

WORKING WITH SCHOOLS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF GIFTED STUDENTS

1. **Be firm, but be kind.** Stand up for your child without putting the teacher or the administration on the defensive. This is not you vs. them. This is simply a matter of you securing the best education possible for your child.
2. **Be confident, but be humble.** Do not be intimidated by the fact that you are talking to trained educators with years of experience. Confidence is necessary to win the battle for an appropriate education. Arrogance is the fastest and surest way to lose that same battle.
3. **Teach your child to be confident and humble as well.** Children need to be confident in their abilities, even when those abilities are overlooked or discouraged. They need to avoid arrogance if they wish to receive support and encouragement from the teacher or the other students. A teacher may believe that the last thing a child's inflated ego needs is more brain food or acknowledgement of his abilities.
4. **Be educated and informed.** If you want the school to do more for your child, be prepared to tell them exactly what programs and opportunities will be of the most benefit, and be prepared to explain why. You must be able to support your position.
5. **Remember that you are the expert on your child.** No one knows more than you do about your child's needs, weaknesses, strengths, quirks, and history.
6. **Remember that your child's teacher sees your child in a different environment than you do.** Children often act differently at home than they do at school.
7. **Remember that even if a teacher has had limited training in the field of gifted education, they do have years of experience and training in the classroom and with a variety of students.** Listen to them with an open mind just as you hope they will listen to you with an open mind.
8. **Remember that you are in this solely for the sake of your child, not how your child's abilities and achievement reflect on you.** Always check your own motives. It is easy to get caught up in either the embarrassment or the

pride cycle when your child performs differently than most of the other students.

9. Remember that poor grades are not necessarily the teacher's fault.

While it's true that some students underachieve because they are bored in class or because they haven't been challenged enough, it's also true that some gifted students will receive poor grades when they enter a classroom that finally *does* challenge their abilities.

10. Band together with other parents of gifted children to form a support group.

This group will not only be able to provide emotional support and encouragement, but it will strengthen your ability to ensure adequate educational opportunities for your children.

11. Be willing to make sacrifices of your time and energy to help out at the school or to supplement your child's education.

You can't expect the teachers to do everything. This is your responsibility as well. Oftentimes, gifted programs are understaffed and under-funded. Volunteers are needed. This also demonstrates to the school the value you place on the gifted programs.

12. Be positive.

Offer as much support and kudos to the teaching staff and administration as you can. They *will* be grateful. They will likely show that gratitude by listening to you when you have needs and by making more of an effort to support you as a parent. They will recognize that you are not an adversary, but a teammate. Develop a good working relationship.

13. Think long term.

It is easy to think that by the time appropriate gifted programs are in place, your child will have graduated from high school. However, much *can* be accomplished in a short period of time, your child *will* benefit from watching your example of perseverance and the importance you place on education, and future parents and children will be able to build on your foundation. *Somebody* has to get the ball rolling.

14. Do not be afraid to stand alone.

Your child may often feel as though *he* is standing alone, and he will need your example.

15. Remember that you are the person ultimately responsible for the well-being and education of your child.

Nobody else can advocate for your child like you can. *You* are your child's champion.