

**SPAN Meeting – Nov. 27 @ Westwood Media Center
Prior Lake Chapter of MCGT**

Announcements:

MCGT membership is going up in January 2019 (believe it is going to \$35). It has great resources for parents with gifted children. Consider joining this organization.

Coffee Talks: Informal meetings where parents can come and ask questions of others who have gifted children; Wed. (11/28) from 6:30 – 8:30 PM and Thurs. (11/29) from 10 – Noon at Caribou in Prior Lake Lunds.

Main Topic: Asynchrony in Gifted Children

Speaker: Pam McDonald – Retired gifted Coordinator K-12 for school district #196 and now consulting, mostly with school districts - Inver Grove Heights and Burnsville School Districts; also starting to teach at Hamline gifted certification. Contact: pam.b.mcdonald@gmail.com

Asynchrony is something that is prominent in gifted children. It is an uneven pattern of development. It can cause enormous amounts of stress and lead to low self-esteem and depression. Many professionals believe asynchrony is THE defining characteristic of giftedness.

Examples: excellent at reading and average or below in math; precocious ability with puzzles but average verbal skills; significantly advanced intellectual skills and lagging social or motor skills

Gifted children, as a group, are MORE heterogeneous/diverse than average classrooms; vast differences in traits and behaviors of gifted kids. The higher the level of giftedness, the wider the gap in strengths (i.e. more asynchrony). The giftedness asynchrony is often as big as it would be in a special ed classroom. Asynchrony can be labeled as having special ed needs if it isn't identified correctly.

How to help a child with asynchrony:

- Understand that it is common and ACCEPT it
- Connect with other families who also have a child with asynchronous development
- Join a SENG (Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted) group – international parent group of gifted children lead by a trained instructor; small group sessions (see sengifted.org)
- Be an advocate for your child
- Consult a professional who understands gifted children/families; especially when asynchrony is significant (see mcgt.net resources)

Resources Recommended:

[A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children](#) – J Webb, PhD, et all, 2007.

[Guiding the Gifted Child](#) - J Webb, PhD, et all. 1982.

[Living with Intensity](#). S. Daniels, PhD and M Piechowski PhD. 2008

[Understanding Your Gifted Child from the Inside Out](#). J Delisle. 2018.

[Emotional Intensity in Gifted Students](#). C. Fonseca, 2018.

[Smart Girls](#). Barbara Kerr

Q&A:

- **Does the District have plans related to support for gifted education?**

The district has a plan to evaluate the K-12 gifted education program; timing is vague and plan is not solidified.

The elementary resources are very limited - serviced by less than 2 gifted specialists across 7 buildings and each elementary student gets about 1 hour/month. There is 1 middle school specialist for the 2 schools.

- **What is the thought on pulling out gifted vs. keeping them in classrooms?**

There should be options for everyone in the education system: All, Many, Some and Few.

Gifted kids should have time together; they need to see themselves in context with others who are gifted. What they do together is key – working on the social/emotional components and activities should connect back to the classroom.

- **If the asynchrony causes depression, should this ever be treated medically?**

If you see it growing/not decreasing with development (as asynchrony becomes less), you could consider seeking professional help.

- **Ideas on how to motivate gifted students?**

When students are underchallenged for a long period of time, they will eventually come across something that is very difficult for them - two options usually happen: 1). dig in and figure it out or 2). think they are not very smart and give up. This is not a reflection on the parents but that the student hasn't been challenged.

Organized Struggle: It is good to see your gifted child struggle with something so they can understand how to grow and overcome the struggle.

Perfectionism can be debilitating to a gifted child.

- **How would you describe 'asynchrony' to your gifted child?**

A couple of ways: 1). Use yourself as a role model: I can do some things very well and I'm not really good at other things. That can make me sad or make me not want to try sometimes. 2). Age and your experiences are not matching and as you get older and get more experience it will get better.

- **How can you work with your school district to engage them with your gifted student?**

Work with your gifted specialist to help be an advocate. You must continue to be an advocate for your child, in addition to the gifted specialist.

Some school districts are hesitant to work with younger gifted students. Many school districts have qualifiers for gifted programs but it varies as to what age these are given to students and what the qualifier is for each program.

- **How can you advocate with your teacher without turning them off?**

Talk about what you see in your child. Also talk about the areas that need to be improved – what your child can get better at, thus getting more confidence in that area. Ask about what you can do at home with your child. This will show your support and that you are willing to work with your child as well. Stay connected to the teachers in a positive way.

There are lots of resources outside of school that can add enrichment for your student. Look at these for your child to support what happens in school as not everything can happen in school.

- **What can we, as a group, do to get the district to do something to address the needs of the gifted students in our district?**

Reach out to your local principal as a parent voice to let them know what you would like to see. Also reach out to Melissa Knettel (952-226-0075/email on the district gifted website page: <https://www.priorlake-savage.k12.mn.us/academics/advance-and-gifted-education>) to let her know what you would like to see with gifted education. Also go to your newly appointed school board members to let them know what you want to see happen in our district regarding gifted education.

- **What are your thoughts about skipping a grade?**

Academically is generally fine. The emotional maturity can be challenging. Some parents wouldn't recommend more than one year.

When accelerating you will get some things and you will give up some things. – not just that year but as the student moves through school to graduation. It is key to talk to others (teacher, principal, counselor) specifically about your child to gain their perspective. Our district has more subject acceleration than grade skip. Start by talking to your teacher and building principal.

Resources on this topic: [A Nation Deceived](#) and [A Nation Empowered](#) (both from Univ. of Iowa).