APRIL WELLS is an educational consultant, conference presenter, and author. She is the Gifted Coordinator in Illinois School District U-46, where she facilitated the redesign of the District’s gifted programming. April serves on the Board of Directors for the National Association for Gifted Children. She is a member of the inaugural Thomas B. Fordham Institute Working Group on Advanced Education. Her work has served as inspiration for other organizations highlighting universal screening, talent development and the use of local norms for gifted programming. She has presented extensively at conferences. Her interests focus on equity pedagogy, underrepresented learners, developing gifted continuum of services and providing instructional supports that allow students to maximize their pursuits. She received one of the 2018 Gifted Coordinator Awards from the National Association for Gifted Children. Her first book, Achieving Equity in Gifted Programming: Dismantling Barriers and Tapping Potential was published in January 2020.

Personal Statement

My desire to serve students, widening access and dismantling barriers, compels me to serve and connect perspectives as we advocate for the timely and timeless supports that honor the identities and trajectories of gifted learners. Leveraging my leadership in the area of providing opportunities for children with potential for advanced learning and achievement, particularly for children who have historically been underserved, I endeavor bridging experiences and highlighting the ways in which we can shift our focus to embrace a more responsive approach to gifted programming that is inclusive and honors the diversity of gifted learners from all backgrounds. My commitment to seeking out opportunities for all children, my knowledge of the research on best practices and ability to bridge scholar ship and practice, my ability to lead others towards substantial change and my willingness to collaborate with others situate me in a way that honors the direction of the field while embodying a restorative approach for previous mishandling of students from underrepresented populations. Coupling the efforts at the systems level with the essential partnership of family and community, I envision shaping innovative mindsets that foster experiences for us to honor the brilliance and strengths of our nation’s beautiful thinkers.
A. How would your knowledge, experience, abilities, and vision contribute to increasing the public’s urgency to support the needs of gifted and talented children and youth?

My leadership is grounded in explicit attention to equity and to increasing access for gifted students. My messaging pushes on boundaries that should not exist in our thinking and in the way that our school systems are set-up. I use my leadership space that I have to advocate the way that things should work for all children. The more space I have, the closer I can aid moving organizations and individuals to delivering on the promise of better school environments for gifted learners.

B. How would your knowledge, experience, abilities, and vision contribute to advocating for the adoption of policies that promote programs and services in which gifted and talented children and youth will thrive?

The systemic focus of my efforts to strengthen gifted programming is critical in the adoption of policies that promote programs and services in which gifted and talented children and you will thrive. In building coalition and convening teams around the development of policies, I am adept at guiding cross-functional teams through a standards-based process in a thoughtful and reflective manner. By beginning with NAGC’s vision/mission to generate shared understanding of what we are setting out to accomplish and by using a methodology to guide this process, we will honor the need to be strategic and collaborative in shaping the future of our delivery of gifted education.

C. How would your knowledge, experience, abilities, and vision contribute to empowering supporters to implement effective practices for all gifted and talented children and youth in homes, schools, and communities?

My instructional vision as an educator is one of my more notable skills in implementing effective practices for all gifted and talented children. Coupling my instructional vision with innovative mindset, my ability to advocate and innovate to build partnerships and community within gifted allows me to manage with diligence and dedication. Having proximity to students as a practitioner provides insight to connect experiences that allow us to serve gifted learners in response to their needs and strengths.