

THE HISTORY OF THE OHIO ASSOCIATION FOR GIFTED CHILDREN

1952–2012—60 YEARS OF SERVICE

THE BEGINNING: THE 1950S AND 1960S

FOUNDED on April 8, 1952, the Ohio Association for Gifted Children (OAGC) was established even before the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC). Ohio has a rich history in gifted education. Home of the first gifted education program in the country (Cleveland's Major Works Program), Ohio has often served as a model for other states throughout the years. Although other states have now gained ground on Ohio, especially in the area of mandated services, the state is still a leader in state-level advocacy and public policy development.

The OAGC was formed as the result of efforts spearheaded by Dr. Edna Oswalt, director of the Department of Special Education at Kent State University. Dr. Oswalt sponsored a series of workshops in public schools, and committees of interested educators met under her direction to plan a state-level organization. These educators formulated the first constitution, realizing that individual schools could not adequately meet the problems of educating the gifted without assistance from other sources. Ohio became the second state to have a statewide organization, Pennsylvania being the first. Earl S. Kerr of Salem, Ohio, was elected as the OAGC's first president, holding that office until 1956.

The Ohio Association for Gifted Children held twice-yearly meetings in various parts of the state. Informational literature was distributed at all meetings. Themes for the meetings were problems of identification of gifted children, teaching strategies, curriculum enrichment, advanced placement, counseling, and guidance. Demonstration classes, discussion groups, panels, debates and seminars reinforced the themes of the meetings and served as inservice training.

In December 1951, the Delegate Assembly of the Ohio Education Association passed several recommendations to be sponsored for legislative action by that organization. Two of the recommendations were:

- Support legislation whereby school systems which desire to form classes for the mentally superior be subsidized in an amount comparable to that provided for other special classes.
- Encourage the State Department of Education to provide in the Division of Special Education consultant and supervisory assistance for testing and guidance programs to meet the needs of mentally superior children.

An important purpose of the Ohio Association for Gifted Children was support for this legislation: In each biennium there was a need to present the recommendation again. As teachers, administrators, and parents demanded more aid from the State Department of Education, the Division of Special Education began to lend its support.

Finally, in 1957, through the efforts of the Ohio Association for Gifted Children, the State Board of Education recommended in its annual report to the legislature: "Amend the Foundation Program Law to make provision for special classes for gifted children in the public schools." The State Department and the Ohio Education Association drafted a bill in 1957 to make state aid to the gifted part of the Foundation Law.

The Ohio Association for Gifted Children continued to solicit support, but it was July 1959 when HB 754 finally passed the legislature. This provided that the State Board of Education "employ competent persons to analyze and publish data, promote research, advice and counsel with boards of education and encourage the training of teachers in the special instruction of gifted children." The appropriation was \$110,000 for the first year and \$140,000 for the second year. Dr. John Slaymaker of Wittenberg College and vice-president of the OAGC was appointed part-time consultant.

THE 1970S

It became apparent that there was a need to expand the membership in the OAGC, and Mrs. Ruth Olson chaired a committee to include parents and other interested persons in the organization. Strong action by lay members gave impetus to the legislative action of the organization. At the same time, the continual problem of securing legislation demonstrated the need for organized support. Dr. Charles Jordan, chair for the affiliates, encouraged groups to join the OAGC in order to strengthen their mutual efforts. Dr. Walter T. Olson, chairman of the Legislative Committee, testified before the General Subcommittee on Education in the House of Representatives in Washington in 1959 and again in 1972. On August 21, 1974, the educational amendment concerning the gifted became Public Law 93-380, Section 404. This was the first major independent program for the gifted enacted by the federal government.

1975 was a very fruitful year for the OAGC. The organization received IRS approval for nonprofit status and also became incorporated by the state of Ohio. Members testified before the Appropriations Committee of the Ohio legislature. The legislature passed an allocation (SB 170) of \$98,000 for one year for gifted education. A full-time consultant, George Fichter, was appointed. In 1976, the Martin Essex School program was established for gifted high school students entering their senior year.

The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Meeting of the Ohio Association for Gifted Children was held at Kent State University on April 22 and 23, 1977. The program was planned by Dr. Will Simmons, coordinator of gifted education programs for Kent State University.

In 1977, Mrs. Janice Williams spoke to the Finance Committees of both the House and the Ohio Senate requesting increased funding for gifted education programs in Ohio. Concurrently, a letter writing campaign by OAGC members was launched to support her testimony. The result was an appropriation by the Ohio General Assembly of \$300,000 for each year of the 1977–1979 biennium.

In the late seventies, the executive committee of the OAGC promoted a policy of moving the meetings on a rotation basis throughout the entire state of Ohio in order to encourage more educators and parents to become involved. District representatives were appointed to further encourage membership throughout the state. The impact of this decision can be seen in the \$4.6 million appropriation for gifted education made by the Ohio General Assembly for the 1979–1981 biennium.

THE 1980s

In 1980, the OAGC received a group exemption standing from IRS, recognizing the subordinate organizations under the auspices of the OAGC. A contest was held for a logo to be used by the OAGC, and the winner was announced at the spring conference.

Coincidentally, on February 10, 1981, David Abbott, assistant superintendent of Maumee City Schools, and Rita Price, supervisor of the gifted and talented program of Sandusky City Schools, coordinated efforts to form the Consortium of Ohio Coordinators for the Gifted (COCG). In May 1981, officers were nominated to the newly formed consortium, and the first meeting of the executive board was held the following July. The COCG was the first such organization in the United States.

The COCG held its first seminar on October 3, 1981, in Columbus, hosting 75 members and guests at sessions on curriculum and program evaluation. The second seminar was held in conjunction with the OAGC on February 25, 1982, in Columbus, with sessions on thinking skills training, program evaluation, and the Midwest Talent Search.

In 1982, at the request of the president of the OAGC, the governor of Ohio and the secretary of state proclaimed February 22–28, 1982, as Gifted and Talented Children Week to coincide with the OAGC conference held in Columbus that week.

Later in 1982, the OAGC newsletter was renamed the *OAGC Review* and given a distinctive format. The first certificates of recognition were awarded to outstanding contributors to the education of gifted children at the 1983 OAGC conference held in Toledo, and the first student scholarships were awarded in 1984 at the OAGC conference held in Cincinnati. In 1983, the first open meetings of the executive committee were held, and a communication network was established to facilitate rapid transmission of urgent information about pending legislation. This system was put in place to function mainly during budget hearings, when letter writing

campaigns needed to be launched quickly. Committees were formed in 1983 to collect material for the OAGC handbook, *Perspectives: Educating the Gifted Child*.

Funding for gifted education continued to improve. The appropriation made by the Ohio General Assembly for 1981–1982 was \$3.26 million; for 1982–1983, \$4.25 million; and for 1983–1985, \$5.4 million. In addition, several major policy changes were made in the 1980s. In 1984, the State Board of Education adopted rules for school foundation units for gifted children. In 1986, the Ohio Department of Education established Summer Honors Institutes. In 1987, Ohio enacted legislation requiring that all gifted children be identified. Finally in 1989, under Senate Bill 140, the Post-Secondary Enrollment Options program (PSEO) was established, allowing high school students in 11th and 12th grades to access university courses.

THE 1990s

The 1990s were an active time for the OAGC, in terms of both advocacy and organizational growth. In March 1990, the Ohio superintendent of public instruction created a task force to develop a strategic plan for gifted students. Also in this decade, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled in the *DeRolph* decision that Ohio's education funding system was unconstitutional. As a result, gifted funding received a big boost in 1995. On November 3, 1998, the OAGC filed the first of three amicus briefs on behalf of gifted children in the *DeRolph* funding lawsuit. A second amicus brief was filed on September 1, 1999. The Ohio General Assembly passed several pivotal pieces of legislation, including House Bill 650, House Bill 770, and finally HB 282, which overhauled gifted education identification and service mandates, and for the first time provided funding specifically for gifted identification (\$5 million). The OAGC, as part of funding discussions, also produced two gifted education cost studies. The first was developed in 1999. In 1997, the OAGC was successful in expanding the PSEO program to students in the 9th and 10th grades.

The OAGC, trailblazing once again, was one of the first statewide organizations in the country (if not the very first) to use the Internet to organize grassroots gifted education advocacy. In 1994, through the leadership of Dr. Raymond Swassing, the Ohiogift listserv was developed, a general advocacy and support e-mail group that continues to be a vibrant source of news for gifted education advocates. The OAGC became known in the 1990s both statewide and nationally as a strong advocacy voice for gifted students.

THE 2000s

The 2000s were a period of dramatic change for the OAGC and for gifted policy in the state of Ohio. In 2001, the organization moved forward with plans to hire its first executive

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director, Ann Sheldon. Two years later, the OAGC moved into its office in Gahanna, Ohio. The organization also established Columbus as the city for all professional development events. The organization continued to emphasize grassroots advocacy by expanding its Web site and online presence with gifted advocates from across the state. In 2001, the OAGC also filed a third and final amicus brief in the *DeRolph* funding lawsuit and conducted a second cost study.

During the 2000s, the OAGC underwent a major reorganization. For several years, the COCG and the OAGC had considered joining forces. In the fall of 2002, Lynn Proegler, then COCG president, and CeAnnChalker, then OAGC president, brought this subject to the agendas of both organizations. It was obvious that the organizations had much in common and that their goals were very much the same: to support and promote gifted education in Ohio. Their memberships overlapped. Many of the same people held board and committee positions for both organizations. Although only coordinators were members of the COCG, virtually all COCG members were also OAGC members. Effort was being duplicated, and many felt that the organizations could be more efficient and effective by working as one entity. Using the NAGC as a model, the OAGC and the COCG combined so that the OAGC would be the major organization, with divisions for various constituencies. Those with a specific interest in coordinator issues would belong to the Coordinator Division of the OAGC. The board of the COCG sent a questionnaire to all members of the organization to get feedback. The vast majority of votes were in favor of the unification, with fewer than 20 opposed. A committee composed of representatives from both groups was formed to work out details. The unification was presented to the COCG membership, a vote was taken, and the COCG membership voted overwhelmingly to merge with the OAGC.

Until 2004, the OAGC had a single governing board. In that year, the OAGC was reorganized to better meet the needs of its diverse membership. The OAGC continues to operate on a divisional basis with a governing board serving as the umbrella structure to guide divisions and to ensure that all division products, services, and communications support the overall mission of the organization.

The OAGC expanded its publications and Web site capacity during the 2000s. With the advent of the highly successful OAGC parent handbook, *What to Expect When You're Raising a Gifted Child*, in the early 2000s, the OAGC began to publish other useful guides, including the OAGC teacher handbook, *What to Expect When You're Teaching a Gifted Child*, in 2003, and the OAGC coordinator handbook, *What to Expect When You're Coordinating Gifted Services*, in November 2009. In addition, the OAGC greatly expanded the *OAGC Review* and began to publish the *OAGC Summer*

Journal of more scholarly works in 2010. An early adopter of Web-based resources, the OAGC reconstructed its Web site twice in this decade. In addition, the OAGC became a leader in offering professional development opportunities, greatly expanding the Annual Fall Conference and adding the Spring Teacher Academy as well as the Coordinator Division Winter Workshops.

In addition to organizational changes, gifted education policy changed substantially in the 2000s. Based on legislation (House Bill 282) passed in 1999, the State Board of Education adopted a new administrative code to implement several changes, including the requirement that all gifted students being served be required to have a written education plan (WEP). The OAGC conducted several studies in this decade, including an update to the cost study initially produced in 1999, a study on written education plans (2005), and another on acceleration (2009). The OAGC was active in obtaining other legislative gains, including HB 364 in 2002, which allowed for the establishment of gifted community schools; SB 3 in 2004, which directed the Educator Standards Board to develop standards that would require general educators to have sufficient knowledge of gifted students; SB 311 in 2006, which established the credit flexibility option; and HB 79 in 2007, which called for all districts to establish acceleration policies.

The State Board of Education was also active in the 2000s. The state superintendent of public instruction convened a task force to update a gifted education long-range plan, which was adopted in 2003. In 2008, new gifted operating standards were approved by the State Board of Education. The recession that began in 2008 resulted in major changes to all of education funding, and gifted education was no exception. Funding was fairly stable throughout the decade until 2009, when the system of foundation gifted units was changed to a completely different system under a short-lived Ohio Evidence-Based Model (OEBM) formula under House Bill 1. Funding for the Summer Honors Institutes and Martin Essex program was eliminated. Two members of the gifted education staff in the Ohio Department of Education left the department in 2009 and were never replaced. House Bill 1 also called for the Ohio Department of Education to develop a gifted performance indicator. The OAGC was highly involved in the process of informing the legislature about gifted funding and continued that involvement with the Ohio School Funding Advisory Council established under House Bill 1 and subsequently dismantled in 2010.

THE 2010S

While the decade is fairly new, the stability of gifted education funding has been rocked to the core, with gifted districts seeing three different funding systems for gifted education between 2009 and 2011. Before the OEBM sys-

GIFTED TIMELINE IN OHIO

1920s and 1930s – Early studies of giftedness evolve from research on mental inheritance, “subnormal” children, the construction of instruments to measure both the sub- and super-normal, and the realization that grade schools could not adequately meet the needs of all children. Pioneers in gifted education, such as Lewis Terman and Leta Stetter Hollingworth, spearhead the movement toward gifted programming and conduct some of the first widely published research studies on gifted children.

1922 – The Cleveland Plan/Major Works Program begins — the nation’s earliest continuous program for gifted children.

1950s – The field of gifted education continues to evolve in the response to the changing needs of the country, especially after the Soviet Union’s launch of Sputnik.

December, 1951 – The Delegate Assembly of the Ohio Education Association passes recommendations on gifted education to be sponsored for legislation action.

April 8, 1952 – The Ohio Association for Gifted Children is founded.

1957 – The State Board of Education recommends that the Foundation Program Law be amended to provide for gifted classes in the public school.

1959 – 16% of Ohio’s schools have programs for the gifted.

July, 1959 – House Bill 759 passes, requiring the State Board of Education to “employ competent persons to analyze and publish data, promote research, advise, and counsel with boards of education and encourage the training of teachers in the special instruction of gifted children.”

1959 – Ohio Department of Education appropriates \$110,000 for gifted in House Bill 754.

1960 – A state survey of school districts shows that 2% of all children in Ohio’s public schools are identified as gifted.

1960 – The Ohio Department of Education employs the first supervisor/educational consultant of gifted programs to provide technical assistance to school districts.

1960 – The Ohio Department of Education is appropriated \$140,000 for gifted.

1963 – The position of state supervisor for gifted education is eliminated because of budget reductions.

1969 and 1972 – Dr. Walter T. Olson, chairman of the OAGC Legislative Committee, testifies before the General Subcommittee.

1970s – The definition of giftedness is expanded along with the programming options available for gifted students.

August 21, 1974 – An amendment concerning gifted education becomes the first major independent program for the gifted by the federal government.

1975 – The OAGC testifies before the Ohio legislature’s Finance and Appropriations Committees.

1975 – The OAGC receives IRS nonprofit status.

1975 – The position of state supervisor of gifted education is reinstated at the Ohio Department of Education.

1975 – The Ohio legislature passes Senate Bill 170, allocating \$98,000 for gifted education.

1975 – George Fichter is hired by the Ohio Department of Education as a full-time gifted education consultant.

1975 – Ohio’s first strategic plan for the education of gifted children is developed.

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tem could be implemented, Ohio changed governors. The new OEBM system, which was still in the very early stages of implementation, was essentially thrown out for a temporary bridge formula in House Bill 153, which ultimately allowed districts to reduce services and staffing to gifted children. The OAGC was, however, successful in advocating for a gifted maintenance of effort provision that stopped districts from totally eliminating services. In 2011, the OAGC released a pivotal report, *Grading on the Curve: The Illusion of Excellence*, which exposed the shortcomings of the state’s district accountability system. As a response to this report and to pressure from other sources, the Ohio Department of Education and the Ohio General Assembly are expected to overhaul the accountability system in late 2012–2013. In addition, the OAGC successfully advocated for a State Board of Education resolution calling for the development of a gifted

performance indicator and dashboard of informational items that will ultimately be a determining factor on district report cards.

The OAGC is still actively working with state policy makers on many initiatives, including strengthening gifted education funding in the next school funding formula, implementing school accountability measures that include the needs and growth of gifted students, and expanded opportunities for gifted students across the state. Organizationally, the OAGC remains a strong, vibrant presence and has increased its use of social media to improve advocacy initiatives.

Much has been accomplished. Much remains to be accomplished. The Ohio Association for Gifted Children will continue to strive to provide a strong state organization for the support of quality education for all the gifted children in the state of Ohio. ☺

(*Gifted Timeline, continued from page 13*)

1970s (late) – The OAGC decides to move board meetings on a rotating basis throughout the entire state of Ohio.

1976 – Martin Essex School for the Gifted is initiated.

April 22-23, 1977 – The Twenty-fifth Anniversary Meeting of the Ohio Association for Gifted Children is held at Kent State University.

1977 – Janice Williams speaks to the Finance Committees of both the Ohio House and the Ohio Senate, requesting increased funding for gifted programs; a letter-writing campaign is launched by OAGC members to support Williams's testimony and results in an appropriation of \$300,000 for each year of the 1978–1979 biennium.

1980-1981 – The Ohio General Assembly appropriates \$4.6 million for gifted education.

1970s (late) – OAGC district representatives are appointed.

1980 – The OAGC receives group exemption status from the IRS, recognizing subordinate organizations (affiliates) under the auspices of the OAGC.

1980 – A contest is held for an OAGC logo; the winner is announced at the spring conference.

February 10, 1981 – Dr. David Abbott, assistant superintendent of Maumee City Schools, and Rita Price, supervisor of the gifted and talented program of Sandusky City Schools, coordinated efforts to form the Consortium of Ohio Coordinators for the Gifted (COCG). The COCG was the first such organization in the United States.

May 1981 – Officers are nominated to the newly formed COCG.

July 1981 – The first meeting of the COCG executive board is held.

October 3, 1981 – The COCG holds its first seminar in Columbus, Ohio, hosting 75 members and guests at sessions on curriculum and program evaluation.

February 25, 1982 – The second COCG seminar is held in conjunction with the OAGC in Columbus with sessions on thinking skills training, program evaluation, and the Midwest Talent search.

1982 – The governor of Ohio and the secretary of state proclaimed February 22–28, 1982, as “Gifted and Talented Children Week” to coincide with the OAGC conference held in Columbus that week.

1982 – The OAGC newsletter is renamed the *OAGC Review* and given a distinctive format.

1982-1983 – The Ohio General Assembly appropriates \$4.26 million for gifted education.

1983 – Committees are formed to collect material for the first OAGC handbook, *Perspectives: Educating the Gifted Child*.

1983 – The first certificates of recognition are awarded to outstanding contributors to the education of gifted children at a conference in Toledo.

1983 – *A Nation at Risk*, a report issued by the federal government, highlights the missed opportunities to identify and serve gifted students.

1984 – The first student scholarships are awarded at the annual conference in Cincinnati.

1984 – The State Board of Education adopts operating standards for School Foundation Units for Gifted Children.

1986 – The Ohio Department of Education establishes the Summer Honors Institutes for gifted high school children, to be held on state university campuses throughout Ohio with funds awarded through a grant process.

1987 – Ohio enacts legislation mandating the identification of all children who are gifted.

1987 – The Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Act becomes law, authorizing the U.S. Department of Education to provide funds to encourage research, demonstration projects, and personnel training.

1989 – Under Senate Bill 140, the Post-Secondary Enrollment Options program (PSEO) was established allowing high school students in 11th and 12th grades to access university courses.

March 1990 – Ohio's state superintendent of public instruction creates a task force to develop a strategic plan for gifted education.

1990s – The National Association for Gifted Children issues national standards for gifted children.

1990s – Federal monies from the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Act fund such entities as the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented and provide grants for gifted education research and programming.

1993 – *Nation Excellence: A Case for Developing America's Talent*, a report issued by the federal government, highlights missed opportunities to identify and serve gifted students.

1994 – Dr. Raymond Swassing establishes the Ohiogift listserv.

1994 – The Ohio Supreme Court declares that Ohio's system of education funding is unconstitutional in the *DeRolph* funding lawsuit.

1995 – As a result of the *DeRolph* ruling, gifted funding is increased substantially.

- 1997 – The OAGC successfully advocates for the expansion of the PSEO program to students in the 9th and 10th grades.
- 1998 – The OAGC files first amicus brief in the *DeRolph* funding lawsuit.
- 1999 – The OAGC conducts a first gifted cost study.
- 1999 – The OAGC files a second amicus brief in the *DeRolph* funding lawsuit.
- 1999 – The Ohio General Assembly passes House Bill 282, which requires all school districts to have a policy and plan for the identification of children who are gifted. \$5 million for gifted identification is appropriated for the first time.
- 1990–2003 – The Ohio Department of Education receives three Javits grants.
- 2000 – The State Board of Education adopts operating standards that apply to all children who are reported as served. The new operating standards require a written education plan for each student who is reported as served.
- 2000 – The OAGC publishes first parent handbook, “What to Expect When You’re Raising a Gifted Child.”
- 2001 – The OAGC hires its first executive director, Ann Sheldon.
- 2001 – The OAGC files a third and final amicus brief in the *DeRolph* funding lawsuit.
- 2001 – The OAGC conducts a second gifted cost study.
- 2002 – House Bill 364 passes, allowing the establishment of gifted community schools.
- 2003 – The OAGC establishes a permanent office in Gahanna, Ohio.
- 2003 – The State Board of Education approves a policy statement on the future of gifted education in Ohio.
- 2003 – The Teacher Division publishes “What to Expect When You’re Teaching a Gifted Child.”
- 2004 – The OAGC reorganizes itself to mirror the NAGC and operate on a divisional basis with a governing board serving as the structure to meet the diverse needs of its membership, including Teacher, Coordinator, Higher Education, and Parent divisions.
- June 3, 2004 – The COCG board meets for the last time to accept membership vote to unify with the OAGC.
- August, 2004 – The COCG members continue coordinator efforts through the OAGC Coordinator Division.
- 2004 – The Ohio Department of Education publishes the *Handbook for Identification in the Visual and Performing Arts*.
- 2004 – Senate Bill 3 passes, which directed the Educator Standards Board to develop educator standards that would require general educators to have sufficient knowledge of gifted students.
- 2004 – *A Nation Deceived* reports on the advantages of acceleration for gifted children and illustrates America’s inability to meet the needs of its most able students.
- 2005 – The *OAGC Review* wins the NASA Award for Public Education and Outreach.
- 2005 – The OAGC conducts a study on written education plans (WEPs).
- 2006 – Senate Bill 311 establishes the credit flexibility option.
- 2006 – The State Board of Education approves the Model Acceleration Policy.
- 2007 – House Bill 79 is passed, requiring all districts to establish acceleration policies.
- 2007 – The OAGC launches a new Web site and division listservs.
- 2007 – Ohio Department of Education releases the *Twice-Exceptional Guide*.
- 2008 – Newly revised Ohio operating standards for identification and services to gifted student go into effect.
- 2009 – The OAGC conducts a study on the impact of the state acceleration policy.
- 2009 – Credit Flexibility Plan for High School students is approved.
- 2009 – The OAGC Coordinator Division publishes “What to Expect When You’re Coordinating Gifted Services”
- 2009 – The funding system changes from units to formula within Ohio evidence-based model under House Bill 1.
- 2009 – Funding for the Martin Essex School and Summer Institutes is eliminated.
- 2010 – Ohio evidenced-based model is dismantled and replaced with “bridge formula” under House Bill 153. OAGC successfully advocates for a gifted maintenance of effort provision.
- 2010 – The OAGC publishes the first *OAGC Summer Journal*, an online scholarly journal.
- 2011 – The OAGC releases *Grading on a Curve: the Illusion of Excellence*, a report detailing the shortcomings of Ohio’s school accountability system.
- 2011 – The State Board of Education adopts a resolution calling for a gifted performance indicator to be including on district report cards by the 2014–2015 school year. 