

**Keller Citizen**  
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# **Support group unites parents of gifted children**

**By SANDRA ENGELLAND**

Parents Advocating for Gifted Education is a new group to help Keller ISD families who face the unique challenges of raising gifted children.

PAGE began meeting in September and has already hosted several programs and conducted an online survey. The group currently has about 140 members and is open to interested Keller ISD parents.

“Our goal is to be a parent advocacy group,” said Ellen Borish, PAGE president.

A lot of people think of gifted children as simply very smart kids, but they’re more complicated than that, Borish said.

Sometimes children who are identified as gifted act out in the classroom because they are bored. They may underachieve to avoid failure or place a lot of pressure on themselves to be perfect.

“Parents want to know, ‘How do I motivate my kid?’ ” Borish said. “We lose a lot of kids who don’t want the pressure. They don’t want to be set apart or ridiculed.”

Pam Cooper, KISD coordinator for advanced academics, helped the group get started because she saw the need for parents to understand their gifted children and to provide information and support to one another.

Some children are extremely gifted in certain areas and more on grade-level in others. A parent may wonder why a student needs little help in math but struggles in reading comprehension, Cooper said. When parents understand that such strengths and weaknesses are common in gifted students, some of the pressure is alleviated.

Len Avecilla, intermediate school coordinator for PAGE and the creator of the group’s parent survey, said that parents were very interested in how to address the social and emotional needs of their gifted children.

“The key question is what can we do to make sure they realize their full potential,” Avecilla said. “I don’t know if we’ll ever see them realize their full potential if they don’t know how to handle the social and emotional challenges.”

Avecilla has four kids. The oldest is in graduate school at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the youngest is in intermediate school. Borish is the mother of seven, ages 7 to 25. One of her older sons dropped out of the 11th grade because he was bored. Another child places pressure on herself to get top grades.

Borish said, "I just want every child to have great opportunities and not give up."

Sometimes gifted children need to understand why grades are important to achieving their goals and "work it backwards," she said. If your eighth-grader wants to be a veterinarian, he needs to know that grades in science and other classes are important to get him into college.

The group is looking at enrichment opportunities that would be open to all interested students. Borish said that the district is not currently doing Destination Imagination, but PAGE is encouraging officials to resume the program. D.I. encourages creative thinking, teamwork and problem-solving.

Members are also looking into the International Baccalaureate program and what its implementation would involve. They hope to report those findings to district officials, Borish said.

PAGE wants to work with KISD administrators to improve gifted education.

Avecilla said, "As a district, we can excel and be creative and innovative in getting these kids ready for the world."

They are considering starting campus groups for parents and others for older students. While K-6 gifted children have many opportunities to interact in GT programs, secondary students do not get the dedicated support. Instead, they are encouraged to enroll in Pre-AP and AP courses.

PAGE also informs members about current opportunities for students such as UIL Academics, Academic Decathlon and Camp Invention.

Cooper said that the Keller group has impressed leaders in the Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented.

"Someone at the state level has said that they've already accomplished in a short time what other groups take three or four years to do," she said. "I can't say enough good things about this group."

For information on PAGE, go to [www.kisdpage.com](http://www.kisdpage.com).