

# Advocating without Alienating: The Discussion Continues



The Power of Positive Communication

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# Tracy Elford

elford.tracy@gmail.com

- Kansas Association for the Gifted, Talented, and Creative
- Blue Valley Parent Advocates for Gifted Education
- Speaker National Association for Gifted Children Leadership & Advocacy Conference in 2018
- Administrative Assistant to the Principal Oxford Middle School
- Clark 23 & Audra 21
  - Carpool driver for 14 years





## Upcoming Events & Announcements

### Items of Note

[Blue Valley District  
Gifted Education  
Handbook](#)

[SENG Groups  
Information](#)

[2020 Robotics Camps  
Information &  
Registration](#)

[2020 Brain Blizzard  
Information &  
Registration](#)

Acceleration Survey  
Results

- [Chose TO Accelerate  
Responses by Question](#)
- [Chose TO Accelerate  
Responses by Individual](#)
- [Chose NOT TO Accelerate  
Responses by Question](#)
- [Chose NOT TO Accelerate  
Responses by Individual](#)
- [Presentation](#)
- [Presentation Notes](#)
- [KGTC Presentation](#)

Sep 10

### Back-To-School Feedback Requested

We hope this message finds you well - or at least hanging in there!  
Administration at Blue Valley has reached out to us and asked for...

245 views [Write a comment](#)



Jul 25

### Fall Education Parent Input Needed - URGENT

Dear families, Our mission at BVPAGE is to advocate for an  
enhanced educational experience for gifted students and provide...

237 views [Write a comment](#)



# Advocate

- To support or speak in favor of something
- To act or intercede on behalf of another

(Webster's Dictionary)

# Purpose of the discussion

- Share best practices & worst practices
- Learn effective techniques
- Avoid pitfalls
- Allow opportunity to share experiences

*“Instead of being a horrible experience, advocating can actually strengthen your bonds with your child’s teachers and school. It also helps other parents, who might come along later, find an easier way.”*

~ survey response

“Success is knowing the difference between cornering people and getting them in your corner.”

- Bill Copeland

# Original and Continuing

Reference original Advocating main topics

Add in some new ones

Yes – Use the Chat function!

# Original

## Chain of Command

- Start and continue with the right person
- Understand that Gifted teachers do not have authority over general education teachers -- they can offer support, resources, and ideas
- Make an appointment
- Don't jump ladder rungs!



# Continuing

## Chain of Communication

- Only address people directly involved in your issue
- Volume of communication
- Timely communication about problems
- Response time

*“My preferred first contact is with the student.”*

# Original

## Seek to Understand

- Ask questions to understand
- Set aside the need to be right
- Ask for clarification to provoke the thought process
- Relay what you are hearing/seeing at home

*“My child thinks that... I want to make sure I understand the whole picture.”*

# Continuing

## Listen to observations

- The child at home is not necessarily the same child at school
- Contact about your child is not complaining but about addressing an issue
- Tell teacher what you are observing at home
- It's ok to talk to your student before you answer or react

*“I want your child to succeed!”*

# Original

## Start with positives

- Build the sandwich – positive, areas of concern, positive
- Establish mutual respect
- Be grateful for efforts and willingness to work together
- Empathy for teacher constraints
- List what is/has been effective - share what is working

*“I appreciate all that is currently being done for my student. Can we look at more ideas?”*

# Continuing

## How you communicate

- Acknowledge and greet teacher before you start your request
- Yelling or YELLING
- Trust takes time and interactions
- If you think you are being emotional, wait before you act

*“Yelling or YELLING at me does not make me want to help you. I will help your child because I am a professional.”*

## Helpful Phrases:

- “Help me understand...”
- “We are open to suggestions about...”
- “What do you think?”
- “How can I reinforce what’s happening in class?”
- “What do you want us to do at home?”
- “We need help.”

*“Yes, she’s getting good grades – but I want her to be inspired and to care.”*

# Original

## **Know the goal**

- Define the problem or talk about observations
- Work on specifics

# Continuing

## **Keep an open mind**

- Don't come in with the answer
- Give it time but don't give up

# Original

## Focus on the child

- This is not about you - park your ego and baggage at the door
- Phrase concerns in child-centered manner
- Don't make comparisons to other children, other teachers, other situations
- Realistically understand your child's strengths and weaknesses

*“Take the steps necessary to raise a well rounded person – not just a math genius”*



# Continuing

## Be an adult

- You are the parent not the friend
- Do not use teachers as the middle-man for your marital/custody issues
- Make sure there is work space at home(s)
- Coordinate responses with spouse/parent

*“These parents were amazing! I did not know for 3 years they were divorced because they worked together, presented a united front, and never talked badly about each other!”*

# Original

## Your Child Is the Student

- Don't make excuses for a child's behavior
- Students earn grades. They are not given grades.
- Teach that it's okay to fail sometimes
- Let natural consequences work

*“What could you have done differently?”*

# Continuing

## Your Child Is Responsible

- Your child is in school, not you
- Students earn grades. They are not given grades.
- Teachers want to see student taking responsibility
- Everyone wants your child to learn and enjoy learning
- Don't let your child fail if they don't have the tools to succeed

*“Curiosity is wonderful! I want to encourage inquiry and exploration!”*

# Original

## Your words matter

- Use “we” and “us”
- Working together means including your child
- Listen
- You can disagree and still be polite

*“When I bring families in, I put the problem on one side of the table and we all sit on the other side. It is a visual reminder that we are all a team.”*

# Continuing

## How you communicate matters

- Kids need to be part of the discussions too
- Kids will emulate parent methods
- Parent silence can be powerful in meetings

*“The best meeting I ever had was with parents and the student who wasn’t doing his work. The parents stayed silent and had their child acknowledge all that he hadn’t done and he had to take part in the plan to catch up on his work. It was noticeably painful for the parents to stay silent but it was so effective!”*

# Continuing

## Communicate when given the chance

- Every year do the “About my Child” requests
- Every year answer questionnaire before IEPs
- Give teachers a head’s up about problem topics

*“I told our English teacher that I have a daughter who cries at puppy commercials and I knew she could not handle an autobiography of a POW. We came up with alternate books she could read and still do all the same assignments as the rest of the class.”*

# Continuing

## Conferences and Check-Ins

- All students are important
- Go in with positive intent
- Ask your child who is important for you to talk to
- If not discussing academics, give teacher a head's up
- It's ok to check in during non-conference times

*“Why are you here?”*

*“Kids are a good judge of character. My son wants me to meet the teachers who ‘see’ and ‘recognize’ him – the ones he thinks are important.”*

# Original

## Involve your child!

- Get your child's input on what they want.

*“Be careful – what is best for a child and what a child wants can be different things. Therefore, advocating for a child means learning the difference between going to bat for them to foster success and giving in to the whims of our children.”*

- Include students in the planning and problem solving process.

*“Students take more ownership of the plan when they were there when it was developed.”*



# Original

- Allow students to figure some things out for themselves. They will feel great if you believe in them.

*“When you rescue them, you deprive the student of the opportunity to work through things on their own. Your actions tell the child that you think they are incapable.”*

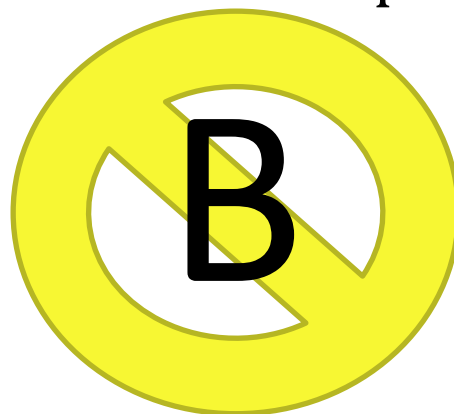
- Teach them effective ways to self-advocate.

*“Golden opportunities to learn that things won’t always be smooth and easy in life.”*

# Speed Round Don't and Do

# #1 Avoid the “B” word! (BORING)

Saying that your child is bored can come across as rude, defensive, and it is not helpful



**Instead Use:** Challenge

Effort

Engagement

Previously learned

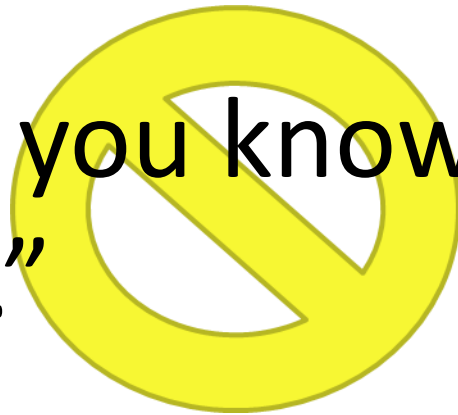
## #2 “You won’t...”



**Avoid:** You won't  
You don't

**Instead Use:** “Can we”  
“Is it possible”  
“What do you think about”  
“Here’s what we are hearing at home”  
“Here’s what we see”

# #3 “Don’t you know who I am? I can....”



**Avoid:** Threats of any kind

**Instead Use:** “We are disappointed to hear that”  
“I would like to continue this discussion with...”  
“I am upset right now and I would like to come back to this at... ”  
“That answer is not acceptable”

# #3 “You can’t give him an F.”



**Avoid:** Not realistically looking at work/effort  
Thinking only the grade matters

**Instead Use:** “An F is new for us, what can Joey do..”  
“Joey did not do the assignment. Is there a way to make up any points?”  
“We are very frustrated at Joey’s lack of effort.”  
“Yes, Joey deserves an F for this.”

# #4 “My little angel” statements



**Avoid:** Not realistically looking at child’s language or behavior

Saying “would never”

**Instead Use:** “Do you know what proceeded this?”

“This is not acceptable at our house.”

“We are very frustrated at Susie’s behavior...”

“We’d like to talk to Susie about this and get back to you.”

# Continuing

## Start your child advocating for themselves

- Teach them the words to use (and not use)
- Start with small questions or discussions
- Practice the hard or uncomfortable
- Give teacher a head's up
- Remind them teachers are not mind readers

*“I love it when something is important enough to a student that they will ask.”*



# Resources

**BVPAGE** (Blue Valley Parent Advocates for Gifted Education) Our mission as a volunteer parent group is to advocate for an enhanced educational experience for gifted students and provide resources and support for their families and educators. [www.bvpage.org](http://www.bvpage.org)

Facebook: BVPAGE

**KGTC** (Kansas Association for the Gifted Talented and Creative)  
[www.kgtc.org](http://www.kgtc.org)

Facebook: KGTC Parent Support

**NAGC** (National Association for Gifted Children)  
[www.nagc.org](http://www.nagc.org)

**Olathe Quest Connections**

Facebook: Olathe Quest Connections

**Hoagies Gifted Education** website [www.hoagiesgifted.org](http://www.hoagiesgifted.org)