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Department: From Where I Sit



Susan Dulong Langley, NAGC Parent Board Member, Framingham, MA Helping Parents Find Their Voice

Like many national associations, NAGC strives to meet the needs of more than one important membership group through its programs and services. In our case, this means striking an important balance -- cultivating both professional educators and parents as members, rather than focusing exclusively on just one or the other. After all, both groups play an essential role in supporting our nation's gifted and talented learners, which is at the heart of NAGC's mission. It is an important dual focus, and one that has been carefully reviewed and revitalized over the years in response to the needs of not only the professionals who work with gifted learners, but also those who parent them.

As an active parenting leader, state advocate, and parent representative to the NAGC Board, I have been both witness to and active participant in the many changes and additions to NAGC's parent focus. It's important for you to be aware of the careful deliberation and decision making that has resulted in expanded parent resources.

In 2010, we sought feedback from parents and parenting leaders on what information and services (and in what format) they would find most relevant from NAGC. The staff, Board of Directors, and parenting leaders analyzed these results and data related to the emerging needs of parents, resulting in:

- a dedicated staff member trained and focused on parent issues
- an increase in frequency and online formats of [*Parenting for High Potential*](#)

- a more streamlined approach for parent advisory groups resulting in improved services and collaboration
- outreach to and partnerships with other parenting organizations
- a proactive social media presence

It was a time of careful deliberation as NAGC leaders sought to increase results within a level-funded budget, but these changes have now come to fruition with two key areas of expansion.

The first significant area of expansion was in *Parenting for High Potential*. *PHP* is still published quarterly in print version for mailing, as it has always been, but those editions are now interspersed with four additional digital issues, letting us reach out in more ways, more frequently. The second significant area of expansion relates to *PHP* with our new parent staff position. Similar to the Teacher Outreach Specialist Position, this staff member will serve as the editor of *PHP* (when our current editor finishes her term in December), respond to parent inquiries, act as liaison to the Parent Advisory Committee, and foster partnerships with other parenting organizations.



This final piece of the plan was recently put into place with the hiring of Kathleen Nilles as our new Manager of Parent Services and Communications. She brings an exciting combination of editorial background, non-profit communications, social media experience, and knowledge of gifted education to match our needs. Kathy's appointment is not the culmination of our efforts to revitalize our parenting approaches. Rather, it is the continuation of important forward momentum on this front, standing on the shoulders of our *PHP* editor Jennifer Jolly, who has more than doubled her efforts to bring quality and relevance to NAGC's flagship publication for parents.

Kathy is pictured at left, at the recent [SENG Conference](#) in Orlando, FL. [Kathy can be reached via email.](#)

These initiatives represent the way NAGC plays a special and vital role in helping parents find their voice at the local, district, state, and national advocacy table. With an ever-expanding wealth of resources as well as staff to assist parents with effective communication and advocacy, NAGC is providing essential guidance and support to parents when they need it most. From where I sit, that is a great place to be.