

From the President

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) has provided its support for TAG's position paper on "Response to Intervention (RtI) for Gifted Children." The final position paper can be downloaded from TAG's website (<http://www.cectag.org>) and may be helpful to you in formulating policies at your school.

In collaboration with the National Association for Gifted Children, TAG has also developed a set of Pre-K–Grade 12 Gifted Program Standards. These standards were approved by NAGC in March and will be reviewed by TAG at its Board meeting in Nashville on April 20. The standards areas include Learning and Development, Assessment, Curriculum Planning and Instruction, Learning Environments, Programming, and Professional Development. These standards are different from the previous ones because

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Council for Exceptional Children 2010 Convention and Expo



The TAG Board is looking forward to the CEC 2010 Convention and Expo at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel and Convention Center, April 21–24, in Nashville, TN! Cheryll Adams, Mary Ruth Coleman, and Susan Johnsen have planned a preconference symposium on "Meeting the Needs of Gifted Students

Within an RtI Framework," which will be held on Wednesday, April 21, in the Gaylord Ryman Ballroom A/D, Level 0, from 8:30–4:00. During the morning each of the invited panelists will make a presentation about these important topics: an overview of RtI and gifted education (Susan Johnsen),

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From the President, continued

they (a) focus on student outcomes; (b) emphasize evidence-based practices that are based on research; (c) are aligned to the NAGC-CEC teacher preparation standards and the NAGC Pre-K–Grade 12 Gifted Program Standards; (d) reflect a much stronger emphasis on diversity; (e) emphasize stronger relationships between gifted education, general education, and special education; (f) are more specific; and (g) integrate cognitive science research.

TAG has completed the process of identifying the research base for supporting advanced teacher preparation standards in gifted education (see the Summer 2009 TAG newsletter to review

the standards). These advanced standards will be reviewed by CEC's Knowledge and Skills Subcommittee at its April meeting and then be sent to the TAG and NAGC membership for review and comments. Be watching your e-mail so that you can participate!

TAG's fall Board meeting and conference will be held on September 24–25, 2010, at Baylor University in Waco, TX. The focus of the conference will be on differentiated instruction with special sessions for parents and elementary and secondary teachers. Mark your calendar for this terrific professional development opportunity! More details will be provided in the next newsletter.

This newsletter's Parent Corner article was written by Dr. Charissa Marrah from the College of Charleston. In "Balancing Act: Supporting Twice-Exceptional Learners," Dr. Marrah shares the story of one parent's experience raising a twice-exceptional child and offers ways parents can help support their children's needs in school. Please feel free to share this informative article with other parents—and teachers—of twice-exceptional students.

Looking forward to seeing you in Nashville!

Susan K. Johnsen, President
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CEC 2010 Convention, continued

policy and state models (Chrys Mursky and Karen Rollins), twice-exceptional (Daphne Pereles, Lois Baldwin, and Stuart Omdal), school and classroom practices (Claire Hughes, Chrys Mursky, and Karen Rollins), and challenges (Claire Hughes and Susan Johnsen). In the afternoon, participants will have an opportunity to work with each of the panelists in small interest groups. The discussions from these groups

will provide specific strategies that will be helpful in meeting the needs of students with gifts and talents within an RtI framework. These suggestions will also be incorporated into a book on RtI, which will be part of a TAG series of books on "Practical Solutions for Underserved Gifted Students" to be published by Prufrock Press. There is still room available at the symposium, so please plan on attending this exciting

event if you will be at CEC! On-site registration is only \$50.

The TAG Business Meeting will be held on Thursday, April 22, from 5:30–6:30 p.m. The meeting will be held in the Gaylord Ryman Ballroom F, Level 0. After the meeting, we will adjourn to the TAG Social, which will be held in the Gaylord Ryman Studio HI from 6:30–7:30. We hope to see you there!

PARENT CORNER

BY CHARISSA MARRAH, PH.D.

Balancing Act: Supporting Twice-Exceptional Learners

Learners who are gifted and labeled with a disability are part of a unique population of students. They demonstrate the challenging characteristics of a disability and the skills of an extraordinary talent. Teacher educators and psychologists contend that the concurrent presence of a disability with giftedness presents a complex set of strengths and weaknesses that traditional identification procedures and placement options overlook. As a result, these students struggle on their own to find a support system that will help them learn to compensate for their weaknesses and develop their talents.

As a special education teacher, I witnessed how these students struggled academically and socially in

school. I taught children who were labeled learning disabled, emotionally disabled, and intellectually disabled; however, some of these clearly exhibited extraordinary talents in illustration, music, bodily-kinesthetic, linguistics, and interpersonal skills. A few of these children also had IQ's of above 130. The parents of the students with high IQ's sought my expertise in explaining the paradox of being disabled and gifted because they did not understand how a child could be both. Several years later, I met one parent who experienced much of what I saw with my students and their families. This is the story of how Mrs. Styles¹ learned about her son's abilities and fought for his educational needs.

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Diagnosis

At the age of 2, Mrs. Styles noticed her son, Winston, was not talking at the same rate as other boys his age. She remembers he was unable to focus, lacked an interest in mimicking writing, and had high levels of energy. Around the time she began noticing these weaknesses in his development, she recognized her son's strong interest in math and science. "Winston would sit and watch the Discovery Channel and *Sesame Street*. He would ask me questions that I had no answer to. But, something told me he already knew the answers and wanted to see if I knew what he knew." She knew her son demonstrated severe weaknesses as well as highly advanced knowledge; however, she was concerned how this would affect his performance in school.

Professional Evaluation

Winston attended the private school where his mother taught until the third grade. In this setting, she was able to work closely with the teachers to support her son's academic performance. When he transitioned to the fourth grade at a public magnet school that his mother selected, he struggled with reading and writing. He also had a hard time focusing in class. Before entering middle school, Winston's teachers felt that a psychological evaluation would help determine if his poor performance in language arts and inability to focus were the result of a disability. His performance on the assessments presented evidence of an unseen extraordinary skill.

A private psychologist identified Winston as being dyslexic with a couple of indicators of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). However, in the assessment of his knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts, Winston presented the knowledge base comparable to that of a student at the 11th-grade level. Mrs. Styles recalled, "I was watching him in a two-way mirror. The doctor kept saying to name things related to science. He kept giving the doctor the scientific names for stuff."

In the end, the outcome of the evaluations suggested that a special education resource setting would best serve Winston's deficits. Unfortunately, methods to improve his academic performance did not include development of his talent in science.

Educational Support

Initially, Mrs. Styles did not agree that her son would do better in a special education resource setting, nor did she believe her son needed medication to focus. She felt strongly that her son would do better in a setting

that challenged him, used more instruction that catered to his kinesthetic learning style, and supported his weaknesses by emphasizing his strengths. However, she felt "pushed" to place him in a special education class. More so, she was "tired of teachers and administrators coming to me and suggesting I give my son medication." Consequently, she halfheartedly agreed to have Winston receive support for his reading, writing, and attention deficits in a resource special education class.

Mrs. Styles "did not mind the pull-out part, because I think the pull-out part is essential, to get the small group instruction . . ." However, she questioned the expectations in the resource setting: "if you're going to pull him out, then why if he's in the seventh grade [are you] going to give him fourth-grade work while he still has to go back to the classroom and do the seventh-grade work?" Winston also was not pleased with the change in his education. In the first year of going to the resource setting for his disability, he often refused to go to the class and/or misbehaved to avoid it. Her son's response to the class left Mrs. Styles frustrated with her son and his teachers. She trusted her professional instinct and believed that her son would benefit from a more challenging curriculum in science and math in an environment that accommodated his dyslexia. She began working with his special education teacher and sharing ways to help him in her class. However, Mrs. Styles thought her approach in being a cooperative parent intimidated the special education teacher, who was reluctant to implement her suggestions to work with her son. With no evidence that her son was doing better in this placement, she requested the school withdraw him from the special education class.

Parent Support

As Winston moved through the final year of middle school, Mrs. Styles worked hard to help Winston develop strategies that supported his disability while encouraging his giftedness in science. She went to the library and bookstore to find books on dyslexia and books on giftedness so that she could learn ways as a teacher and parent to support her son's disability and giftedness. She implemented the strategies she learned from the texts and shared these with his teachers, a few of whom were not open to her ideas. She registered him for football and track at the school and was proud of the success her son was having with most of his classes and extracurricular activities. Yet, one of her proudest memories of Winston's success at this time was with the science teacher who worked to encourage his talent and interest.

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Parent Corner, continued

Teacher Support

Ms. Lisbet's, Winston's science teacher, encompassed everything that her son needed in a teacher. She carried high expectations and enforced student and parent accountability. She encouraged her students to engage in critical thinking and had many hands-on learning experiences. Winston excelled academically in Ms. Lisbet's science class. Of all the teachers Winston had in his eighth-grade year, Ms. Lisbet was the first and only one to recognize Winston's giftedness and recommend that he consider enrolling in a gifted class for his talent. Unfortunately, at the time there were no options in the school district to support his advanced abilities in science.

Education and Encouragement

Mrs. Styles learned not to accept what others thought about her son's ability. She felt assured by educating herself in how to understand and view her son's abilities. After middle school, Mrs. Styles felt wiser when it came to supporting and advocating for her son. She now knows that her son improved and excelled

because she educated herself on how to work with his disability and develop his talent.

For parents of children labeled with a disability and who possess gifts that have been unidentified, she suggests that parents show teachers how to recognize their children's strengths and talents. She encourages parents to educate themselves and work with the teachers and administrators to create a learning environment that supports the student's weaknesses in a way that does not undermine their talents. Last, but not least, she advises parents to celebrate their children's talents despite their performance in school because when their children know that they are supported, their abilities are limitless.

For further information on parenting your twice-exceptional child, look for an upcoming article on the specific strategies and resources that Mrs. Styles used to help her son in school, at home, and in the community.

(Footnotes)

¹ Names have been changed to pseudonyms to protect confidentiality.

Invite a Colleague to Join TAG!

Membership Application

To: CEC
1110 N. Glebe Rd., Ste. 300
Arlington, VA 22201-5704

TAG Dues:

U.S./Canada: Regular: \$25;
Student: \$10
Overseas: \$55

_____ **CEC and TAG Dues.** I want to start enjoying the many benefits of membership in CEC and TAG. I am enclosing both CEC and TAG dues.*

_____ **TAG Dues Only.** I am currently a member of CEC and my CEC ID # is _____. I am enclosing TAG dues only (see prices above).

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State/Province: _____

Zip/Postal Code: _____

Country: _____

Phone: _____

* Please call (888) 232-7733 (toll free) or (703) 620-3660 for information on current CEC dues. Join online at <http://www.cec.sped.org>.

Save the Date!
CEC Convention & Expo
April 21-24, 2010; Nashville, TN

Make plans to attend CEC's annual convention in Nashville. The conference offers sessions focusing on the most up-to-date information on evidence-based strategies for working with gifted students, as well as the opportunity to learn from and network with peers from around the world.

TAG is now on Facebook!
Become a group member of The Association for the Gifted and network with other TAG members in the online community. Do a search for "The Association for the Gifted" and join the group today!

