



March 27, 2014

## **Department: From Where I Sit Super Weekend: Better with Collaboration**

What has been traditionally known by NAGC staff and volunteer leaders as “Super Weekend,” grew to even greater proportions this past week. Each March in Washington, D.C., over the span of just five days, NAGC hosts overlapping meetings of the Board of Directors, Convention Program Committee, and state affiliate leaders. The state affiliate conference is unique in that leaders from state associations of gifted advocates (made up of educators, parents, administrators and others) learn the latest advocacy messages from NAGC and share ideas with one another before heading out to visit their Senators and Representatives on Capitol Hill. In fact as I write this, they are braving cold winds and snow showers to reinforce the drumbeat that all children (including gifted children) need appropriate educational opportunities to succeed. Each of these groups has a clear focus and purpose, but bring them together and they reenergize one another and recommit to ensuring that the best interests of students with gifts and talents are considered in education conversations at every level.



What made this incarnation of Super Weekend even more significant was the 12-month collaboration between the Belin-Blank Center at the University of Iowa and NAGC that brought the 11th bi-annual Wallace Symposium to the nation’s capital. Susan Assouline, the Director of the Belin-Blank Center, and her team oversaw the efforts from Iowa, while NAGC staff worked from the Washington, D.C. side. A committee was created and Joyce VanTassel-Baska chaired the group. After months of planning more than 200 researchers and educators converged on D.C. and engaged in high quality scholarly conversations about building bridges between research, policy, and practice.

Keynote addresses were provided by Paula Olszewski-Kubilius, Richard Duschl, Richard Florida, Chester Finn, Martin Storksdieck, and Nicholas Colangelo as the Julian C. Stanley Distinguished

Lecturer. The Honorable Deborah S. Delisle, Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education, also greeted the Symposium and State Affiliate Conference attendees and shared her support for high-ability learners, “What we offer to our children tells them what we value.” Susan Assouline provided the closing keynote, a preview of, *A Nation Empowered*, which will update findings from [\*A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America’s Brightest Students\*](#), a comprehensive report on acceleration published 10 years ago. Symposium attendees hailed from several countries and 22 states.

NAGC’s contribution to the Wallace program content resulted in a broader focus on policy and advocacy. Several sessions explored the power of using data to influence policy. Attendees of the Symposium learned about both the latest research in several areas of talent development, and also how research can inform practice—all with the goal of ensuring members of our community are well-informed about the connections between GT programs, services, and pedagogy and developing the high levels of talent we need in the global economy in every student group.

Speaking with one voice about the academic and social emotional needs of students with gifts and talents is the mission of NAGC. To that end, the leadership and staff work hard to ensure that states and advocates don’t reinvent the wheel or start from scratch. Each time we convene as a Board of Directors, some of our agenda is devoted to exploring ways to channel the expertise of our members and experts inside and outside the field into position papers, factsheets, op-ed pieces, brochures, and online materials to support state affiliates and individuals in making the case on behalf of gifted students.

Having just arrived home after the 2014 Super Weekend, I am excited and energized for the mission that lies ahead. Advocating for any important cause is a relentless activity. Making sure that the academic needs and interests of students with gifts and talents are considered in key conversations requires state-of-the-art information, a proactive approach to planning, and perseverance. The 2014 Super Weekend has provided the first two. The rest is up to us!