



2026 NAGC Leadership Nomination Form

Nominee Information

Name Jessica LaFollette Photo

Credentials PhD

Organization Piper USD 203

Job Title Gifted Specialist

This nomination is for the Board of Directors

Which board position is this nomination for? Network Representative



Biography: Please share a biography that provides NAGC members information regarding your background, experience, and qualifications for the position. Be sure to include the most significant ways you have contributed to and participated in NAGC.

Jessica LaFollette currently serves as the Interim Parent representative on NAGC's Board of Directors. She has been teaching gifted students at Piper Middle School in Kansas City for over twenty years and is co-chair of the special education department. Dr. LaFollette is also an adjunct professor at the University of Missouri where she earned her PhD and currently instructs online graduate courses in gifted education. She is co-author of the LEAP Guidebook for Differentiating Instruction and the book, *Magic in the Middle: Hands on Challenges that Create Joy for Gifted Middle School Students*. Dr. LaFollette is a Past President of the Kansas Association for the Gifted, Talented and Creative and past Chair of NAGC's Parent, Family and Community Network. When she is not teaching, she enjoys puzzles, reading, baking, and traveling with her husband and four children.

Personal Statement: Please share a personal statement explaining why you want to serve on the NAGC board, an organization whose mission is to empower all who support children with advanced abilities in accessing equitable opportunities that develop their gifts and talents.

When I first attended the NAGC convention in 2014, I felt inspired by the passion and voices of leaders advocating for equity and meaningful learning for gifted students from all backgrounds. I wanted to be part of that work and took every opportunity to become more involved. My first official NAGC service was on the Parent Editorial Advisory committee where we supported families through the difficult years of the pandemic. Chairing the Parent, Family and Community network brought the challenge of planning Parent Days at the convention and developing meaningful free content for families who could not afford to attend the convention. When I stepped into a position on the convention committee, I shifted gears to champion the needs of K12 educators, especially those attending NAGC's biggest event for the first time. It was such a privilege to work with the NAGC staff and other volunteers to plan our new lesson round-table sessions, the first Teachers Summit, and co-author a LEAP guidebook. If elected as network representative to the board, I will utilize my experience as a teacher, parent, and innovative leader to sustain the important work

of all NAGC networks who bring meaningful content and connection to our members.

Board Service Questions

The following questions are designed to help both you and voting members better understand your qualifications and approach to board service.

What do you believe is the most important work of the NAGC Board of Directors?

The NAGC Board of Directors is responsible for overseeing the strategic, financial, and professional integrity of the entire association. Their most important work is to collaborate with the NAGC staff to accomplish each of the goals outlined in the strategic plan, while carefully guiding the association through the challenges of the nonprofit landscape. This means that board members must communicate frequently and clearly with staff and each other as well as committees, networks, and all association members. Sometimes the board must make difficult decisions and ultimately take responsibility for the overall health of the organization. Communication supports the high level of understanding required for board members to be prepared, present, and professional when making decisions that benefit the membership and achieve NAGC's ambitious goals.

Review the Board Competencies & Dispositions. We strive to have all competencies and dispositions represented in the combined Board of Directors. Which competencies and dispositions can you bring to the NAGC Board of Directors?

As a leader, I thrive on creative team-based problem solving with other intelligent and committed individuals. Over many years participating in gifted education programming as a student, educator and parent, I found these opportunities bring me joy, energy and fulfillment. As a member of the Board of Directors, I will bring my skills in analysis, communication, adaptability and collegiality to help our team collaboratively solve the many challenges facing a nonprofit education organization during difficult political times. I believe the best way to address complex problems is by listening closely to diverse perspectives from all sides of an issue before evaluating potential solutions. I can also contribute meaningfully to discussions about advanced learners with over twenty-five years of experience teaching and parenting gifted children. Finally, I am deeply committed to advancing opportunities for bright children to receive appropriately challenging learning opportunities and will pursue this mission consistently and creatively.

What leadership positions have you held in the association and the field? How has your service demonstrated your support and commitment to its mission and values?

I have served in multiple leadership positions in my state gifted affiliate including President, Secretary, and Professional Learning Chair. My first official NAGC service was on the Parent Editorial Advisory Committee where we supported families through the difficult years of the pandemic. Chairing the Parent, Family and Community Network brought the challenge of planning Parent Days at the convention and developing meaningful free content for families at home. On the convention committee, I championed the needs of K12 educators, especially those attending NAGC's biggest event for the first time. It was such a privilege to work with NAGC staff and other volunteers to plan our new lesson round-table sessions, the first Teachers Summit, and co-author a LEAP guidebook. Recently, as interim parent representative to the board, my NAGC responsibilities have grown, but so has my dedication to the depth and breadth of all the work this organization accomplishes each year.

Using NAGC's Strategic Plan as a reference, describe how your experiences and background will help the board advance the plan. What aspects of the plan do you think are most impactful for NAGC members?

The NAGC strategic plan set ambitious goals for the organization four years ago and I am excited for the opportunity to update and continue this important work into the future. Though I wear many hats within the field, my primary role as a K12 teacher will bring a fresh and important perspective to advancing each of the objectives in the strategic plan. Like a majority of our members, I trust NAGC to be a center of expertise that can guide my practice and advocacy based on the most current research, especially in equitable identification and service models. The impactful community of incredible teachers connected by NAGC is what has motivated my attendance at the convention and I want to plan for all educators to have the best possible experience during and beyond the annual gathering. The board should help all teachers

continue to trust NAGC into the future.

Using NAGC's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy as a reference, describe how it will help you understand and work effectively with those who are different from you in their thoughts, values, and backgrounds.

One of the primary reasons I became more involved with NAGC is because the organization is now focused on addressing the equity gaps that have plagued the field of gifted education for generations. The current DEI policy compliments NAGC's mission to empower "all who support children with advanced abilities in accessing equitable opportunities". In order to achieve this mission, the perspectives of all stakeholders must be voiced and considered every time. When the board is facing difficult decisions, it would be an honor to listen carefully to others with different backgrounds than my own, then work together to find common ground and potential solutions that continue to achieve this mission. Only then can we truly build a stronger future for the entire field and all the children we serve.

What do you believe the organization's role and success in advancing the mission is now? What opportunities do we have to increase value to members in the future?

I believe that NAGC is very successfully advancing its mission to empower all who support children with advanced abilities, especially with regard to preserving its role as a center for expertise and creating a community of educators focused on research-based practice. However, I also believe that many teachers and families may be missing from this community due to systemic financial barriers or lack of awareness. NAGC could also more successfully accomplish its advocacy goals with a stronger and more diverse base of educator and parent membership. Recently NAGC has increased opportunities for engaging through new events and resources. My favorites are the Teachers Summit, Opportunity and Access Symposium, LEAP professional learning, and the whole slate of free or low-cost network webinars that keep people learning with and through NAGC beyond the convention. Growing and sharing these new platforms will increase the value of membership and the efficacy of our advocacy.