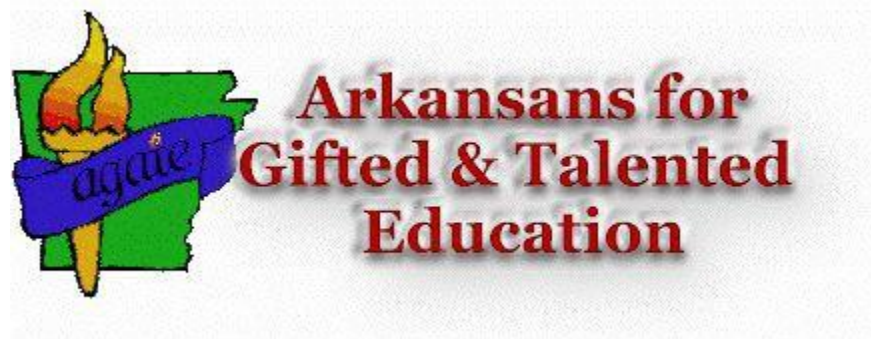


Forward



The purpose of this publication is to assist Arkansans who are concerned about the educational opportunities for gifted and talented youth. We hope that AGATE (Arkansans for Gifted and Talented Education) will be beneficial in bringing together those who share this concern. While contribution of each individual is important, the effect can be multiplied many times through a network of support and advocacy across the state.

It is our hope that this handbook will be helpful to those who are interested in forming parent/community advocacy groups. The task is great, but it is one which is worthy of our best efforts.

Failure to help the handicapped child reach his potential is a personal tragedy for him and his family; failure to help the gifted child reach his potential is a societal tragedy, the extent of which is difficult to measure, but which is surely great. How can we measure the sonata unwritten, the curative drug undiscovered, the absence of political insight? They are the difference between what we are and what we could be as a society.

~James Gallagher

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What is AGATE?

Arkansans for Gifted and Talented Education (AGATE) is a non-profit, statewide organization of persons working together to promote excellence in education, particularly as it relates to the gifted and talented children and youth of Arkansas.

In serving gifted and talented children and youth in Arkansas, AGATE is working to...

- Provide a unified voice
- Disseminate information
- Stimulate statewide activities
- Encourage development and implementation of educational programs for students and teacher
- Establish working relationships with organizations or institutions whose objectives include working for the gifted and talented
- Support and assist with the enactment and implementation of national, state, and local legislative programs which promote educational opportunities for the gifted

What is an AGATE Affiliate?

An AGATE affiliate chapter is an organized group of persons interested in promoting appropriate educational opportunities for gifted and talented children and youth. These are local community, school, or school district groups which have formally joined with AGATE to support its efforts and share in the benefits of statewide networking.

Why affiliate with AGATE?

By participating in this statewide network, your local organization can have an effective impact on decisions regarding state, federal, and private funding and also help to determine the direction of the gifted education movement in Arkansas. Through AGATE's newsletter, conferences, and other publications leaders of local affiliates are able to remain abreast of the latest activities and trends in gifted education. By affiliating with AGATE, your group will be contributing to the continued development of a positive public awareness of the purpose and need for gifted education in Arkansas

Requirements for Affiliation

1. The local organization must have a common interest and purpose with AGATE: the development of the potential of gifted and talented youth.
2. The governing body of the local organization must have voted to affiliate with AGATE and must renew annually by payment of membership fees to AGATE.
3. A copy of the local organization's membership application must be sent to the AGATE Affiliate Director.
4. Annual affiliate dues will be \$60. Fee includes annual AGATE membership for all of the organization's parent members. The officers will each receive newsletters and all other correspondence from AGATE
5. Local affiliates will send a copy of their newsletter (if any) to the AGATE president and the AGATE newsletter editor

Questions to Consider

1. What is our purpose, our goals, and why should we organize?
2. Have we accurately assessed our local situation?
 - a. What has been done in the past for gifted students by our parents?
 - b. What has been the public reaction to our efforts and have they changed? If so, why? What is the general feeling among school patrons at this time?
 - c. What is happening now in our schools to meet the special needs of gifted and talented children? Can our advocacy group help?
 - d. What known obstacles exist? Are they major deterrents to our primary purpose and goals? What resources will be needed to overcome the obstacles?
3. Do we have a consensus on the major issues from a representative cross-section of our community?
 - a. Parents-across ethnic/racial/social lines
 - b. Educators-teachers, administrators, School Board members
 - c. Community leaders-political, social, business
4. Do we have accurate, factual information to use in making concrete proposals about gifted education that will be persuasive, well organized, and

acceptable? Are we open to and considerate of multiple points of view?

5. Are we aware of the kind of commitment that will be needed to make our organization successful? Do our leaders understand that there will be varying degrees of commitment among membership, and are they willing to allow for that in planning activities?



**Arkansans for
Gifted & Talented
Education**

Getting Started

1. Plan an organizational meeting:
 - a. Create a list of persons interested in gifted education.
 - b. Arrange publicity for the organizational meeting: newspaper, radio, etc.
 - c. Consider an outside person to speak briefly at the organizational meeting (AGATE Affiliate).
 - d. Gather materials on gifted education and other organized affiliate and advocacy groups.
2. Suggested format of the first meeting:
 - a. Obtain names and contact information of attendees.
 - b. Enlist guest speaker.
 - c. Select a steering committee.
 - d. Set the next meeting date.
 - e. Leave time for informal interaction.
3. Responsibilities of the steering committee:
 - a. Discuss and define the purpose, organizational structure, membership requirements, and group goals.
 - b. Develop a constitution including necessary committees and responsibilities of officers.
 - c. Select a name for the organization.
 - d. Nominate a slate of officers.
 - e. Establish a policy concerning dues.

4. Format of the second meeting:
 - a. Adopt constitution
 - b. Elect officers
 - c. Collect membership dues
 - d. Present and discuss goals
 - e. Consider on affiliation with AGATE
5. Officers formulate a plan for carrying out the group's goals and evaluating the effectiveness of the organization.

Ideas, Activities and Goals for Affiliates

1. Sponsor local workshops, conferences, and seminars
2. Compile a resource list of people, places, and things to see and do on a gifted field trip
3. Compile a list of citizens willing to serve as mentors
4. Sponsor a fair to display and share talents of gifted students
5. Publish a newsletter
6. Attend a school board meeting to present information on gifted children
7. Volunteer the services of parents in the GT classroom
8. Present free affiliate memberships to legislators, public officials, and school administrators
9. Provide information about or sponsor summer programs for gifted students
10. Compile a resource list of books, periodicals, and journals related to gifted education
11. Establish a public relations committee to increase public awareness of the gifted students in the district
12. Publish a book of stories and poems written by gifted children
13. Invite experts in the field of gifted education to speak at meetings

14. Investigate and visit gifted programs in other districts
15. Distribute information about conferences, workshops, and special programs of interest to gifted parents
16. Exchange ideas and information with other affiliate groups (AGATE Affiliate FaceBook page)
17. Provide article for the newspaper about activities of the gifted program and students
18. Publish a handbook for parents of gifted children
19. Sponsor a young authors contest, Future Problem Solving, Quiz Bowl, of Science Olympiad team
20. Raise money for scholarships to special gifted programs
21. Organize after school or Saturday mini-courses for gifted students

Sample Constitution

Arkansans for Gifted and Talented Education –

_____ Chapter

Article One – Name

The name of this organization shall be _____

Article Two – Purpose

The purpose of this organization shall be to promote the welfare and education of gifted and talented youths by:

1. Serving as a unified voice for gifted and talented youth
2. Establishing a public relations committed to increase community awareness and legislative advocacy
3.

This organization shall be nondiscriminatory with regard to race, creed, sex, economic status, or political affiliation.

Article Three – Membership

Section 1:

Membership shall consist of persons interested in the welfare and education of gifted and talented children and

youth who have paid membership dues of \$_____per year. Free membership will be given to legislators, public officials, and administrators.

Section 2:

Voting privileges shall be accorded as follows: Individual, student, and business memberships entitle the member to one vote.

Section 3:

Membership year shall extend from _____to _____

Article Four – Officers

Section 1: Eligibility

Officers shall be members in good standing when elected and shall remain so throughout the term of office. A nominating committee will present a slate of officers to be elected by a majority vote of the membership present at the annual meeting.

Section 2: Number of Officers

There shall be a president, vice-president, treasurer, and secretary.

Section 3: Time of Election

Election of officers shall take place during the March meeting.

Section 4: Assumption of Duties

Officers shall assume their duties immediately following the election.

Section 5: Term of Office

Term of office shall be for one year.

Section 6: Succession

Officers may not succeed themselves in the same position more than once consecutively.

Section 7: Vacancy

In case of a vacancy in an office, the remaining officers shall appoint a member in good standing to fill the unexpired term.

Section 8: Presidential vacancy

Vacancy in the office of president shall be filled by the automatic ascension of the vice-president. The new vice-president shall be appointed as described in Section 7.

Article Five – Duties of Officers

1. President – Call and preside at all general meetings and officer meetings. Represent and or speak for the membership as directed.
2. Vice-President – Assume the duties of the president in the absence of the president. Assume any duties assigned by the president.
3. Secretary – Custodian of all official records and documents of the organization. Shall record minutes of meetings.
4. Treasurer – Receive and disburse monies of the organization and make reports of financial condition as requested. Treasurer shall forward affiliate dues to the membership vice-president of the state AGATE organization.

Article Six – Committees

Section 1: Executive Committee

The Executive Committee shall consist of the elected officers of the organization plus up to six additional interested members. They shall have the authority to act for the organization on all matters that arise between meetings.

Section 2: Standing Committees

Standing Committees include the nominating committee and the membership committee. Chairpersons of these committees shall be

appointed by the president and confirmed by a vote of the membership.

Section 3: Additional Committees

Ad hoc committees shall be appointed by the executive committee as deemed necessary to complete projects, assignments, and other undertakings of the organization.

Article Seven – Meetings

General membership meetings shall be held at least two times per year at regular intervals with appropriate notice given to members. The annual meeting shall be the last meeting in the spring.

Article Eight – Parliamentary Procedure

Robert's Rules of Order, Revised, shall be used as a guide by this organization in carrying out its parliamentary procedure.

Article Nine – Amendments and Revisions

These by laws may be amended by a majority vote at the annual meeting or at a special general membership meeting. The membership must be provided with copies of the proposed amendments or revisions at least thirty days prior to the meeting at which the vote on the matter will be taken.

Plan of Action for Advocates

1. Read information on the education of the gifted to prepare yourself to make a defensible case for the special needs of the gifted.
2. Evaluate your own strengths to determine where in the larger effort you can make your best contribution.
3. Inform yourself about your state's provisions for gifted children as well as the national picture.
4. Contact AGATE and offer your efforts in your areas of strength as well as where needed by organization.
5. Become a politician. Meet with your state and Washington legislators as well as local school board members to discuss the special needs of gifted children. This usually falls into the following categories:
 - a. Provide information about the special needs of gifted children.
 - b. Request information about any current legislative or district policy efforts on behalf of gifted children.
 - c. Suggest specific actions rising out of a or b.
 - d. Express your thanks for any effort by them that benefits gifted students.
 - e. Offer assistance and support on behalf of gifted children.

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Pitfall Number 1: Using an adversarial rather than a persuasive approach. There is a natural tendency for us to model after advocates for the rights of minorities and rights of the handicapped. Those “other advocates” were very adept in various pressure tactics. But these tactics will not work as well for advocates of the gifted for three reasons:

- The cause is different.
- Times have changed.
- We are wiser.

Pitfall Number 2: Assuming that people in administrative and political positions are not too bright or very knowledgeable. Such attitudes and actions are destructive to any cause. Advocates seldom realize that these decision makers have to grapple with issues that we do not understand, which unfortunately leaves gifted and talented programs as a minor issue many times.

Pitfall Number 3: Being impatient. It is very touch to be patient when you see children whose abilities need attention and development RIGHT NOW. But patience in advocacy for the gifted is more than a virtue, it is required.

Pitfall Number 4: Being Human. The failure of many advocacy efforts for the gifted and talented can be directly traced to a common human malady – egoism. Perhaps the toughest challenge you will face as an advocate for the gifted will not be to testify before a legislative committee, but to manage to get a group of fellow advocates to work together. Getting that chorus together will require a lot of effort and selflessness so that no one voice rises above the others.

Websites of Interest

AGATE Website:

<http://www.agatearkansas.org/>

NAGC Website:

<http://www.nagc.org/>

Hoagies

<http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/>

State Officials

<http://portal.arkansas.gov/government/Pages/default.aspx>

Arkansas Department of Education

<http://arkansased.org/programs/gt.html>

Thank you for your advocacy.

