



BVPAGE PAGES

www.bvpage.org

From the President

Rhona Alter

Welcome!

The summer seems to have flown by, and it's time to begin a new year with Blue Valley Parent Advocates for Gifted Education (BVPAGE). I am honored to have been asked to take over the presidency from Ann Ryan. Ann has been a wonderful president the last two years, providing solid leadership, creative ideas, and an ability to navigate contentious issues with great diplomacy. I hope to be able to build on Ann's accomplishments, with the help of our strong Board of Directors.

We are looking forward to making this year as busy and productive as last year was for BVPAGE. One of our biggest accomplishments was completion of a survey of our members and other parents of gifted and talented students to ascertain the level of satisfaction with and any concerns about gifted education in Blue Valley schools. Our goal is to use the results of this survey as a basis for meeting with Blue Valley school administrators about your concerns, and to present some possible actions that could be taken to address these concerns.

In other goings-on this past year, Board members spoke to the District's Curriculum and Instruction Committee to voice our support of its review of, and consideration of improvement to, middle school rigor. Additionally, several BVPAGE members had the opportunity to help with the Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted ("SENG") conference, a national conference held in Overland Park this summer.

We have already begun planning this year's programs for parents and for students. Our first parent program will be a repeat of our popular

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forum of break-out sessions about various issues related to gifted education (for example, identification of gifted children, going through the IEP process, and more). Other programs from last year included Dr. Barbara Kerr (author of *Smart Girls* and *Smart Boys*) speaking on the social and emotional needs of the gifted, Sandra Jacob helping us learn about obtaining college scholarships, and presentation of some of the many summer enrichment activities available locally and around the country. Opportunities for members' students included visiting the robotics exhibit at Science City and a trip to the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art for a 3-D tour of the Sculpture Garden.

We are fortunate to have a strong and active Board of Directors, as well as a good relationship with our school district's gifted education teachers and with Dr. Sheri Stewart, our district's coordinating teacher for gifted education. However, to make this another successful year, we need your talent, participation, and input. BVPAGE Board meetings are held each month at the District office (dates listed in this issue) and are open to all members. I encourage you to contribute to the continuing success of BVPAGE by renewing your membership and getting involved. [For your convenience, a membership form is included in this newsletter.]

Have a wonderful school year.

Rhona

DCT's Corner (District Coordinating Teacher)

Dr. Sheri Stewart

This fall there are a number of exciting initiatives Blue Valley gifted educators have planned for the 2007–08 school year. One of those initiatives is to delineate the curriculum for gifted education K–12 district-wide. We see the curriculum in this way:

INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM	GROUP CURRICULUM
	Process Skills
IEPs	Enrichment & Extension
	Affective Growth

We will begin with writing curriculum for Process Skills. The process skills will include these four areas: 1) Thinking Skills, 2) Problem Solving, 3) Research Skills, and 4) Technology. These are four of the elements of the Autonomous Learner Model (ALM). The ALM curriculum is a framework of skills that are taught to students to help them develop into self-directed, life-long learners. Later we will tackle other process skills from the ALM.

After researching and exploring a number of curricular frameworks for each of the process skills, we will choose the best one(s) and write a scope and sequence of the basic skills

incorporated in each of the four areas. This will result in a K–12, district-wide listing of standards, skills and assessments. However, as children's strengths and interests vary from school to school, the content for these skill units will be chosen at the school level. The important part is that similar skill sets will be taught across the district. This work will enable us to communicate and collaborate as well as to offer common trainings and materials. Teachers will be doing this curriculum writing work during our monthly gifted teacher meetings for the rest of this school year.

In the future we will add other process skills. And also we will tackle the Enrichment and Extension piece as well as the Affective Growth areas.

We are excited about this new initiative! We look forward to a guaranteed, viable curriculum for gifted students as well as meeting their individual needs through their IEP. We feel that this combination offers the best experiences to meet the unique needs of your gifted children.

Dr. Sheri Nowak Stewart
District Coordinating Teacher
Gifted Education

Feel free to call (239–4333) or email (snowak@bluevalleyk12.org).

Education is not preparation for life;

education is life itself.

-John Dewey

Being an Effective Advocate

What makes an Effective Advocate?

Reprinted from KGTC's May 2006 issue of *The Bugle* with permission of the author, Ginger Lewman.

Effective advocates are:

- **Well informed** regarding the topic and armed with information supporting their goals. While decision-makers expect professionals to have special knowledge about gifted education, the expectation is not necessarily true for parents. Anecdotal information, or real-life stories from parents is most effective.
- **Knowledgeable** about their constituency. While advocates are usually speaking for themselves, they are sometimes authorized to speak as representatives of an organization. An effective advocate KNOWS the difference.
- **Resourceful** in finding information and gaining access to decision-makers and stakeholders.
- **Quietly persistent** and not afraid to ask questions.
- **Clear** about what action is needed.
- **Imaginative** in suggesting solutions.
- **Respectful** of other's points of view.
- **Politically** aware.
- **Tactful**.
- **Enthusiastic** and pleasant.
- **Well-organized** and accurate in reporting and note-taking.
- **Articulate** with main points succinctly prepared.
- **Knowledgeable** about the power hierarchy and other issues that may be central.
- **Sensitive** to other's reactions.

Effective advocates must do their homework if they plan to influence policy decisions and legislation. Such homework includes being sure

that requests are specific and proposals well-documented. Additionally, it is important that advocates know the assignments, areas of expertise, and areas of interest of targeted stakeholders.

Stakeholders and decision-makers are obligated to be aware of all sides of an issue, and they must look at the total educational and funding picture when making decisions. Therefore, effective advocates are prepared to respond to possible criticism and explain why high ability services should be high priority.

Are you already an advocate?

Reprinted from KGTC's May 2006 issue of *The Bugle* with permission of the author, Ginger Lewman.

Advocacy takes a variety of forms, and you're likely already doing something. Answer "yes" or "no" to the following questions to determine just how much of an advocate you are.

If you are a parent, do you regularly talk with your child about whether or not s/he is happy and challenged in school?

___ Yes ___ No

If you are an educator, do you communicate on a regular basis with parents and administrators to explain how you differentiate curriculum and why it is important to do so?

___ Yes ___ No

Have you written a letter, made a phone call, or sent an email/fax to a legislator on behalf of gifted students?

___ Yes ___ No

Have you made contact with a school board member regarding the gifted and other high

Being an Effective Advocate continued

ability students in your district?

___ Yes ___ No

Have you expressed appreciation for your local gifted program to your district superintendent?

___ Yes ___ No

Have you expressed your support and appreciation to a local teacher and/or site administrator for the gifted services that have been particularly interesting and challenging?

___ Yes ___ No

Have you helped in your area to increase community awareness of the needs of gifted children?

___ Yes ___ No

Have you joined an organization that supports gifted education?

___ Yes ___ No

Have you helped to publicize (in ways including contacting local newspapers and other media) the positive activities or aspects of gifted programs?

___ Yes ___ No

Have you volunteered your time on behalf of gifted education?

___ Yes ___ No

Have you attended seminars, workshops, or conferences to improve your knowledge of gifted education or shared the information with teachers, parents, or administrators?

___ Yes ___ No

Are you already an effective advocate?

Add up your “yes” replies.

10–12 Advocacy for gifted students is a top priority

7–10 Advocacy is a high priority

4–6 Advocacy is a priority

2–3 Advocacy is a low priority

0–1 Advocacy is a VERY low priority

If you scored high, congratulations and keep up the good work. If you didn't do so well, you may want to consider taking a beginning step by the end of the month. Your children/students will thank you!

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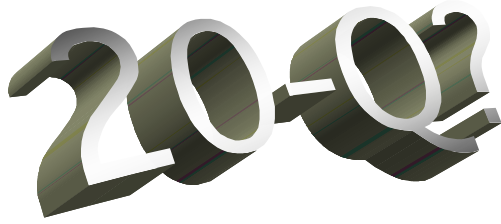
http://kgtc.org/KGTC_Bugle_MAY06.pdf



The *BVPAGE Pages* are published quarterly. If you have any news items for this newsletter, you may contact the editor, Angela Case, at:

bvpage@everestkc.net

BVPAGE UPCOMING EVENTS



**ANSWERS
FOR
YOU!**

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 27,
2007, 7-9 PM
OVERLAND TRAIL MIDDLE SCHOOL
6201 W. 133RD STREET**

ALL PARENTS AND TEACHERS ARE INVITED TO ATTEND.

TWO THIRTY MINUTE SESSIONS WILL BE PRESENTED BY DISTRICT TEACHERS AND BVPAGE MEMBERS ON A NUMBER OF TOPICS RELATED TO GIFTED EDUCATION. MANY OF THESE TOPICS WILL BE REPEATED DURING BOTH SESSIONS SO YOU MAY ATTEND TWO DIFFERENT TOPICS.


FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE SPECIFIC TOPICS THAT WILL BE COVERED CHECK THE BVPAGE WEBSITE AT WWW.BVPAGE.ORG.

Sponsored by:



Blue Valley Parent Advocates
for Gifted Education

NOTE: PRINTABLE COPIES OF ANY HANDOUTS FROM THESE SESSIONS WILL BE AVAILABLE ON THE BVPAGE WEBSITE: WWW.BVPAGE.ORG.



BVPAGE SURVEY

Thank you to all who participated in the BVPAGE survey. The survey will help us gather information about how BVPAGE can best advocate for the gifted learners in our district. Watch for the survey results to be published on the website in **October, 2007**.

Upcoming BVPAGE Board Meeting dates:

September 20, 2007 February 21, 2008
 October 18, 2007 April 17, 2008
 November 15, 2007 May 15, 2008
 January 17, 2008

Kansas Association
for the Gifted,
Talented and Creative



**Mark your calendars to join us in
Lawrence, Kansas October 7 - 9 2007**

**“21st Century Learning
Opportunities”**

A sample of topics:

Social and Emotional Needs of Creatively Gifted Students
Dr. Barbara Kerr

Education’s Obligation: Nurturing Talent through Hope
Dr. Rick Olenchak, Past President NAGC

Embracing 21st Century Skills, Tools and Teaching Strategies
Linda Geiger, KSDE Gifted Education Consultant

www.kgctc.org

Legislative Report

Submitted by Ginger Lewman, KGTC Legislative Liaison

(Reprinted from the September 2007 issue of *The Bugle* published by the Kansas Association for the Gifted, Talented and Creative)

(1) Javits. Although the annual Labor/HHS/education funding bill is tied up in knots, due this time to veto threats from the White House (over the overall spending levels, which are higher than the president requested), funding for the Javits program for 2008 is all but secure. Again, thanks to gifted advocacy efforts, our friends in Congress allocated \$7.6 million for the Javits program. It is less than we would like, but far better than we were at this point last year! \$7.6 million is not enough to run a state grants competition, but it's enough to keep the NRC/GT research projects going; we also expect a competition in the spring for 5-year research grants.

(2) Formula Grant Legislation was introduced by Rep. Elton Gallegly (CA-24), one of our long-time supporters. 14 state associations, including KGTC, sent letters to his office endorsing the legislation - H.R. 2925. Similar to the legislation last introduced in 2003, this bill would create a formula-grant-to-states program, based on a state's relative student population size, where states would determine for themselves how to spend the funds, based on 5 key areas:

- *professional development to ensure that school personnel understand the educational needs of gifted students innovative programs and services, including service learning
 - *making materials and services available through state regional educational service centers, institutions of higher education, or other entities
 - *challenging, high-level course work that utilizes emerging technologies, including distance learning, for individual students or groups of students; and
 - *direct educational services and materials, including strategies designed to address the educational needs of gifted students such as curriculum compacting, acceleration, independent study, and dual enrollment. We're still a long way from securing passage of this legislation, and we will need to secure funding, but as usual, the first step is to secure cosponsors. We need your help to get more cosponsors for the bill. Currently, there are 8 cosponsors (see list at <http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=2101>).
- KGTC members should send emails to our Representatives urging them to cosponsor the bill as a way of showing support for the educational needs of high-ability learners. As always, the email addresses for Representatives are available at www.house.gov <<http://www.house.gov>> or <http://www.kgtc.org/?page_id=32>.

(3) Higher Ed Act. The Senate passed its version of the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA) (S.1642), which sailed through because student loan issues were in a separate bill and included language that supports gifted learners. The definition

of "teaching skills" has been modified to include that teachers would know how to address the learning needs of gifted children. Also, teacher preparation institutions that receive Title II teacher preparation grants are required to increase what pre-service teachers learn about gifted children. The House Education Committee hasn't acted yet, but we're reasonably confident that similar language will be included, based on the fact that it was included in the HEA bill passed by the House in the last Congress. Rep. Paul Gillmor (OH-5) reintroduced the HEA amendment; his office is following the House Education Committee. Once the legislation is passed and the president signs it into law, there will be much work to do to educate universities about how they might better prepare pre-service teachers to know how to identify and serve gifted students in their classrooms. But this is a task that we are all looking forward to!

(4) Science and Math. In the wee hours of the last day of session before the recess, both the House and Senate passed the America "COMPETES" Act, which is essentially a compilation of 3 bills from last Congress devoted to energy conservation, tax issues, and improvements in education. The most exciting provision for gifted education advocates is that the bill provides federal matching funds for statewide math/science public high schools. As you may know, Kentucky will be the 15th state to have such a high school when the Kentucky Academy of Mathematics and Science opens next week on the campus of Western Kentucky University. Congratulations to Kentucky advocates on their success! We hope that even more states will be able to explore the math/science high school option once federal funds are available.



Legislative Report Continued

(5) No Child Left Behind. There is nothing specific to report on NCLB, except that the House education committee will be introducing its bill as soon as Congress returns to DC this month. Although the House is likely to pass that bill, the future for NCLB in the Senate is not at all clear, and no bipartisan bill has emerged from the Senate education committee. Suffice it for now to say that below proficient children will remain the focus of the legislation, with modifications made to how districts measure and report AYP. We've heard that using growth models for measuring student achievement will be an option for states, but, again, the students whose progress is being measured for accountability purposes will be struggling learners, and not all learners. NAGC has urged the Senate committee to focus on improving the reporting requirements (including reporting the numbers of students participating in g/t programs & services), and removing disincentives to giving students out-of-level tests so that districts can see how far above grade level students are actually performing. There is a very long way to go on this legislation; no predictions yet!

(6) Immigration. Senator Grassley has been trying to secure a permanent funding stream for the Javits program by increasing the H1-B visa fees charged to employers to bring in "highly skilled" employees from overseas, and dedicate the fee increase to the Javits program. The Grassley amendment to the immigration bill had support from the bills' managers, but as you know, the immigration reform bill collapsed in the Senate over the "amnesty" provisions. It's possible that Senate leaders will resurrect pieces of the immigration reform bill, including the H1-B section (because business wants an increase in the number of H1-B visas available each year). If so, Senator Grassley will try again with the amendment. If this effort were to succeed, there would be enough funds available to fund the formula grants to states legislation described above. Again, we have a long way to go, but I wanted to remind you that we do have friends in Congress trying to help support gifted students.



BVPAGE Membership Application

Name(s)		
Address		
City		
State	Zip	
Home phone		
Work Phone		
E-mail		
Voice Mail		
Renewal Status		
<input type="checkbox"/> New Member	<input type="checkbox"/> Renewal	
Children:		
Name	School	Grade

Committee(s) I'd be willing to work with:

- Parent Programs
- Advocacy & Legislation
- Membership
- Student Events
- Resource

I would be interested in:

- Being a mentor
- Providing a student program
- Providing an adult program
- Helping in the classroom
- Helping with competitions
- Serving as a Building Representative/Liaison
- Other:

Please complete the above information and submit this application along with your **dues of \$15.00** to the following address:

Karin Miller
 5748 W. 146th St.
 Overland Park, KS 66223



Thank you. Welcome to BVPAGE!

BVPAGE

BVPAGE strives to increase the quantity and enhance the quality of services, disseminate information to and maintain a support group for parents to benefit all gifted and talented students in the Blue Valley School District.

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

www.bvpage.org

**A MEMBERSHIP
APPLICATION/ RENEWAL
FORM IS AVAILABLE ONLINE**

Make your plans now! NAGC 54th Annual Convention

**Minneapolis, Minnesota
For educators, other professionals, and
parents.**

November 7-11, 2007

Early Bird Deadline is September 21st!

Dean Keith Simonton and Bob Sternberg join Minnesota's favorite son, Garrison Keillor, to round out the keynote general sessions.

Register today. I



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10013 W. 126th Street
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