

Gifted Education Day in Washington

Tuesday, March 19, 2013

The Columbia Room

Legislative Building

9:00 am to 2:30 pm

Part I: Basics

YOU
are a key advocate for gifted education in Washington State.

**Join other advocates in Olympia and talk to your Legislators about the value
of Highly Capable Programs for both the student and the state.**

Gifted advocates are a lone voice. There are many sympathetic causes in public education that enjoy the support of a wide variety of interests, but the toughest issues often are the ones with few champions. We may be few but our combined voices matter in advancing our cause.

Sponsors

Northwest Gifted Child Association
NWGCA
Celebrating our 60th year.
Active in supporting parents on a local level since 1963.
President: Marcia Holland
northwestgca@gmail.com. www.nwgca.org

Washington Association of Educators of the Talented and Gifted
WAETAG
Helping teachers since 1984.
President: Charlotte Akin
www.waetag.net

The Washington Coalition For Gifted Education
Chartered on February 20, 1985.
The Coalition is the advocacy arm of the gifted community in Washington state.
wagifted@earthlink.net



This 2013 issue of the Handbook is divided into three parts: Basics, Spotlights and Facts & Myths.

Not all messages about the importance of Highly Capable Programs work equally well. A great deal depends on who you are talking with or writing to. A decision on which message will work best needs to be carefully considered. What works well with one Legislator or Administrator might not work at all well with another. Much depends on the nature of your relationship with the individual and with the depth of their knowledge about the issue. Also important is their position. With a Legislator you may be seeking funding. With an Administrator you might be looking for implementation.

We present several approaches. Based on your knowledge of the individual(s) you are communicating with, you may wish to select one of them to use. They are only suggestions; your own message may be far more effective. Should you decide to use our suggestions, please select only one and do not try to mix and match different approaches within the same message.

Because of the large number of new Legislators, we need to concentrate this year on educating them in the needs of gifted students. While we will work to increase funding in the budget and get a new formula enacted, those may not be realistic goals for this funds-challenged session. Please plan on educating your Legislators.



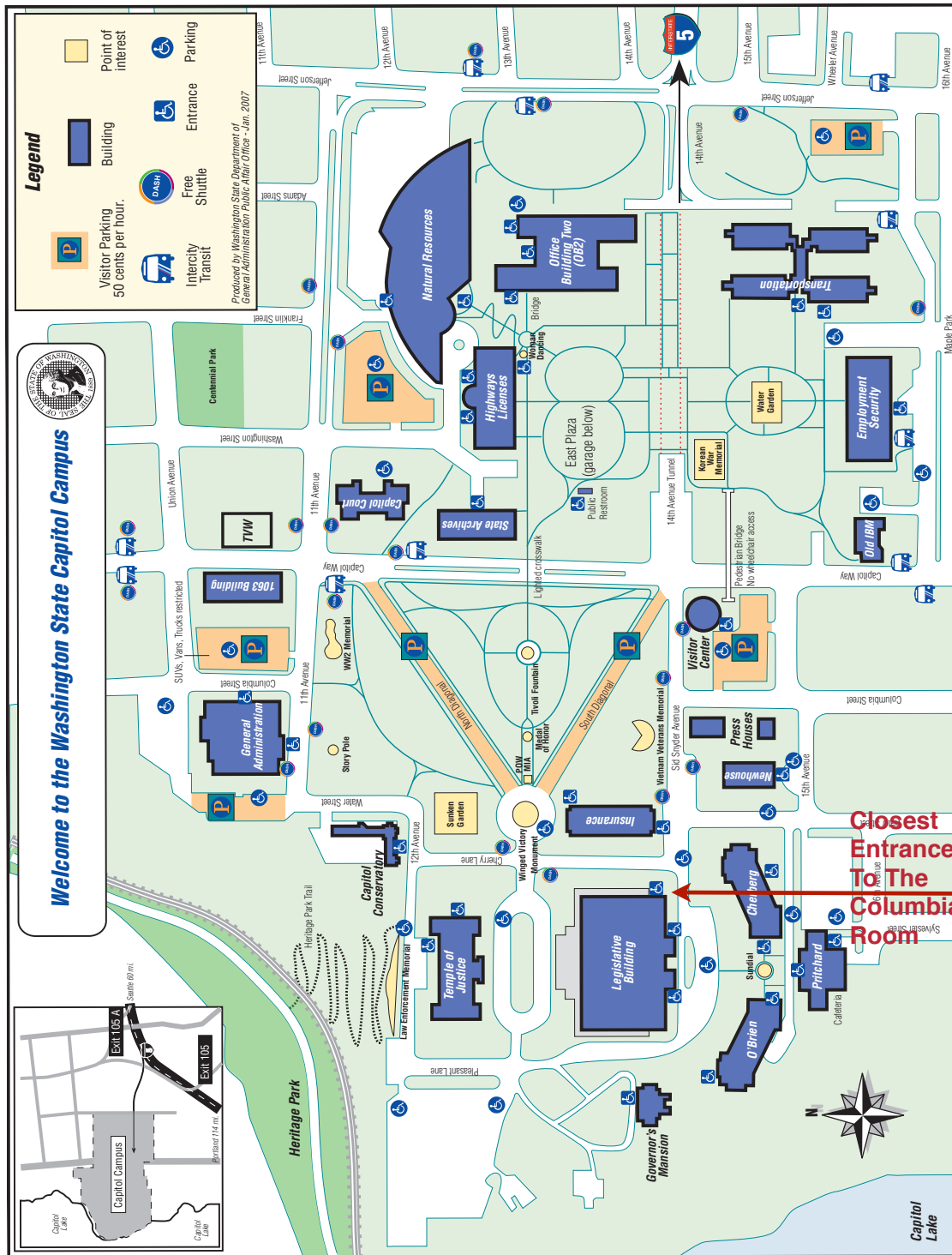
Reps Good



MEMORIES OF PRIOR GIFTED EDUCATION DAYS

Prepared for you by The Washington Coalition For Gifted Education
wagifted@earthlink.net
<http://www.facebook.com/wagifted>
<http://wcge.wordpress.com>





If you are coming as a group

Again this year the Coalition will be contacting a number of individuals and organizations asking them to organize a group of 4, 5 or more advocates to come to Olympia together. If you have not been contacted and wish to volunteer to do this, please contact us at wagifted@earthlink.net.

Coming as a group means you can car pool; it is easier to find parking -spaces are limited. If you want to park close to the capitol building bring lots of quarters and one dollar bills for the meters. Better yet, you can park further out and take the free DASH shuttle. Information on DASH is part of this handbook. People who used DASH last year found it an efficient way to get to the capitol building. You can access driving directions at <http://www.ga.wa.gov/visitor/direction.htm>

Making legislator appointments as a group is easier than doing it as individuals.

If you are the organizer of a group, please let the Coalition know how many individuals there are, what school district or advocacy group you represent, and which legislators you plan to contact. If you are bringing students make sure you have signed photo permissions on file at their school.

If you are coming on your own.

If you are unable to be part of a group, organized or informal, and will drive to Olympia on your own, be forewarned that parking is limited. We recommend you park in one of the shuttle lots and use the DASH shuttle. Information on DASH is a part of this packet. You can access driving directions at <http://www.ga.wa.gov/visitor/direction.htm> Please let us know which Legislators you will meet with.

Using the Columbia Room

The Columbia Room is in the Legislative Building, the one with the big dome. The most direct entrance is in the southeast corner - see map in this package. There will be someone present in the Columbia Room at all times so you can leave coats or bags with us during your legislator appointments. However, we do not assume any liability for any items left there so no electronics, please. Feel free to eat lunch in the Columbia Room. If you don't want to brown bag, there is a small cafe just across the hall which has a seating area. There is a large cafeteria in the nearby Pritchard Building.

Legislator Appointments

Make your appointments to meet with your legislators well in advance. As soon as possible after session opens on January 14th, call or email your Legislator requesting an appointment on March 19, 2013. Say you will be in Olympia for Gifted Education Day and want to talk about the programs for Highly Capable Children. Take whatever time of day is offered. A few days before Gifted Ed Day, reconfirm your appointment to be sure it hasn't changed.

If you have any questions on how to find who your legislators are and how to contact them to make individual appointments, please feel free to email us at wagifted@earthlink.net.

Intercity Transit "Dash" Shuttle

It's easy. It's fast. It's fun. It's free!

Intercity Transit provides a FREE Dash Shuttle that loops around the Campus and then down Capitol Way to the Farmers Market and back.

Dash Shuttle:

Serving the Olympia Capitol Campus, the Dash Shuttle runs between the Capitol Campus and the Farmers Market, also making a loop around the Wheeler Ave. satellite parking lot and making stops about every two blocks down Capital Way. The service covers both the east and west campuses, and runs every 12 minutes from 6:45 a.m. until 7:15 p.m. on weekdays. It also operates on Saturdays, from April through December, when the Farmers Market is open and runs every 15 minutes from 8:30 a.m. until 6:30 p.m.

There is a DASH shuttle stop near the southeast entrance to the Legislative Building and the Columbia Room. For a map of the shuttle stops, go to: <http://www.intercitytransit.com/traveloptions/dash/Pages/default.aspx>

Visitors Park Free!

Whether visiting downtown or Legislative activity on campus, you have a handy place to park. The Visitor Parking lot is just off I-5 on the Capitol Campus at Jefferson and Wheeler. Park FREE for the first 2 hours, then just 50 cents an hour after that. Dash serves the lot, 6:45 a.m. until 7:15 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Parking at the Farmers Market!

There is now added parking at the Farmers Market. This parking option is available **only** January through March. The first 2 hours are free; users cannot buy monthly permits to use this lot: it is hourly only!

For other parking options in the area, see the **P** (parking symbol) on the shuttle map.

For directions, maps and information regarding parking and free shuttle service please see <http://www.leg.wa.gov/legislature/Pages/Parking.aspx>

What can you and other advocates in your area do if you can't get to Olympia for Gifted Education Day on March 19, 2013? Here are some ideas.

1. Meet in small groups at a convenient location and time to hold a "Contact Your Legislator" party. The meeting need not be exactly on March 19 but we recommend as close to that date as possible. Some things you can do as a group are:

- If you do not already know who your Legislators are and what district you reside in, go to <http://app.leg.wa.gov/DistrictFinder/> and fill in the boxes. You will get the Find Your Legislator page and links to all three of your Legislators. **Due to redistricting, you may now be in a new legislative district; be sure to check.**

- Use the links you get to send emails to your Legislators directly from this site. Be sure to identify yourself as a constituent and give your address. Try to keep your email to only one subject and to keep it short. If you make a specific request, request a response.

- Use the Legislative Hot Line to place calls to your Legislators - 1.800.562.6000. Because the operators on the hot line take down your message by hand and then transmit it electronically to the Legislator, we recommend that you prepare your message in advance. Identify yourself as a constituent. Keep your message short and focused on only one idea.

- For longer messages, write an actual letter to your Legislator and email it to him. The links you got from the Find Your Legislator Page will give you an email address in Olympia.

- Make your messages individual. Too many messages reading exactly the same will be discounted.

2. If you have already established a relationship with a Legislator through prior meetings or correspondence, you may wish to phone directly. Phone numbers are on each individual Legislator page. You are likely to reach the legislative assistant so again prepare your message in advance.

3. Phone advocates who are not able to join your small group and urge them to make contact with their legislators.

Tips for meetings with Legislators in Olympia

Make your message as informative as is needed but do not make it more informative than is required.

Start early to make arrangements. Phone well ahead for an appointment. A month's lead time is not too much!

Prepare for the meeting by deciding (1) what information and messages you want to convey, and (2) what you want the legislator to do.

Be on time.

Introduce yourself by name and affiliation. State that you are a constituent from their district.

Be sure your message is short and concise. Most meetings with legislators in Olympia last for 15 minutes or less. Avoid too many details about your issues. An anecdote is good, but a life story is too long. If emailing, keep your letter about one issue. Express your position in one paragraph.

State your reason for being there: the importance of appropriate educational opportunities for gifted students, the successes and achievements of these students, and the over all impact on both the district and the community. Pause to allow the Legislator to respond; listen to them to determine where they stand on the issue.

Be ready to answer questions. It is OK if you don't know the answers. If this is the case, just tell Legislators that you don't know the answer, but that you will get back to them — if you say this, you must follow through. We will be happy to help you get the answer.

Leave some information (like a fact sheet); be sure that it has your contact information including your email address on it or contact information of others the Legislator can contact.

Ask for a response by email.

Keep in touch with your Legislator. You want to build an ongoing relationship.

It's OK if you meet with the legislative assistant. They are usually friendly and will convey your message to the Legislator. The staff in a Legislator's office can be powerful: they frequently control the Legislator's schedule, the information s/he receives, and may influence the Legislator's decisions.

Follow up your meeting with a handwritten note thanking them for the meeting, restating your concerns, and providing further information (if needed). If you are in Olympia, note paper and cards are available in the Columbia Room; we will deliver for you.

Complete a contact report for the Coalition after meeting with a Legislator or the assistant. This is especially important if there is a need for us to follow up. Forms are available in the Columbia Room.

If using the hot line, 1-800-562-6000, write out your short message and polish it in advance so you can deliver it exactly as you want it.

When phoning your Legislator's office to express an opinion, either write out your message or jot down your points before calling to make sure you get your entire point across quickly.



*Some more tips for talking with Legislators,
Principals and School Administrators.*

Be helpful to them and begin a dialogue. They don't have time to become the experts. Provide them what they need to know. You be the expert for them to rely on. (It's about dialogue, dialogue, dialogue, and building relationships.) Since Legislators, principals and administrators have (generally speaking) not come to us for information or help, we need to go to them.

To most effectively communicate with busy Legislators, principals and administrators, be concise, be focused, be accessible online, be credible, be equitable, be ready to take advantage of any opportunity that comes your way (have your "elevator speech" ready at all times).



Using Social Media to Advocate For the Gifted

July 20, 2012 by [karla](#)

Many politicians and policy makers are accessible via various social networks, such as [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#), and most are well monitored by the politician him/herself, and/or a staff person.

Social media is a fantastic advocacy tool. But there are certain things to keep in mind, when taking this advocacy route.

Keep in mind:

- 1) **Be respectful.** Despite what internet trolls would have you believe, the internet does not give you carte blanche to be rude and disrespectful. Be firm. Write well. Don't be ugly. You will engage them better that way. No one wants to feel attacked, whether face-to-face, or online. Just because you can say it, doesn't mean you should.
- 2) **Don't let it become emotionally charged.** This goes along with 'be respectful', but I can't stress enough, how important it is to keep your cool. When it goes to that level, you will often lose your credibility.
- 3) **Write out your thoughts beforehand.** The internet allows us to correspond and do things at a much quicker pace, but don't just get on your computer, type out your complaint or request and hit 'enter'. Once it's out there, it's out there. Gather your thoughts, think on it for a bit and revisit your ideas. Edit as needed. Read it again. Edit again. Rinse and repeat.
- 4) **You only have 140 characters on Twitter.** Make them count. Sometimes, it is best to break your thoughts into several separate tweets, rather than risk losing the message in a bunch of shorthand. (Writing on your school board's Facebook wall or your state Senator's LinkedIn page? Have at it – there are no word/character limits.)
- 5) **Don't use social media as a bullying tool.** I've been turned off by some efforts for some great causes, simply because what they were doing seemed more in the realm of bullying. We don't tolerate it in schools. We shouldn't tolerate it online. (see #1 and #2)
- 6) **Understand that it is difficult to measure its effectiveness.** Unlike seeing someone face-to-face and getting a handshake, you will not know for certain whether the policy maker you are trying to engage has read or seen what you write. In social media, sometimes the power comes from getting the word out to others, and combining your voices, rather than your individual update or tweet.
- 7) **Be sure to thank them for their work, time and effort.** Don't just bombard with stats and requests. Thank them for the job they are doing, thank them when they do listen, or they ask questions. Even the worst policy maker does something right, once in awhile, right? Dig deep, and compliment him on the lovely tie he had on at the last board meeting.

Taken from the *Living the Life Fantastic* web site on August 23, 2012

<http://www.livingthelife Fantastic.com/2012/07/using-social-media-to-advocate-for-the-gifted/>

You can find links to Legislator pages on Facebook, Twitter, etc. by going to <http://www.leg.wa.gov/senate/Pages/default.aspx> and selecting your senator and to <http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/Pages/default.aspx> and selecting your representatives. Click on the name. Then click on Homepage just below the picture and the homepage will tell you what social media links the legislator has. Updated Legislator information will not be posted until January 14.

WHY DO WE ADVOCATE?

There is an important role for education advocacy organizations because policy making is:

Chaotic - perfect consensus even among like-minded policy makers rarely happens

Cyclical - windows of opportunity open at different times from different political events

Conflict-ridden - disagreements are inevitable and essential

Relationship-driven - friends or enemies should never be permanent

In other words, because policy making is difficult, even talented and influential inside champions need outside support to navigate the path to change. When the values and concerns of the civic community voiced by advocacy organizations align with the priorities of inside champions, there is strong opportunity for action - and with careful, continued work, great things can happen.

Advocates must monitor changes at each stage of the implementation process. Legislation has created broad directives while delegating implementation details to the purview of state boards, education agencies and districts. Legislative directives can be watered down in the implementation phase of policy making so advocates must remain vigilant. Once progress is underway and policy begins to impact schools and communities, advocates must continue their work by sustaining and defending the policies they've championed.

Some strategies great advocates use are:

- ✓ Advocates build and maintain trusted relationships with policy makers in order to set the stage for future successes. They nurture relationships that foster credibility and that lead to action on their proposals. They maintain strong relationships with legislators' staff and work constantly to identify potential leaders. It is especially important to maintain strong relationships at the local level.
- ✓ Stick to clear messages and achievable goals with widespread support.
- ✓ Great advocates don't just highlight problems; they propose concrete policy solutions. Advocates protect against simple solutions and silver bullets, and they continue to look for ways of keeping policy makers engaged and committed to their key education priorities.

How do advocates build and maintain respect of leading policy makers?

- ✓ Advocacy organizations deflect credit for victories back to inside champions, making them into heroes. Advocates care more about winning the issue than in owning it.
- ✓ Great advocates maintain fidelity to values based in student achievement, staying above the fray when fights become more about political ideology than what is best for kids. Sometimes policymakers do care more about partisanship than issues, and advocates need to stay above that fray.
- ✓ Advocates are discreet and do not divulge confidential conversations with opponents or proponents.
- ✓ Advocates can appropriately dial back expectations and declare success if they are victorious with only part of their agenda.

These two pages are adapted from *Seizing the Opportunity: How Education Advocacy Groups and State Policy Makers Work Together to Advance Reform*. Policy Innovators in Education Network, January 2012, with some additions of our own. More information at <http://www.pie-network.org/>