EMPOWERING GIFTED STUDENTS THROUGH SELF-ADVOCACY

July 2017
Deb Douglas, Presenter
22nd Biennial World Conference, World Council for Gifted and Talented Children
The University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia
SELF-ADVOCACY

The process of recognizing and meeting the needs specific to your own learning ability without compromising the dignity of yourself or others.

Loring Brinckerhoff, 1994
CHANGE HAPPENS

- in education
- in the field of gifted education
- in the state or province
- in the school district
- in gifted kids’ lives
WHAT DOESN’T CHANGE?

Each individual child’s need for an appropriately challenging education and effective social and emotional support.
WHO
NEEDS TO SELF-ADVOCATE?

Outliers
Pre- and Post-Workshop Surveys
SUBJECT DEMOGRAPHICS

25 School Districts
(Public, Private, Homeschool)

- Rural
- Town
- Suburb
- City

- 151 Males
- 172 Females
- Ages 11 - 18
DO THEY WISH FOR CHANGE?

Question: How often have you wished a teacher would modify something for you in order to make your work more challenging or more interesting?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th># of students</th>
<th>% of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N = 323</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never/Almost Never</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently/Always</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>52.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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DO THEY ASK?

**Question:** How often have you asked a teacher to modify something for you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th># of students</th>
<th>% of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never/Almost never</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>62.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently/Always</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**ARE THEY COMFORTABLE ASKING?**

**Question:** How comfortable are you asking a teacher to modify something for you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th># of students</th>
<th>% of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Uncomfortable</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okay</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>51.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Comfortable</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>30.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 323

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WHY DON’T THEY ASK?

Some of the myths . . .

• only struggling students have special academic needs.

• bright students should be able to get by without special programming.

• gifted education programs are elitist.

Without training, a gifted child’s naïve efforts to self-advocate tend to antagonize others.

Their frustration may keep them from being either subtle or tactful.
IN ORDER TO RE-IMAGINE THEIR ROAD TO GRADUATION, GIFTED STUDENTS NEED

- Information
- Insights
- Tools
4 (SIMPLE) STEPS

1. Understand your rights and responsibilities
2. Reflect on your learner profile
3. Match your profile to options and opportunities
4. Connect with advocates
STEP 1
UNDERSTAND YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A long, rich history of recognizing, researching, debating, theorizing, legislating, and developing C&I just for you.

- Federal and state/provincial laws
- School Mission Statements
- NAGC Gifted Students Bill of Rights
TWO RIGHTS

AS A GIFTED INDIVIDUAL, YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

• understand giftedness and how it relates to your unique self.

• an appropriately challenging education.
To be or not to be.

That is the question.

\[ x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a} \]

Whatcha thinkin' about?

Oh, not much.
TWO RESPONSIBILITIES

AS A GIFTED INDIVIDUAL, YOU HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO:

• take charge of your own education

• develop personal characteristics that support your success
STEP 2
REFLECT ON YOUR LEARNER PROFILE

5 Areas of Assessment

• Cognitive Functioning Information
• Learning Strengths Information
• Personality Characteristics and Traits
• Learning Preferences
• Interests
STEP 3
MATCH YOUR PROFILE TO OPTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

• Independent Study
• Compacted Classes
• Credit by Exam
• Online Courses
• Accelerated Classes

• Subject Acceleration
• Mentorships
• AP or IB
• Summer Courses
• Clubs/Organizations
STEP 4
CONNECT WITH ADVOCATES WHO CAN SUPPORT YOUR PLAN

- Teachers
- Counselors
- Family
- Friends
- Coaches & Advisors
- Administrators

- Regional G/T Groups
- State/Provincial Affiliates
- Talent Search Programs
- National and World Orgs
- Special Foundations
  - (Davidson, JKCooke, etc.)
STUDENT ACTION GOALS

1. Find appropriately challenging academic work
2. Explore an interest
3. Spend more time with other gifted peers
4. Adjust school or home to better accommodate personal needs
POSSIBLE GOALS

Do faster pace in pre-calculus
Take as many science classes as possible
Take college classes when I’m in high school

Study Latin
Investigate careers in gaming
Study computer programming online

Start an Academic Quiz Bowl
Join a writers group
Find other kids who want to learn to speak Tolkien Elfish

Talk to teachers about changing due dates
Start a counseling group on perfectionism
Get permission to eat breakfast mid-morning
# Action Plan

**Goal Statement:** I want to finish pre-calculus in one semester instead of two and take statistics second semester.

## Implementation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Steps</th>
<th>Person(s) Responsible</th>
<th>Date completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Talk to counselor:  
   a. Would this have any effect on graduation, college acceptance, ACT/SAT?  
   b. What sort of signed approval do I need?  
   2. Get recommendation from last year's math teacher  
   3. Get approval from math dept. head  
   4. Get approval from principal.  
   a. What credit will I get? | Mandy and Ms Douglas | Aug 28 |
| | Mandy | Sept 1 |
| | Mandy | Sept 2 |
| | Mandy | Sept 3 |
GT Carpe Diem
Seize a day, change a lifetime
WHY?

- Efficient
- Effective
- Systematic and continuous
  - Provides:
    - Common knowledge base
    - Peer networking
    - Understanding of gifted learner diversity
- Leaves less up to chance
**COMFORT IN ASKING FOR CHANGE**

Question: How comfortable are you asking a teacher to modify something for you to make your work more challenging or more interesting?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N = 323</th>
<th>Pre-workshop</th>
<th>Post-workshop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very uncomfortable</td>
<td>59 (18%)</td>
<td>16 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable</td>
<td>165 (51%)</td>
<td>102 (32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very comfortable</td>
<td>99 (31%)</td>
<td>205 (63%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Likely To Ask For Change**

Question: How likely are you to talk with someone at your school in the near future about better meeting your needs?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-workshop</th>
<th>Post-workshop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not likely</td>
<td>88, 31%</td>
<td>28, 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likely</td>
<td>124, 43%</td>
<td>72, 25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very likely</td>
<td>74, 26%</td>
<td>187, 65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 286
“I wish that I could stay here forever. I liked that I didn’t have to lower my vocabulary because everyone here was just as smart as me.

This was a great experience because I felt like I have known these people FOREVER!”

Cheyenne, grade 5
THERE'S NO SUBSTITUTE FOR SOMEONE WHO GETS YOU.
The single most powerful predictor of positive outcomes for vulnerable children is a relationship with a caring adult.

“Risk and Resilience in Gifted Children”

Maureen Neihart
Available
September 2017

- Free Spirit Publishing
- Silvereye Learning Resources

Foreword by Jim Delisle
I’d love to hear what you think.

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