

WATG Topics for NAGC 2026 Call for Proposals

The State of Wisconsin has a comprehensive system for serving the needs of gifted and talented students, with state statutes for school districts that stipulate identification, educational planning, curriculum and services, and gifted endorsement training. In addition, as well as magnet programs and specialist district schools, a wide range of high-ability and gifted students form a very diverse population with large percentages of English-Learners and immigrant populations.

In Wisconsin, "Gifted and talented pupils" means pupils enrolled in public schools who give evidence of high-performance capability in intellectual, creative, artistic, leadership, or specific academic areas and who need services or activities not ordinarily provided in a regular school program in order to fully develop such capabilities. (Wisconsin Statutes § 118.35)

To address the current concerns from teachers, district administrators and specialists in gifted education, the following topics would be most relevant to preparing proposals for NAGC 2026.

| Topic | Description/Rationale |
|---|--|
| <i>Identification using universal screeners: pros and cons</i> | In the state of Wisconsin each school district has the autonomy to choose a screener to identify students for gifted services. Thus, not all school districts use universal screeners for giftedness that are culturally sensitive to the linguistically and ethnically diverse students that exist in public schools. |
| <i>Social-Emotional Learning</i> | Explore the critical role that social-emotional learning (SEL) plays in programming for gifted students. Topics could include strategies for developing self-awareness, emotional regulation, and interpersonal skills that align with the unique needs of gifted learners. |
| <i>Advocacy and accountability</i> | How do various states make sure that appropriate programming actually happens? What typical state laws support appropriate challenges, and what state laws (like WI Act 20 from 2023) might serve as barriers to advanced learners and gifted education? |
| <i>Parent & School Partnerships</i> | How to honor both educator expertise and parental intuition when planning for gifted learners. Are there case studies of parent groups influencing district policies, funding, or identification practices? Do other countries do this well? Are any states great examples of this? |
| <i>Training Educators</i> | What are the upsides of getting more training in gifted education to the school staff at every school and the preservice teachers in our colleges/universities? What is best practice in professional development? Where do we get funding for this for current staff? How do we plan for this in a system that prioritizes curricular development and standardized testing? |
| <i>Identification</i> | Identification of gifted students is only the first step in gifted education. How are we providing professional development for our general ed & gifted ed teachers, counselors, psychologists and support staff? How do we continue to identify if we can't consistently respond to their needs? |
| <i>Sustainability & Business Strategy for Gifted Programs</i> | How to build the "business case," achieve buy-in, defend gifted programs in lean environments. Some ideas in this space: "how to deliver gifted services when you have one coordinator, 600 students, and no extra budget" or "how to use shared services across districts" or "how to use online/virtual acceleration to level the playing field in rural settings". |

| | |
|--|--|
| <i>Return on Investments: Longitudinal Studies on the efficacy of gifted ed services</i> | Less about what we do and more about what the results show over the past 5-10 years. There should be an emphasis on data, longitudinal outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and convincing administrators and boards that gifted services are not optional extras but essential investment. |
| <i>Student Innovation Showcase</i> | Students present mini-projects (visual design, architecture, robotics, music) and rotate through the exhibit hall, inviting educators to see “what gifted students are doing right now.” Partner with enrichment providers such as Destination Imagination, Mathnasium, MYSO, Discovery World, MSOE, YMCA, etc to bring these students and their projects to the conference. |
| <i>Differentiation in the Tier 1 Classroom</i> | Most teachers are not trained on how to differentiate for advanced learners. Logistically how do educators differentiate effectively? In our state most resources/training goes towards students who are below grade level. What are some practical ways/strategies to differentiate in a general education classroom for someone who is a novice? |
| <i>Importance of Instructional Coaching in Gifted Education</i> | Instructional coaching in gifted education is essential for building teachers’ capacity to differentiate instruction and nurture advanced learners’ unique needs. Coaches provide ongoing, job-embedded professional learning that bridges theory and classroom practice, helping educators implement strategies that challenge and support diverse gifted students. |
| <i>Gifted Education is an Equity Issue</i> | Gifted education is fundamentally an equity issue because access to advanced learning opportunities remains uneven across race, culture, language, and income levels. When identification and services fail to reflect the full diversity of student potential, systemic bias perpetuates underrepresentation and limits opportunities. |
| <i>Talent Development Model</i> | How can the Talent Development Model of Gifted Education help support high ability learners within the school setting? Some districts have gone away from identification and targeted programming options to a more wide based approach. |
| <i>Mentors: Finding and Pairing Community Members with Gifted Children</i> | Pairing students with mentors who share a common interest/passion can be a great way to foster support and growth in our learners. How do districts go about matching people up? Is there an application process? |
| <i>Evaluating and Revitalizing Gifted Programming in Schools and Districts</i> | Many districts have outdated gifted “programs” and are looking to revitalize or recreate modern models of programming. What does the research say? How can we balance equity and excellence? How do we move toward a talent development model that honors the needs of diverse populations? |
| <i>Working with Parents and Caregivers of Gifted Children and Adolescents (</i> | In many gifted programming models, parents/grandparents and other caregivers feel alone in meeting the academic and social/emotional needs of their children and adolescents. How do we best support them - in a school setting, a community setting, or as an organization? |
| <i>A Gifted Education Primer for Administrators</i> | Many school districts lack adequate gifted programming and support for gifted learners and their teachers; often this is due to inadequate knowledge and training about gifted education issues for their administrators. |
| <i>Educating the Support Staff - counselors and school psychologists</i> | When prospecting for talent in a school, all staff are important “talent scouts”. Yet, many school personnel, especially school counselors and school psychologists, who often are called upon to assist gifted learners, have little training in identifying and supporting this population. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Differentiation in the classroom-supporting Regular education teachers | Though there is much talk about differentiating education for gifted learners, classroom teachers sometimes/often lack the will and the skill. How do we build both? Practical, doable strategies are a must, with time for practice, implementation, and follow up with a coach. |
| Coaching as the Third Side of Sustainable Gifted Services. | If academic supports and social emotional supports are two sides of the triangle of support for gifted learners, coaching is the final support that stabilizes the triangle. Without coaching support, regular education teachers may not have the tools necessary to educate and challenge gifted students sufficiently. |
| Wisconsin's Act 20 and Gifted Readers | Research and rationale on best practices for gifted readers ~ how can their needs be met in the classroom? |
| Gifted Support in rural communities | What can it look like in our smaller schools with fewer children? |
| Gifted Grows Up | What does it look like to be a gifted adult outside of school? How can we support gifted adults in our communities? How can our communities' gifted adults support our gifted programming within our schools? |
| Unique psychological traits and intensities of the gifted | Helping students manage their heightened sensitivity, which can be a trademark of giftedness and manifest as strong reactions to emotional or social situations. |
| Giftedness in linguistically diverse learners | Identifying and nurturing giftedness in ELs, who may not be immediately obvious due to language proficiency challenges. |
| Giftedness in 2e and 3e learners | Addressing the unique needs of gifted students with disabilities, such as learning disabilities, ADHD who are multiple intersectionalities such as race, SES, sexuality, etc. |
| Building Gifted Capacity Through Instructional Coaching | With many Wisconsin districts operating on lean budgets and shared roles, instructional coaching offers a sustainable way to strengthen differentiation and gifted pedagogy in the Tier 1 classroom. |
| Creative Depth for Every District: Practical Project-Based Learning Models that Work in Wisconsin | Many Wisconsin districts lack full-time GT coordinators, yet teachers still need ways to challenge advanced learners. Project-based approaches that promote rigor, creativity, and community partnerships can be key and are adaptable for small, rural, or budget-constrained schools. |
| Micro-Learning for Macro-Impact: Professional Development That Actually Sticks | Wisconsin educators report limited time and funding for PD. Micro-learning models for gifted education can be helpful -short, practical training bursts and coaching cycles that build sustainable teacher growth. |
| Accountability: Ensuring Gifted Students Receive Real Services | How can we ensure that gifted students actually receive the services they are promised? In many schools, gifted programming exists in name only — with few structures for oversight or follow-through. |
| Elevating Student Engagement through High Impact Instructional Strategies | Discover practical, research-based strategies to boost engagement and critical thinking in gifted learners. Leave with hands-on tools to foster deeper participation and meaningful classroom experiences that will push our advanced learners to think...and think again! |