

Educational Pathways: Thinking Outside the Box & Advocacy



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Agenda

What is advocacy? (20 minutes)

- Define & Why
- Model & Stakeholders roles of advocacy

Educational Pathways (10 minutes)

- Finding the Right Fit
- Creative Problem Solving

Leverage the NAGC tips on advocacy

Brainstorm



Creativity

A/a

sketch


Design

HAR



Define Advocacy

Standing Up Speaking Up



"a set of activities designed to **change the allocation** of resources to **improve opportunities** for the education of **gifted and talented students**" (p. 1).

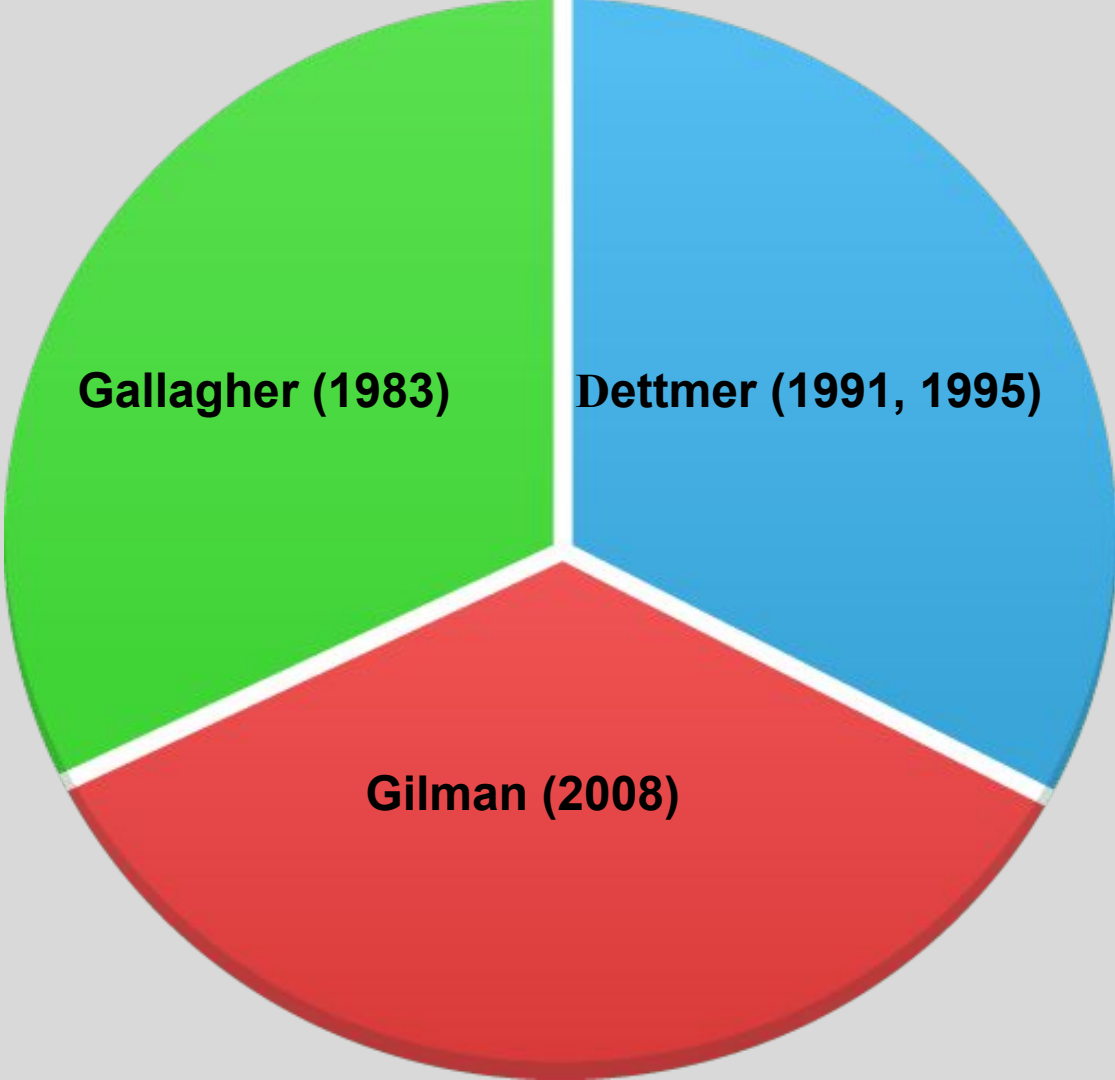
~ Gallagher (1983)

Why Advocate?

Advocacy is linked to **empowerment**. A means to an end that can facilitate the process by which people, through articulating their **own needs** and desires, gain the confidence and ability to **influence decisions** which will affect their own future.



Models of Advocacy



Gallagher's (1983) Model

Step 1



Step 2



Step 3



Gallagher's (1983) Model

Step 4



Voice Message

Step 5



Step 6





Allies

Adversaries

Stakeholders

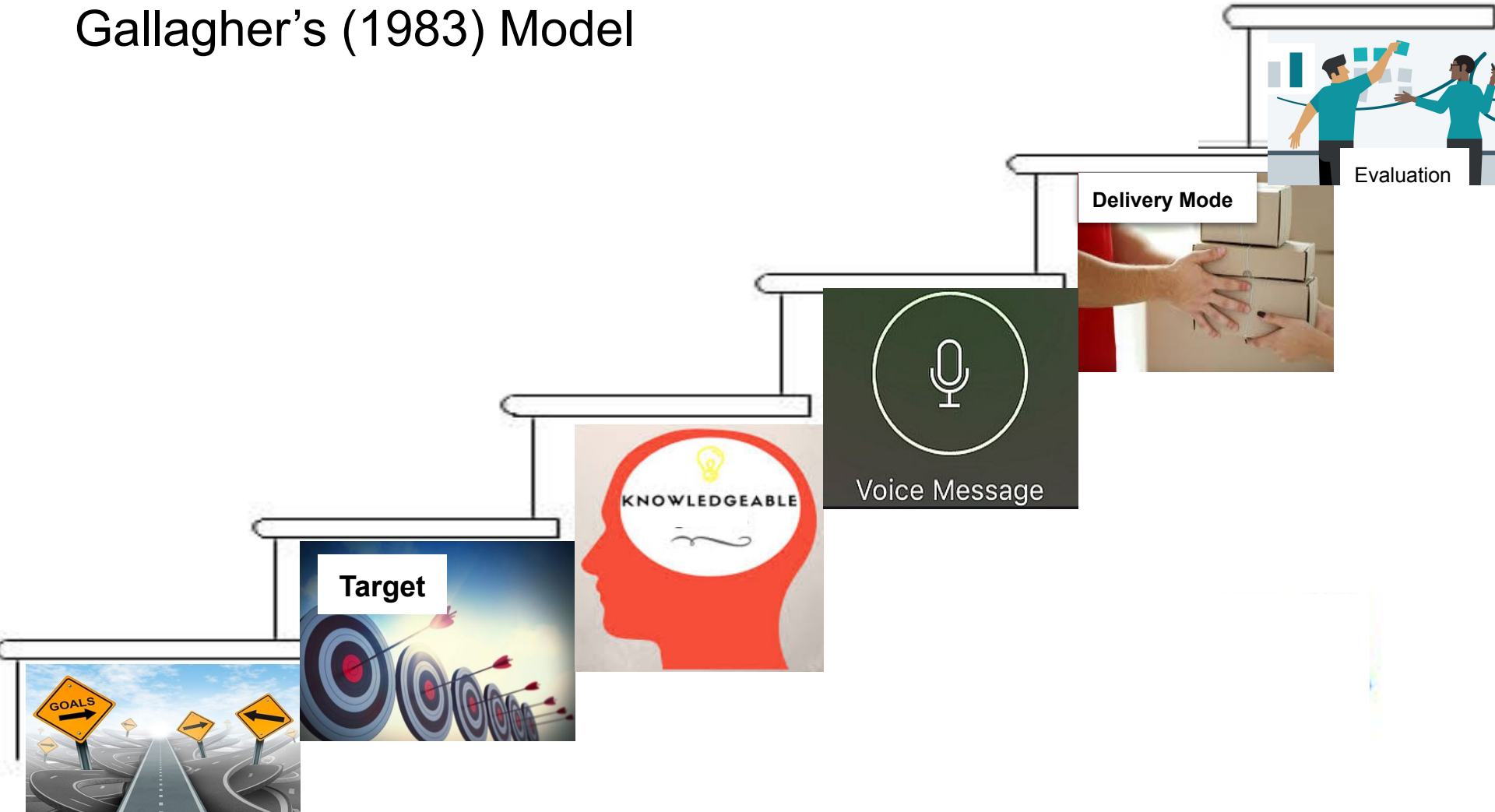
Beneficiaries

Internal

- Educational Pathways
- Finding the Right Fit
- Creative Problem Solving



Gallagher's (1983) Model



Advocating for Gifted Services

Parents and caregivers are a gifted child's best advocates, especially when schools lack appropriate identification policies, adequate services, and resources.

School districts don't always provide effective or appropriate gifted services. As a parent, you may feel frustrated by the district's failure to meet your child's needs, and fear backlash if you confront your child's teacher or the school administration. It's important to remember that the majority of school personnel are eager to support the learning needs of all children. They may just not be aware of the educational requirements for children with exceptional abilities.

To better advocate for your gifted child, familiarize yourself with state regulations and policies, district and school educational policies and practices, and common terms in gifted education. It is also essential that parents fully understand which services are required by the state and find out the options that might already be available for gifted children in the district.

HOW TO ADVOCATE FOR YOUR CHILD

Before embarking on your advocacy journey, first join your state or local gifted association. They can provide valuable information and support. Next, find out your district's specific chain of command. Then, follow the steps to effective educational advocacy below:



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

» Parents of gifted children may face the challenging task of advocating for gifted programs in the school district.

» Always follow the chain of command in a school or district.

» Parents may have to advocate each year with each new teacher unless they work for systemic school or districtwide change.

» Although school boards and administrators intend to meet each child's learning needs, they may not be aware of the unique characteristics or learning requirements of gifted children.

Classroom Advocacy

Parents often wonder when and how to approach their child's teacher if their child seems unhappy or not challenged in the classroom.

While there is no single recipe for how parents should develop a mutually supportive relationship with their child's teacher, there are some processes and best practices parents can implement as they work to bring changes to their child's educational experiences.

Difficulties parents often have in communicating with their child's school can be avoided by understanding the chain of command, doing advanced research and planning, and staying open-minded to solutions.

HOW TO GET STARTED

1. Always start with your child's classroom teacher. If the teacher perceives you've spoken to other teachers or to the principal before speaking with her, you'll start off on the wrong foot.
2. Do your homework! Talk with your child, make a list of your child's concerns (be as specific as possible), discuss various alternatives with



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

» It's imperative to approach the teacher with respect, trust, kindness, and enthusiasm. Leave your anger and frustration at home.

» Focus on one or two of your most important issues, not a laundry list of complaints.

» Most teachers want to do the right thing for their students and want to give their best to all of their students. Often, teachers are also frustrated that their schools have limited resources for advanced learners.

Self-Advocacy

Gifted learners who speak up for themselves are more apt to find challenges and opportunities to best fit their needs.

While it's true that all people may benefit by self-advocating, it's especially important for gifted learners whose needs go beyond the regular classroom.

As parents, you are on the front line of support for your child's self-advocacy. In order to be effective, however, you must be knowledgeable. Both you and your learner should have a clear understanding of the nature of giftedness, your child's individual learner profile, your rights and responsibilities within the education system, and possible options and alternatives.

TEACHING YOUNG CHILDREN

Even in the primary grades, it's not too early for parents to start teaching their young child to self-advocate in both academic and social settings:

- Don't solve every problem that arises for your child. Problem-solving builds life skills like self-reliance, sharing, conflict resolution, and independence.
- Help your child discern what is important to her and how to choose what's worth fighting for.
- Teach that advocating is not about complaining or whining. Instead, it's about knowing what she wants, assessing the situation to determine if the desired outcome is feasible, thinking about the best way to approach the person who can make the decision, and arming herself with evidence to support her position.
- Practice role-playing situations in which your child has a choice whether to simply complain or to self-advocate for a desired outcome.
- Empower your child to approach teachers, coaches, and other adults directly to present their ideas or solutions.

HELPING TWEENS & TEENS



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

» Self-advocacy is the process of recognizing and meeting the needs specific to your learning ability without compromising the dignity of yourself or others.

—Loring Brinckerhoff

» Four essential steps to successful self-advocacy for gifted learners:

—Understand your rights and responsibilities.

—Assess and reflect on your personal learner profile.

—Match options and opportunities to your profile.



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