Advocacy for Acceleration

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Thanks to

• National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) and
• Jane Clarenbach for providing some of the information for this presentation!
“Many teachers of the gifted, especially those from smaller districts, are lone voices advocating for the needs of advanced learners.”

~~ Croft & Wood, A Nation Empowered
You might feel like that “lone voice” if you are advocating for acceleration.
Strategizing for Advocacy

- **BE INFORMED**
- **GATHER RESEARCH**
- **HAVE A CLEAR MESSAGE**
- **INCLUDE LOCAL EXAMPLES AND “STORIES”**
- **FIND ALLIES**
- **SPREAD THE MESSAGE**
- **MAKE THE REQUEST FOR CHANGE**
BE INFORMED
Academic Acceleration ...

- Moves high-ability students at a faster rate or a younger age than typical
- Matches a curriculum to a students’ academic abilities
- Is an appropriate developmental placement
- Is supported by 60 years of research
Academic Acceleration Is Not…

- Pushing a child.
- Forcing a child to learn advanced material or socialize with older children before he or she is ready.
- A “one-size-fits-all” approach.
  - It should be carefully considered.
  - It acknowledges the fact that some individual differences merit educational flexibility.
  - It is not “the answer” for all gifted students.
GATHER RESEARCH
HAVE A CLEAR MESSAGE
Develop the message

• Easy to understand
• Focus on students and student learning
• Use local and state data and examples
What are some of our messages about gifted students and acceleration?

• Gifted children have a right to learn something new every day. (NAGC)
Acceleration works. An extensive research base supports acceleration for gifted students.

#NationEmpowered
Acceleration can be tailored to the academic and social needs of the individual student.

#NationEmpowered
Accelerated students are more successful, have higher productivity rates, more prestigious occupations and they earn more and increase their income faster compared to older, similar-ability, non-accelerated peers.

- #NationEmpowered

More of these picture quotes are on Twitter: #NationEmpowered in 2015 and 2016
INCLUDE LOCAL EXAMPLES AND "STORIES"
Examples of success

Single-subject

Gabriel, or “Gabby” as she’s called, is the third oldest.

Her mother says, “She was bright but not ‘over the top,’ at least at first.”

By the end of fifth grade, though, she’d soared through sixth-grade math and was working on pre-algebra, all while helping her fifth-grade classmates with their assignments.
Acceleration Supports Students’ Social Development: What examples or “stories” might illustrate this point?

• The facts:
  – It puts them in classes with academic peers, who are similar in terms of interests & intellectual level.
  – Some studies show that highly gifted students are better accepted by older students than by their age peers.
  – Overall, in terms of research on social development and academic acceleration, the picture is quite positive.
Ask some students to...

- Write letters to the editor
- Participate in a panel discussion
- Present to the school board
Local examples lend credibility

- Share examples of acceleration policy
- Show how acceleration is being implemented in nearby districts
FIND ALLIES
Allies

Parents

Teachers

Administrators with acceleration experience

Students

News Reporters
SPREAD THE MESSAGE
Who do we want to influence?

• Local school leaders
• Elected officials
• General public
  – Many people are not well-informed about high-ability students’ needs or the effectiveness of acceleration
  – We might need to dispel myths
    • “They will be fine on their own.”
We are already doing (some of) it!
What Happens if We Don’t Accelerate?

• Not only should we consider what the research tells us (acceleration is highly successful for carefully selected students), but also we should understand the consequences of inaction

• “Doing nothing” is still a decision
MAKE THE REQUEST FOR CHANGE
Ways to be an advocate

• Act individually
  – Letter to the Editor
  – Talk to other teachers about accelerating students

• Encourage others to act
  – Write to your representative
  – Attend school board meeting and ask for policy

• Join others
  – Work with a team to create or update policy
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Endorsed by  
NAGC  
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National Association for Gifted Children

- http://www.nagc.org/get-involved/advocate-high-ability-learners/advocating-gifted-programs-your-local-schools
Other Resources

- https://www.txgifted.org/advocacyresources  Start on this page and link to many other resources.
Not all gifted students have families who can advocate on their behalf.

~~~Your advocacy is needed.
When you see the research, when you're given the tools, you see that acceleration makes complete sense.

Parent of an accelerated student
Advocacy is a marathon…

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