

GAM Advocacy Check-List 2010

We have come to a time in the State of Missouri where we need to re-engage advocates for our state's high ability learners. We need to forge a stronger relationship with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to offer/encourage programs for gifted education in our schools.

Our strategy and advocacy structure must change to meet the pressing needs to strengthen the voice of gifted education.

The GAM Board discussed an Advocacy Plan called "Adopt-A-Legislator".

Following the General Elections GAM's Governmental Affairs Consultant, Kyna Iman, will prepare a list of House and Senate seats in each GAM District.

Each GAM District Director will secure a designated GAM representative for each school district in their area. Then the GAM representative for each school district (teacher or parent) will ensure educational materials and action alerts are sent to their designated State Senator or State Representative.

We can no longer just ask our legislators to "support gifted education". We need to urge their support for legislation that requires school districts to:

- 1) Identify gifted students;
- 2) Ensure school districts provide services for high ability learners; and
- 3) Report data annually to DESE on identification procedures, students being serviced and gifted program offerings.

***Please see attached proposed legislation and what it means in layman's terms.

GAM CHECK-LIST FOR ADVOCACY

- GAM Leadership meet with Commissioner of Education (June)
(GAM members met with Assistant Commissioner for Office of Quality Schools – Margie Vandeeven and David Welch – who will continue to represent gifted education at the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, 7/23/2010)
- GAM Leadership meet with Governor and education-staff (July)
- GAM Leadership meet with State Board of Education (August)
- ADOPT-A-LEGISLATOR – District Directors will make assignments to ensure every legislator is contacted. (August)
- Know your own State Representative & State Senator (ongoing)
- Go to www.senate.mo.gov or www.house.mo.gov to learn more about your state legislators, i.e. contact information, committee information, sponsored legislation
- Have Parents organize a “Meet and Greet” to get to know legislators
- Invite legislator for coffee at local coffeeshop
- Invite legislators to your house for a visit with your neighbors
- Take a legislator to lunch
- During election year, assist on campaigns, volunteer, put up yard sign, make support phone calls (June – November)
- Have students conduct a “mock” debate with state candidates running for state representative and state senator in your school district
- Invite legislators to visit your gifted classroom to see students in action
- Teachers/Parents continue to educate Administrators and School Board members of importance of gifted programs
- GAM work to have the Gifted Coordinator reinstated at DESE
- Iman work to line-up legislative bill sponsors for 2011 session
- Iman and members work on campaigns to get PRO-Gifted education legislators elected – list of candidates – www.sos.mo.gov

Overcome hurdles:

- Perception of “gifted” being elitist or an entitlement
- Additional perceived classroom costs
- Perception and belief that gifted students will do fine without specialized instruction
- Test scores and MAP issues always a concern
- No more reporting or collection of data at DESE – WHO IS MONITORING AND TRACKING OUTCOMES?

QUESTIONS - INFORMATION FOR LEGISLATORS

- 1) Do you know ___x___ School District serves ### of gifted students who are in grades _____?
- 2) Do you know _____x_____ School District has had a gifted program for ### years?
- 3) Do you know the process _____x_____ School District uses to identify high-ability learners?
- 4) Do you know in 2007, when the legislature rolled the categoricals in to the foundation formula, they basically ended any gifted program oversight?
- 5) Do you know that there is only a part-time gifted coordinator at DESE?
- 6) Do you know that there is no reporting requirements at DESE for statistics or data on:
 - a) what gifted programs are being offered;
 - b) how students are identified;
 - c) how many students are being served?