THE WHO, WHY, WHEN, WHERE, AND WHAT
Tracy Elford

Blue Valley Parent Advocates for Gifted Education

Blue Valley School District

Overland Park, Leawood, and Stillwell Kansas
Students vs. Children

Gifted Children

A Day in the Life
WHY GIFTED ADVOCACY IS NEEDED

The Norm

THE WHY
WHY PARENT GROUPS ARE NEEDED

- Connections and Support
- Information
- Unique Challenges and Joys
- Understanding and Advice
- Group Advocacy
WHY PARENT GROUPS THRIVE OR DIE

• Positive Charter
• Information
• Relationship with Teachers, Schools, & District
• Communication
• Continuity
WHERE ARE THE PARENT GROUPS

• Where Are Parent Groups Needed
• Where do you start
• Where is your focus
• Where can you get parents to “do something”
WHEN DID BVPAGE BEGIN

- BVPAGE start
- Evolution
- Change and adapt
- When do others come to us?
Our Greatest Successes

THE WHAT
#1 MONTHLY MEETINGS

- 1 per month 11:30am – 1:00pm
- Minimum 2 night events
- Bring your lunch
- Held at district conference room
- Information
- Open Forum

THE WHAT
HIGHEST ATTENDED MEETING TOPICS

- High School Opportunities*
- Whole Grade & Math Acceleration
- IEPs
- Asynchronous Development
- Visual & Performing Arts Curriculum
- Twice Exceptional **
- Elementary & Middle School Gifted Curriculum
- Results of Acceleration Survey
- Common Core
- English & Social Studies Curriculum
- Mini SENG Sessions

THE WHAT
First taste of Advocating
33 schools had different criteria and process for identifying gifted students
Not our action but our impetus
Goal of Gifted Administrator, took 2 subsequent administrators and several years
#3 SCHOOL DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP

• Mutual Respect
• BVPAGE taught Blue Valley
  “My child is in gifted class 45 minutes a day. But my child is gifted all day.”
• Blue Valley taught BVPAGE
  “Change is evolutionary not revolutionary.”
“The partnership with BVPAGE is a great example of the positive results that occur when a group of parents and the district work together. We are extremely fortunate to have a committed parent organization like BVPAGE.”

Dr. Todd White, Superintendent

“While the members of BVPAGE are certainly advocates for their children, they approach the district from the perspective of a partner who assumes positive intent, rather than as an adversary.“

Dr. Mark Schmidt, Assistant Superintendent Student Well-Being and Support
“Having BVPAGE members on the district Curriculum and Instruction Committee has allowed for a clear line of open communication regarding curriculum topics within the district. This relationship is positive and has continued through leadership changes in both BVPAGE and the District.”

Dr. Tonya Merrigan, Chief Learning Officer

“As a gifted education teacher, I feel supported 100% by BVPAGE in serving students who are gifted..... On top of this, BVPAGE ....helped prevent the state of Kansas from removing gifted education services from the state Special Education mandate. For all of these reasons and more, I appreciate the partnership I have with BVPAGE. I wouldn’t be able to effectively do my job without the unwavering support of BVPAGE.”

Jen Johnson, Gifted Education Specialist
“BVPAGE and Blue Valley Schools have a beautiful, reciprocal relationship that supports each organizations’ goals and objectives..... The organization strives to provide accurate, timely information and support for families, and they are an impactful voice in the bigger picture of Blue Valley Schools. Other organizations/groups would be wise to follow the approach BVPAGE has used in building a trusting, collaborative relationship with Blue Valley Schools."

Kristin Asquith, Coordinator of Gifted Education
#4 HONORS MULTIVARIABLE CALCULUS

- Large number of math accelerations
- High school seniors had no math class
- Request to add a senior math class for accelerated students only
- Took 3 years to accomplish
- First year 1 teacher & 4 video-link classes
- Now 1 teacher at each of 5 high schools
#5 SUMMER ROBOTICS CAMPS

- BVPAGE saw need for summer robotics offerings
- Needed to be at high talent or gifted level
- Started in 2010
- Grown to 3 weeks, 6 sessions
- Minimal funding to our group for the year
- Proceeds go to Gifted Education Class Rooms
SUMMER ROBOTICS CAMPS
Past President Lisa Nickel saw need for specifics
2015 Created a survey
Parents, General Education teachers, Gifted Education Teachers, and Building Administrators
Power of Positive Communication
Superintendent showed to district administrators, used to start other parent support groups, requests from special education community
“Success is knowing the difference between cornering people and getting them in your corner.”

- Bill Copeland
Use Team approach

- Teachers are professionals who want to help your student.
- Everyone is on the same team.
- All members have valuable input to share.
- Problem solve in a way that respects everyone’s time.
- Use “us” and “we”.
- Be seen throughout school as someone who works together well.
- Be open-minded to possible interventions and solutions.
- Bring suggestions and options.

“When working on a problem with parents, I sit with them on the same side of the table and put the problem on the opposite side. This shows them visually that we are working together and we are on the same team.”
Advocating without alienating

Pitfalls to avoid

Avoid the “B” word! (BORING)
• Saying that your child is bored can come across as rude, defensive, and not helpful
#7 SUMMER OPPORTUNITIES FAIR

- February Open House
- Summer camps, classes, activities
- Ask they be geared for highly talented or gifted
- Free of charge to attendees
- No IEP check at the door
- Invite other school districts and parochials
SUMMER OPPORTUNITIES FAIR

THE WHAT
#8 NATIONAL SPEAKERS

- Dr. James Webb
- Sandra Johnson

Gifted Education: Why Bother?

- The country needs these children to be highly educated in order to ensure its long-term competitiveness, security and innovation.

- These high ability students also deserve and education that meets their needs and enhances their futures, just like all children.

THE WHAT
#9 STARTING OTHER PARENT GROUPS

- Contacted by Wichita, Shawnee Mission, and Olathe
- Discussions
- All our meeting topics & presentations online
- *Advocating Without Alienating* for first Olathe & Shawnee Mission parent meetings
- Mixed success and survival of groups
- Joint meeting with Olathe:
  - *Understanding the Dynamic of Gifted and Siblings*
February 8, 2016 Kansas bill proposed to remove Gifted Education from Special Education
School officials limited in vocal opposition
Rallied BVPAGE and other parent groups
Templates and email addresses provided
Emails sent and bill dropped February 9, 2016
Thank you email template sent
“Should I accelerate my child?”

Large group of ‘old’ parents exiting this year

Survey to gather opinions, experience, criteria

100+ Parent and Student respondents

Belin-Blank Center at University of Iowa and Davidson Institute for Talent Development

Presented to BVPAGE parents and administrators and at 2017 KGTC conference
ACCELERATION SURVEY

Whole or Single Subject Offer

- Single Subject: All Others
  - Number of Offers: 14

- Single Subject: Math
  - Number of Offers: 80

- Whole Grade
  - Number of Offers: 29

THE WHAT
Insightful Parents & Children

“She advanced above her age level to her ability”

“Whether you chose to accelerate or not, as long as your child is your priority, you won't make the wrong decision.”

“Boredom is dangerous”

“I felt more on par with my peers rather than as far ahead and isolated.”

“My teachers and principal demonstrated concern I would not ‘adjust socially and normally.’ Although every student is different, I would like to report that it actually helped me become more social and extroverted”
ACCELERATION SURVEY

Emotional Effects
Prior Concern vs Experience

- Chose NOT to Accelerate Emotional Hopes
- Chose TO Accelerate Emotional Experience

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<th>Chose NOT</th>
<th>Chose TO</th>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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THE WHAT
Other BVPAGE Activities

• SENG Model Parent Groups
• District 4th & 5th Grade Gifted Class Robotics Share Fair
• Middle School Gifted “Brain Blizzard” trivia contest
• Offered district teacher training on robotics purchases
• Helped Launch 2E parent group
• Facebook Page
• Upcoming “Don’t Ask Alexa, Siri, or Google. Ask ME!!” Gifted student panel
• Your local parent support group
• Do they need startup, location, topics
• Offer your experience and expertise
• Information needs to move down and up

This is about gifted children.

THE CHALLENGE
Questions and Answers

• WWW.BVPAGE.ORG
  Presentations under “Items of Note”
• Facebook group: BVPAGE
• Twitter: @BVPAGEORG

• elford.tracy@gmail.com