandi taught in Sumner School District, where she served as an upper elementary and middle school regular education teacher, a self-contained elementary gifted program teacher and as gifted program coordinator.

WAETAG has played an important role in Sandi's development as a gifted education specialist, beginning when she first attended a conference while still in her undergraduate program at PLU. She is also active in the NW Association of Independent Schools, NAGC, Tacoma Rotary 8, and is a senior fellow with American Leadership Forum.

ESD 105 Representative: Wendy Clark

Wendy Clark, ESD105, has been a third and fourth grade looping teacher in the Naches Valley School District for the past 14 years. She previously taught second and third grades in Toppenish, Washington where she attended school from kindergarten through high school. Some of her favorite memories of school include her experiences in the pull out program for highly capable students. These experiences grew into a passion and connection with highly capable youth, evident in her teaching today. In Toppenish, Wendy organized and taught after school and summer programs for highly capable students in grades 3-5. After moving to Naches, Wendy worked on a committee to design and implement the district's Highly Capable Program. She has been coordinating and teaching that program after school each week for the past 11 years, serving students in grades four through six. Wendy is

also a part of the cadre of trainers that participated in WAETAG's ESD/Highly Capable Program training program in 2013 at Whitworth University. During the 2013-2014 school year, Wendy provided workshop trainings in the area of gifted education for ESD 105 and the Naches Valley School District. She has her Masters in Education, National Board Certification, Specialty Endorsement in Gifted Education and works as adjunct faculty for Whitworth University.

ESD 113 Representative: Jen Flo

Jen Flo, MA Ed., was the Coordinator for Highly Capable Services and teacher for the pullout highly capable program, PATS, in the Olympia School District. She also served as Committee Co-Chair on the OSD Task Force, researching highly capable programs and services. Currently, she is a member of the OSPI State Advisory Committee for Highly Capable and OSPI HiCapPLUS project. She recently returned to the classroom, teaching fifth grade at McLane Elementary. Jen also conducts workshops for teachers in the areas of differentiation and nature and needs of highly capable students. She received her endorsement in Gifted Education from Whitworth University.

ESD 114 Representative: Sonya Piper

Sonya Piper is currently in her ninth year of teaching the self-contained 4th/5th Highly Capable class at Kitsap Lake Elementary in the Bremerton School District. She is also the parent of a highly capable child. In her years of teaching in the highly capable program, she has developed many successful curriculum components. Each year, the Highly Capable Program at her school performs a musical. She recently published the script for the musical "Science Fair Spectacular; A Musical about Great Scientists." She is a strong proponent for challenging curriculum and advocacy for highly capable students and looks forward to serving as a representative on the WAETAG Board.

ESD 121 Representative: Jennifer Vanderbeek

Jenny Vanderbeek has been a part of WAETAG since 2013. She currently teaches the highly capable program for Tacoma Public School. On her free time she loves hiking and collecting rocks, playing her guitar and organizing retreats incorporating holistic healing. Jenny also runs a bed and breakfast in her Tacoma home, where she resides with her husband and three children. Jenny has been in the classroom over the last 20 years and loves the creative side of teaching.

ESD 123 Representative: Susan Tatum

Susan first began working as a mentor for gifted students under the direction of Dr. Dorothy Sheldon Schrader, who developed, along with Dr. Joseph Renzulli, a model to serve small school districts without extra funds to serve gifted and talented students. Her interest in gifted students has been nearly a lifelong area of study.

Currently, in addition to wearing a teacher-librarian hat, Susan is also the Highly Capable Liaison for Finley School District. This effectively means that she is the person who seeks input from parents, staff, students and community members about potentially gifted students, evaluates data, tests further, if warranted, and makes recommendations to the district multi-disciplinary committee. She then works with teachers to ensure that students are being served. This includes training and help for teachers who are unsure how to enrich the curriculum for students in their classroom.

Recently, Susan completed all coursework for the gifted and talented endorsement from Whitworth University. As part of her field study she completed a Highly Capable Program Manager's Handbook specific to Finley School District with all forms, letters, and information readily available for anyone who might need it.

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