

**MINNESOTA COUNCIL
FOR THE
GIFTED & TALENTED**

**CHAPTER ESSENTIALS
HANDBOOK**

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MCGT CHAPTER ESSENTIALS HANDBOOK
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(Revised 2008)

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MCGT MEMBERSHIP AND DUES INFORMATION

All chapter members are also members of the state MCGT organization. Dues are currently set at \$35. If members join through the local chapter, \$16 of the dues is retained by the chapter and the rest is forwarded to the MCGT Membership Chair. If they join through MCGT, the chapter designated on their membership form receives a rebate of \$16 from the MCGT treasurer and the information needed to include them on the local chapter's roster of members. A two year membership is also available. The current dues for a two-year membership are \$65. (\$32 to the chapter and \$33 to the state organization). If a member wants to join two chapters, the second chapter should be indicated on their membership form and include an additional \$16 per year that will be sent to the second chapter.

The chapter decides how its portion of the dues money will be used. It may be for a chapter newsletter, printing and postage costs, providing scholarships for students for a summer program, hosting a Teacher Appreciation event, providing opportunities for gifted/talented students to meet and participate in activities, paying for guest speakers at chapter meetings, etc.

The other half of a member's paid dues go to MCGT. This helps to maintain the office (including rent, phone, postage and copying/printing), which functions primarily as an information and networking center by providing:

- a newsletter five times a year that includes articles, announcements of events, listings of summer and school year opportunities for kids and adults; legislative and organizational information, etc.;
- support to the local chapter with information and chapter contact workshops;
- a resource library, including subscriptions to various journals to keep abreast of current research events and programs in gifted education to pass along to our members;
- regular CHAT nights (Connect, Help, Advocate, Talk) for informal discussion among parents of gifted children;
- MCGTdotnet, our online discussion group;
- contact with other state organizations and memberships in national organizations;
- maintenance of legislative contacts and coordination of legislative advocacy efforts;
- a list of speakers who are willing to share their areas of expertise in the world of the gifted;
- information, resources and referrals to individuals and chapters;
- an annual conference with sessions for adults and classes for kids;
- seminars on specific topics;
- a website and e-mail access for chapters and state officers and committees;
- an advocacy project in which parent volunteers coach and guide other parents

through the process of working with the school to meet the needs of their children.

ADVOCACY GIFT SUBSCRIPTIONS

MCGT members or chapters can purchase Advocacy Gift Subscriptions for \$16. per year per subscription. An Advocacy Subscription can be sent to school personnel (teachers, administrators, gifted and talented coordinators, school board members), resource centers or libraries, or to legislators. MCGT currently sends complimentary copies of the newsletter to legislators on the House and Senate Education committees, but an Advocacy Subscription could be sent by a member or a chapter to other legislators.

To purchase an Advocacy Subscription, fill out the membership form with the name and address of the person or chapter paying for it, write "Advocacy Subscription" on it and include the name and address where it is to be sent. We'll send a letter to the recipient telling who is giving them the subscription. When the subscription comes up for renewal, you will be notified.

MCGT E-MAIL ADDRESSES: THE HOW & WHY OF IT ALL

What is it?

On our website we want every chapter to be able to be reached by e-mail. To make this happen we are creating chapter e-mail addresses for each chapter in the following manner:

<chaptername>@mcgt.net

For example, bloomingtong@mcgt.net or stlouispark@mcgt.net

How does it work?

In order to do this, however, we must have an e-mail contact for someone in your chapter to receive the messages.

Please e-mail info@mcgt.net as soon as possible with your e-mail address (or someone else in your chapter who should receive messages electronically) so we can set up the mcgt.net address for you.

Who will use this address?

People who read about us on the website and want to learn more can use it to directly e-mail your chapter.

MCGT will use it to send periodic updates and information to all chapters in a quick and inexpensive way.

You can advertise the address locally - it's easier for people to remember than most personal addresses.

Why should we use it?

This provides an easy and uniform way for all our chapters to be hooked up electronically. It also allows you to be reached by e-mail without having to share your personal e-mail address with the world.

When do you need the info?

E-mail us now! E-mail info@mcgt.net - also use that e-mail address to ask questions or get more information.

TIPS FOR A HEALTHY CHAPTER

Develop ownership. Share in the tasks right from the beginning to give everyone a feeling of ownership and to reduce the burden that can often be placed on one or two individuals. After you have assessed and compiled a list of the needs and desires of the other parents in the group, you can set some guidelines for prospective programs. A project that has acceptance by a group will encourage its members to give their energy, time and enthusiasm. This in turn builds a shared feeling of commitment. Maintain those feelings and watch your team efforts multiply.

Be productive. List your goals; evaluate your progress. Your committees and individuals need to follow through on group commitments and continue to plan, re-evaluate and problem solve. The membership will change as you grow. A healthy organization requires constant attention. Have flexible attitudes toward new ideas and procedures. Many assets are intangible, but appreciate them ... an inspiring speech, a "heart-to-heart" with a new member, a decision to carry out your idea. Other products are tangible ... a newsletter, a resource file, an ongoing project. The group needs to be made aware of its accomplishments (through the newsletter, at meetings, and any other way you can think of). Share the notes and words of appreciation you receive, too. This inspires people to accomplish more. And remember that volunteers need good pay; they get it in recognition and praise.

Be effective. To meet its own special needs, an effective group determines goals and ways to accomplish them and periodically assesses the entire operation. It identifies and clarifies expectations, ideas and needs; an effective group allows time to explore these and yet keeps a balance between a group consensus and individual dominance. Effective advocacy amounts to the positive use of accurate information by a large number of people.

Revitalize your group. Some time after your group is organized, you may realize that it is not functioning effectively. Chapters evolve, members come and go, and people burn out. Organizations don't stand still; they grow and prosper, or they slowly fade away. Don't play the "blame game." Instead, assign a task group to re-evaluate your goals, procedures and direction. Possibly the group may recommend doing an interest survey with the membership. It may be time to set new goals and try new methods to reach them.

Advertise your activities. To keep new people coming to your group, be sure you advertise your activities outside your current contact group. This can be done via the MCGT email group (MCGTdotnet) and the MCGT web-site's Coming Up page. To get an activity posted on the Coming Up page, send the information to the MCGT office.

MORE TIPS FOR A HEALTHY CHAPTER

How do you insure good attendance at chapter meetings and events?

To be well attended, meetings should be enjoyable. Start on time; follow an agenda; end early. Provide coffee and treats. Involve people personally; combine politeness and firmness to curb long-winded talkers. Give people time to enjoy themselves; it is their meeting, and you want them to return. Meetings should have a focus or topic so they do not turn into either a bragging or complaining session. However, be sure to allow time for just plain conversation. One chapter includes an "open forum" at the end of each meeting. The chapter meeting may be the only place where parents can exchange similar problems and solutions with people who understand and empathize.

Consider the quality of your meetings, rather than the quantity. Three or four well-attended meetings, interspersed with other activities, will be more effective than monthly meetings that are poorly attended. Select speakers with a variety of timely (and possibly controversial) topics who will draw a crowd; then publicize the meetings well. Charge a nominal fee (one for members, slightly higher for non-members) for a special speaker; ask neighboring chapters to publicize that meeting, too.

Vary the location of your meetings; a museum, nature center, cable TV station and other locations would lend themselves to a different kind of meeting that could also involve kids. You could also have your meeting in a different school each time and include an interesting report on what goes on in the g/t program in that school.

You do not always have to have a speaker. Plan meetings that allow for active participation in small group discussions or informal study groups. Combine child and adult programs, such as field trips to historic sites, nature centers, hospitals, theaters and other interesting places. Kids enjoy the opportunity to have their own program with others like themselves, either during the adult meeting or at another time. One chapter invited a poet who has experience working with kids to spend the meeting time with the participants' children; at the end of the meeting, each child chose his/her two favorite poems created during that time to read to the adults.

The SENG (Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted) program has found that you can expect about half your power base to attend and pay dues about half the time. The committed core will be about one-quarter of the eligible parents. The remaining three-quarters are transient -- moving in and out, coming for special programs, but not necessarily following every step of the way. They recommend involving fathers in all aspects of programs and committees, involve students in some way in about half your programs, seek funding from the community, become recognized as a credible resource on the gifted in your district, and engage in community service activities.

Nothing happens overnight, so it's smart to continually recruit parents of students moving into the community, coming into kindergarten or newly identified as gifted/talented. It may take three years for these parents and their children to adjust to the schools, and they can find it rewarding to be involved with the chapter during this transition time. A chapter's continuity could be heavily dependent on those new families.

Set up your meeting calendar early in the fall and publish the dates and topics in the chapter newsletter, the local newspaper and in school newsletters. One chapter printed bookmarks with its chapter meeting dates on one side and the names and phone numbers of its officers on the other side. School gifted/talented coordinators and teachers can send meeting notices home with kids. You may want to set up a "phone tree" to call members before each meeting.

Don't forget to plan family activities, such as picnics and other social events, just for fun, so people can get to know each other more informally.

How do you involve chapter members as you work to increase visibility of gifted/talented programs in the school and credibility of the chapter?

These are just a few ideas. Start with these and brainstorm others that would be tailored to your area.

- Some chapters co-sponsor a big event each year with the school district, such as an Inventors Fair, Destination Imagination, Art Fair, Creativity Showcase, Science Fair, Writing Contest and several others. Invite the local newspaper to send a reporter and photographer. If they can not (or will not), take your own pictures and write a story to submit with several interesting photos. It just might get published! (Be sure to include a short paragraph about the sponsors and how to get in touch with your chapter.) Also send it to MCGT's newsletter editor - it will give other chapters ideas and insights. The Minnesota Academic Excellence Foundation, based in the Minnesota Department of Education, has a list of several more competitions that kids can be involved in; call (651) 582-8476 and ask for their publication, "Reach for the Stars."
- Promote and provide Advocacy Subscriptions for people who may not be directly associated with your chapter. (See information in this handbook's appendix.)
- Work with the librarian to put up displays that highlight chapter meetings and events or feature books for and/or about gifted kids.
- Staff a booth at school or community fairs.
- Hold a fund-raising event for which the proceeds would pay for scholarships for summer or after-school programs.
- Contribute books about gifted children and their education to the school district's staff library and/or to the public library.

- Put packets of information together about the chapter and MCGT and give them to new teachers and administrators, school board members, realtors, etc. Encourage, and work with, the school district gifted/talented coordinator to also provide information about the district's gifted programs and activities. If your district has a communications coordinator, be sure to include his or her input and advice.
- Hold a recognition event in the spring for gifted/talented personnel and volunteers. Thank school board members and legislators publicly for their recognition of the needs of gifted students.
- Collaborate with the gifted coordinator to write articles about the school's gifted programs to be published in the school district newsletter and local newspapers. You could also offer to help compile materials and do other tasks.
- Volunteer to be a mentor, help in enrichment programs, lead Junior Great Books or Omnibus groups, coach a Destination Imagination or Future Problem Solving team. (Your willingness to be volunteers should not allow the school district to sidestep the necessity of providing school day and classroom programs for gifted/talented kids.)
- Use chapter funds for training volunteers or to help send teachers and g/t teachers and coordinators to conferences and seminars.
- If you can manage it, a newsletter or e-mail list is the best way of keeping everybody informed about the progress toward the chapter's goals. Distribute it not only to chapter members, but to principals, administrators, g/t coordinators, school board members and post it or have it available in teacher lounges. Include the next meeting and program, local resources, recommended books, updates on gifted classes and activities, news from other chapters and the state organization, names and addresses of school and committee contact people, and information on potential and enacted legislation. Each school representative can include information about that school's gifted program.
- Personally invite principals, school board members, gifted/talented coordinators and state legislators to your meetings on a regular basis. They may also enjoy being invited and coming to the special events you sponsor or co-sponsor. If it's a competition, ask them to be judges and present awards.

How do you prevent membership and leadership "burnout"?

Involve as many members as possible in well-defined jobs. Involve new members immediately by giving them small, specific, but meaningful, tasks.

The group's leaders should not do all the work; think about what would happen if they left the chapter. Assistants or co-leaders should be always in training to take over jobs next year.

Frequent evaluation and assessment of the chapter's functioning will help focus efforts more efficiently. In order to maintain a healthy core group, take time at least annually

with chapter members and ask yourselves what the chapter's goals are for this year. What was accomplished last year? What needs to be done now to plan for next year? Changing any system, particularly in education, takes years and years and there must be ways for members to feel that their efforts are important and make a difference.

(Adapted from an article written by Jeanne Knox and Kay Fecke for the November/December, 1985, *MCGT News*, and from *How to Recognize and Develop the Special Talents in Your Child from Birth to Age Seven*, by Joan Franklin Smutny, Kathleen & Stephen Veenker).

SAMPLE OFFICER JOB DESCRIPTIONS

PRESIDENT: Preside at the chapter's Board and General Membership meetings; coordinate business of the chapter; represent the chapter to the community as situations may require. Receive reports and interface with newsletter editor, program committee and state liaison person (if different). Provide members with an annual report at the May meeting.

VICE-PRESIDENT: Preside in the absence of the President. Possibly designated as President-elect, in training to succeed the current President. Receive reports and interface with committees responsible for program, fund-raising and expenditures. May be responsible for nominations for officers to be elected by the membership at the annual meeting.

SECRETARY: Take notes and record in the Secretary's book all minutes of Board meetings and business meetings of the membership; prepare copies of minutes and agenda and distribute to all Board members at least three days prior to the next Board meeting. Prepare write-up on general membership meetings for inclusion in newsletter. Receive reports and interface with Corresponding Secretary and committees on publicity, legislation, membership and local events.

TREASURER: Record all debits and credits for the chapter in a Treasury book; prepare monthly financial report for the Board and General Meetings. Maintain record of dates when membership dues are due and notify members (if this isn't done by a membership chair); at the present time, dues expire a year after payment. Regularly send new member information, including e-mail addresses, and dues payment to MCGT. Help prepare annual report and send to MCGT by October 1 each year. (MCGT's fiscal year is September 1-August 31; chapters should adopt the same fiscal year time period.) Serve as a member of the chapter's Finance Committee. Receive reports and interface with expenditures, finance and membership committees.

CHAPTER CONTACT TO MCGT: (This can be the president or co-president.) Be in touch with MCGT Membership Chair as the person to contact for your chapter. Attend MCGT chapter contact meetings.

DESCRIPTIONS OF POSSIBLE COMMITTEES

(Listed alphabetically. A chapter may not feel that all of these committees are necessary to start with, or some may be combined, or active only for a short time. Some may be the responsibility of a single person, while others work best with several people. Decide which are the most important to function well; keep others in mind as future possibilities.)

COMMUNICATION: Develop and oversee implementation of a phone or e-mail contact system to get the word out about special meetings of the Board and for General Membership meetings, including invitations to meetings for new people.

CORRESPONDING SECRETARY: Take care of all correspondence for the chapter and maintain copies of all correspondence for chapter files.

EXPENDITURES: Brainstorm and develop for the Board recommendations for expenditure of funds raised by the chapter. Include: advantages (to whom?); disadvantages; impact on existing programs, community, schools, school district, staff, children, etc.; amount required; whether it is "seed" money or expected to be an ongoing expenditure. Be represented on Finance Committee.

FINANCE: Develop a goal-oriented annual budget of income and expenditures and recommend adoption by the Board and the General Membership. Publish the budget so members and potential members know why you need their dues. Monitor implementation at regular intervals during the year. Assist treasurer in preparation of annual report to MCGT.

FUND-RAISING: Brainstorm and develop for the Board recommendations for fund-raising activities, including cost, amount of time and number of people required for planning and implementation, amount expected to be raised, and whether they are reasonable and appropriate projects to be undertaken. If approved by the Board, set up sub-committees, if necessary, to formulate and execute fund-raisers.

Chapters should review their fund-raising plans with MCGT before actually implementing them to be sure there is not overlap that would be confusing to any potential donors. Other kinds of assistance (besides money) can be requested, such as mentors and other volunteers and expertise, supplies, printing, meeting space, etc. Information about MCGT can be provided to chapters to use in their fund-raising efforts.

HOSPITALITY: Assume responsibility for provision of refreshments and clean-up for general meetings and for special meetings, if necessary.

LEGISLATION: Be informed and current as to what is happening on the state and national

levels regarding education for the gifted and talented. Act as the chapter liaison with the MCGT Legislative Chair. Report to the Board and School Board any new or pending legislation that they should be aware of; inform the membership through the newsletter or other means (phone tree or e-mail, for instance) when pending legislation warrants writing letters or making phone calls; make recommendations of actions to the Board.

LOCAL EVENTS : Develop and regularly revise a list of events around the community of interest to chapter parents, teachers and children. Include this list in the chapter newsletter and possibly in school newsletters.

MEMBERSHIP and ROSTER: Provide membership forms and information at each General Membership meeting. Maintain list of members, including name, address, phone numbers, e-mail address; child(ren)'s name(s), school(s), and graduation date(s); date joined, date expires. Develop plans for membership drive and implement after Board approval. Develop a roster of officers, board members, committee chairs and school representatives. Provide school reps (see description below) with list of chapter members with children in their school.

NEWSLETTER: Write and edit articles and incorporate articles received from other sources to formulate a local newsletter to be mailed or emailed on a regular basis to the chapter membership. Permanent inclusions could be notes from last general meeting and/or board meeting; agenda for the next general meeting and/or board meeting; events around town; upcoming events; notices from school board observer, school reps, legislative committee, MCGT, and other committees. A statement of this chapter's affiliation with MCGT should be included, as well as MCGT's mission statement (see page 1 in this handbook). The format may be expanded as needed. Please include the MCGT office on the list of newsletter recipients.

PROGRAMS: Develop program ideas - the speaker's list available from MCGT is one source - and make recommendations to the Board for General Membership meetings for the next year. After approval of the Board, finalize plans with presenters and publicize the programs in the newsletter and other places. After the meeting, please provide feedback to MCGT using the form you'll find on the MCGT website. Also develop and bring to the Board ideas for children's programs for the coming year and implement as approved.

PUBLICITY: Write news releases about General Meetings, chapter activities and special events for chapter newsletter, local newspapers, school newsletters and other media. Develop and implement other publicity such as posters, flyers, brochures, etc. as needed.

SCHOOL BOARD OBSERVER: Attend School Board meetings (or watch on local cable television); report to the Board any items possibly affecting gifted programming or that may have an impact on specific gifted programs. Make recommendations of action to be

taken, if necessary. Through contact with legislative committee, stay informed of any laws affecting the school district.

SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVES: Establish and maintain good rapport with the administration and staff at your school. Distribute brochures, flyers and other materials to your school's gifted/talented coordinator. Be available to answer any questions from parents at your school or refer the questions to others for answers. Be available and cooperative with the staff. Be available to the parents in your school - include your name and phone number in the first school newsletter of the year. Encourage membership in MCGT and participation in both the state and local organizations. Stay informed about what is going on in the school, pros and cons, for discussion with the Board. Be a sounding board for your school, staff, and parents, but do not sound off. Listen to parent and/or staff problems; advise if you feel you are capable, otherwise try to find an answer or refer the person elsewhere. Above all, try to maintain a good relationship with your school.

SCHOOL REP ALTERNATES: Your goals are the same as those for the school rep in your building; however, you will probably have less responsibility for attending meetings at the school and the Board. Use this year as a learning year so that you will be able to fill in as school rep when the necessity arises.

STATE LIAISON: This is probably the same person who is the MCGT Chapter Contact. Stay informed about what's going on with MCGT and report to the Board as necessary. Submit items of interest for the newsletter.

DOCUMENTING MCGT's NON-PROFIT STATUS

MCGT has both federal and state tax exempt ID numbers. The federal number may be used for such things as confirming MCGT's non-profit status when required for opening a non-profit bank account or accepting tax-deductible donations as a non-profit 501(c) (3) organization. The state number can be used to avoid paying of state sales tax on purchases for MCGT or a chapter. Libraries and other locations may require a number to allow reserving of rooms at a reduced rate; they often will take either number.

If a chapter uses either of these ID numbers, it has to be used with the state organization's name, MCGT, not with a chapter's name. This is because the chapters are not separate legal entities.

To obtain MCGT's non-profit ID numbers or a copy of the federal or state form verifying MCGT's non-profit status, contact the MCGT office at *info@mcgt.net*.

**MINNESOTA COUNCIL FOR THE GIFTED AND TALENTED
ANNUAL CHAPTER UPDATE
FOR CHAPTER: _____**

Date: _____

Chapter Address (if you have a P.O. box or other address that is used consistently used for mailings):

School District Number:

School District Name:

Board Members - Please list President, Treasurer, and at least one other board position as a minimum. All Board members must be current MCGT members.

Name: _____ Position: _____

Address (including City/State/Zip):

Phone: (____) _____ E-mail Address: _____

Name: _____ Position: _____

Address (including City/State/Zip):

Phone: (____) _____ E-mail Address: _____

Name: _____ Position: _____

Address (including City/State/Zip):

Phone: (____) _____ E-mail Address: _____

Name: _____ Position: _____

Address (including City/State/Zip):

Phone:(____)_____ E-mail Address:_____

Name:_____ Position:_____

Address (including City/State/Zip):

Phone:(____)_____ E-mail Address:_____

Name:_____ Position:_____

Address (including City/State/Zip):

Phone:(____)_____ E-mail Address:_____

If there are more Board members than spaces above, please attach a separate sheet with the additional Board member's information.

Person to be listed as contact in Outlook newsletter:

E-mail address to receive e-mails sent to chapter's @mcgt.net address:

E-mail address to receive monthly Chapter Member listing:

Person to receive monthly rebate checks from MCGT:

**MINNESOTA COUNCIL FOR THE GIFTED AND TALENTED
ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT
FOR CHAPTER: _____**

Treasurer's Name (print):_____

Accounting Period:

Start date: _____

End date: _____

Balance at Start Date: \$ _____

Amount received during Accounting Period: \$ _____

Total Expenses during Accounting Period: \$ _____

Balance at End Date: \$ _____

Signature of Treasurer: _____ Date: _____

Treasurer's Street Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone Number: (____) _____

E-mail Address: _____

NOTE 1: Annual reports are due to the MCGT Treasurer on October 1st each year for the purpose of filing MCGT's annual return. Because local chapters are affiliated with MCGT, they are not required to, and should not, file annual returns with the IRS.

NOTE 2: If at any time during the accounting period named above, receipts equal or exceed \$5,000, notify the MCGT Treasurer immediately.

**MINNESOTA COUNCIL FOR THE GIFTED AND TALENTED
INCOME AND EXPENSE STATEMENT
FOR CHAPTER: _____**

START DATE: _____

BALANCE AT START DATE: \$ _____

INCOME:

Member Dues Received to Chapter: \$ _____

Member Rebates from MCGT: \$ _____

Fund Raisers: \$ _____

(Attach a list of fundraising activities and income from each.)

Donations: \$ _____

(Attach a list of donors and amounts from each.)

Other Income Sources: \$ _____

(Attach a description of other sources and amounts.)

TOTAL INCOME: \$ _____

EXPENSES:

Member Rebates to MCGT: \$ _____

Copying/Printing: \$ _____

Supplies: \$ _____

Program Expenses, including speaker fees: \$ _____

Children's Programs: \$ _____

Refreshments: \$ _____

Mailing: \$ _____

Mileage: \$ _____

Other Expenses: \$ _____

(Attach a description of other expenses and amounts.)

TOTAL EXPENSES: \$ _____

END DATE:

BALANCE AT END DATE:

\$ _____

**MINNESOTA COUNCIL FOR THE GIFTED AND TALENTED
VOLUNTEER HOURS AND ACTIVITIES
FOR CHAPTER: _____**

1. Estimation of Volunteer Hours over the last two years by Chapters

President:

Vice President:

Secretary:

Chapter Contact:

Treasurer:

Activity Chair:

Newsletter Coordinator:

Speaker Coordinator:

Volunteer Speakers:

Volunteers:

2. Activities offered by MCGT Chapter last two years:

3. Donations toward Community needs in the last two years: (Examples: library books, community activities, donations to schools of tangible items, paying for teacher inservice or educational workshops)

4. Hours spent toward mentoring and volunteer support for student learning: