

September 10, 2013

President Trehar and members of the Board, good afternoon. My name is Karen Rumley and I thank you for the opportunity to join these other voices of concern about the overhaul of the Gifted Operating Standards. I am a consultant in gifted education, serve as a district gifted coordinator, am the president-Elect of the Ohio Association for Gifted Children, and a member of the Gifted Advisory Council. As an advocate for gifted children, I strongly oppose a great number of the changes that were made to the draft following the last Gifted Advisory Council session.

The Council process was open and collaborative by which we brought in research, experience, and feedback from practitioners and parents across the state. With the leadership of Ohio Department of Education personnel the Council made several recommendations to enhance the education of our gifted students and to strengthen district accountability to provide such.

At our last meeting, what we saw in the final draft was not only the disregard and undoing of the work this year's Council had done, but the dismantling of almost every aspect of the operating standards that provide for and protect these exceptional learners with high ability, high capacity, and learning needs that are difficult to impossible to meet in a regular classroom.

For example, as the Council explored ways to modify caseload restrictions and contact time requirements to allow flexibility for district service models, the final language eliminated virtually ALL these parameters; the destruction to service was then exacerbated by limiting the need for qualified (read: trained) gifted intervention specialists from service settings. The purpose in past Rules of linking service to student instruction by a gifted intervention specialist is inherent in the title of the credential- these are professionals who have specialized coursework and training to understand the unique cognitive and academic needs of our gifted population and how to meet those challenging needs. It should be noted that next to no attention to gifted education is given in typical pre-service or graduate educational coursework, thus these are often the only personnel in their schools who have any training at all in this field, so it is egregious to assume that the job can be done well by just anyone. The deletions of service parameters essentially relegate what was once meaningful, targeted intervention for highly diverse learners into a label to slap onto anything, such as a 15 minutes per week puzzle club or a general classroom with no differentiation for gifted learners. Districts

can get PR credit by 'serving' everybody, but the service means nothing, and can provide no basis for measuring effects on student achievement, growth, or the affective elements of appropriate gifted services.

It is my great fear that significant program elements will be dismantled in the absence of defined service parameters, such as the critically important cognitive services which are often the oases for exceptional children who require learning experiences with other highly able students as peers to even function in a typical school. While I appreciate the desire to increase flexibility in service provisions, please understand that the past few years of districts slashing gifted services have already made it clear that truly providing for their gifted students are not high on their priority lists.

In the process of establishing that trained specialists are apparently unnecessary for understanding and meeting the needs of our gifted, every meaningful criterion was removed from the coordinator credentials. Coordinators are the primary source of professional development and support for teachers and administrators in curriculum, instruction, and assessment appropriate for our gifted learners, a difficult task without any actual training in the field. In essence, removing the necessity for ANY training or teaching experience allows a general education teacher, a parent, a community member, a study hall monitor, or anyone else to manage the identification and service of an entire subgroup of students. I cannot imagine that any other program for diverse learners would be treated so casually.

With this in mind, with the loss of accountability to spend state gifted funds on gifted students, personnel, or services, it seems a win-win for districts: they can collect money without having to adequately serve a single child. How is this good for our kids? Even in districts that would typically support gifted programming, these funds will be diverted to other areas with greater accountability.

I appreciate your time and the difficult position in which this situation puts us all. It is my hope that you have begun to understand the drastic ramifications the draft standards, as they were last presented, will have on our gifted students and the ability for their unique needs to be met in their public education classrooms. WE ask that you reinstate service parameters and personnel criteria in accordance with the language of the Operating Standards draft that was created at the conclusion of the Council's last working meeting. Thank you for your time.