

Achievement Committee Notes – September 12, 2016

Gifted education rule update – Members of the achievement committee were all there except for Joe Farmer, who arrived at the end of the discussion. Members included Rebecca Vazquez-Skillings (Chair), Todd Jones (Vice Chair), Melanie Bolender, Pat Bruns, Stephanie Dodd, Nancy Hollister, Ann Jacobs, and Ron Rudduck. Additional board members present included Tom Gunlock (board president) and Mary Rose Oakar. State Superintendent Paolo DeMaria and House education chair, Andrew Brenner, were also in attendance. As always, these notes are a rough transcription of the events with inevitable errors and typos. The audio recording of this committee meeting can be found at: [ftp://ftp.ode.state.oh.us/ODEMediaWeb/State Board Meeting Audio/September 2016/](ftp://ftp.ode.state.oh.us/ODEMediaWeb/State_Board_Meeting_Audio/September_2016/) under the achievement committee part 2 tab. The gifted discussion begins at 1:13:30.

Sue Zake, Director of the Center for Exceptional Children, led the discussion. Ms. Zake described the content of the new draft including identification, service models, staffing, training, accountability, and a description of the innovative programs and gifted advisory council. A draft of the operating standards and a comparison chart were also provided to the committee members. The presentation can be found online at: <http://www.oagc.com/files/ODE%20Achievement%20Committee%20%2009122016%20-%20gifted%20slides%20%20.pdf>. Ms. Zake went on to discuss public input on the standards.

There were approximately one hundred comments -- The majority of commenters were gifted coordinators followed by gifted intervention specialists, parents, state superintendents and administrators. Two university personnel provided input and fifteen respondents had no identified role.

Identification – Comments were generally positive with some discussion about the cost, time, and grade bands tested. ODE indicated that they might come back recommendations to address some of these suggestions.

Assessment for identification – Comments concerned some needed clarification for English language learners. Comments indicated that the 90 day referral window could be burdensome. (Note from Ann: This is interesting as the current rule already requires this for students coming into the district. The draft actually just makes this referral process consistent for those students who already reside in the district.) Some felt that charter schools serving gifted students should follow the gifted rule.

Services – Zake reminded the board that services are not required. She went over some of the specifics in the draft including the fact that guidance was removed as a stand-alone service. Class sizes for pullout and resource rooms were specified with waivers available. Comments in this area were that the minutes and caseload requirements should be extended to all areas.

Service criteria – No real changes from current standards though subjective criteria are prohibited. Comments – Requested minimum minutes and caseload requirements to be increased and maximum caseload extended to other areas. Clarification was sought in some terminology such as commensurate and school day.

Service delivery options – Comments related to the need for more specification about what are being delivered and by whom particularly for services in the general education classroom.

Who can teach – GIS with appropriate license and a trained individual – this is someone with expertise in the visual and performing arts. A general education teacher – Standards address professional learning for general learning in four different areas. Gifted staff or people with previous experience can provide training. Comments – There was a request for more fully defined parameters for professional

development. Some liked the attempt, but thought using experienced but unqualified staff was not an appropriate means. There was a misperception that general educators would be trainers of gifted education. This will be addressed in a recommendation from ODE.

Written education plan – Who can write a WEP? – A WEP should be written in conjunction with a GIS, a coordinator or someone who has previous experience in writing a WEP. Comments – What is a reasonable attempt to get a parent signature? Comments were overall positive, but indicated a need for more specificity.

Funding – Comments generally were that there is little to hold districts accountable for district gifted funds. Others also mentioned the desire for more gifted funding.

Accountability – Differentiated review process and the possibility for a corrections and improvement process. Need to make sure that we do not duplicate data already collected by EMIS such as identification and service. Comments – Many people wanted increased monitoring and outputs defined and the term review changed to audit.

Innovative gifted process and gifted advisory council – Comments – People wanted more clarification about membership and responsibilities.

Questions/Comments from the Board

Melanie Bolender – One thing that I'm concerned about is the use of general education teachers and the definition of experience. I know that teachers that have experience where they are thrown into instructional settings that they weren't ready for, and that they shouldn't count as experienced in gifted if they had no proper training. I would like to see stronger requirements for who can teach gifted students, similar to those for teachers who teach students with disabilities. I am concerned that our gifted students will get lost in the classroom without further parameters. I know that we have previously discussed a gifted certificate.

Pat Bruns – I would like a more robust conversation about how gifted students are served. There is a lot of language about classroom teachers in the regular classroom. Unless you have a small number with someone teaching them it won't work. It will be a disservice to gifted students. Answer from Sue Zake – One of things we would suggest that gifted services have to include is content that is differentiated such as a Honors class. I would say to you that through technical guidance we would indicate what the general education classroom has to have in place to be called service.

Bruns -- Who could provide this service? Answer -- You must have a GIS or coordinator in support of the teacher to count this as service. (Note from Ann: The current draft of the standards does NOT say this.)

Bruns – Could the WEPS also drive the credentials of the teacher training of the service provide. Trained individual in the arts? What does this mean? Answer – It means that arts professionals can provide those services.

Ann Jacobs -- I am concerned that licensed gifted staff aren't supervising gifted intervention specialists. Answer – I think we need to add that there would have to be a temporary waiver with the intent that they are pursuing a license. Coordinators may have less information about a student than classroom teacher so it is important that teachers who know students best are part of the WEP process.

Stephanie Dodd – I have a few questions – The repeated term that we heard was flexibility. The first is with assessments in the grades K-2 and 3-6 grade bands. Can districts use other tests that districts can

use? Answer – There is. We would suggest that we change the grade bands from K-3 and 4–8. We have underrepresented populations who need to be identified. This is why we need whole grade screening.

Dodd – Regarding the general education teachers – is it unnecessary oversight to document training on the IPDP (Individual Professional Development Plan)? Can the local district document at the local level and districts be held accountable in the review of audit? Answer – We can take that under advisement. (Note from Ann: As all teachers required to have an IPDP have to account for their hours, it would seem that using a different process would duplicate that effort.)

Dodd – What is the desk review? What is the difference between that and an audit? Answer – We would like to work toward a process that is not the “gotcha” kind of approach but rather looking at the district services and help them to correct their problems. Determinations will be to set what a successful gifted program is. Should we provide credentials for what constitute successful programs are?

Dodd – Is the innovative program the flexibility that you are offering in these standards like a waiver? Answer – The innovative program is different from a waiver. It is more about looking forward to the future to what other types of programs are out there.

Dodd – I would like the gifted advisory council language to be expanded a bit so that we know who is represented on the council. I would like to make sure that rural areas are represented and maybe even a state school board member.

Ron Rudduck – I began my state board tenure 3 ½ years ago and we were discussing the gifted standards then and we are still discussing the standards. I think we are getting pretty close. We have some corrections to make. My biggest concern is unfunded mandates. And I don’t get the sense that there are a lot of unfunded mandates in these standards. I am also concerned about the burden we are placing on classroom teachers. Would they be forced to provide services to these kids in the classroom and have to get gifted training? I think though that we are close, and I think the gifted advisory council is a great idea so that we can tweak things as we go along so we don’t necessarily have to wait five years for the next revision. So let’s move along.

Vazquez-Skillings – I think it is important to know that this is not a mandate but this is an attempt to define what gifted services are. But there is not a mandate to provide those services.

Rudduck – The innovative program is a great idea especially with the gifted performance indicator driving services and the fact that some services don’t count.

Representative Andrew Brenner – What is the point of this committee again? (Note from Ann: It appeared he meant the advisory council.) Answer – The council would help to advise the gifted plan as we move forward into the future so that the board can be informed.

Brenner – So is the council is to create standards that all districts adopt? Answer – No, the council would provide guidance around setting criteria for what services are. Also the council would look at data to make recommendations to the board.

Brenner – The concern I have here is that this is going to become a mandate. What helps a southeast Ohio district provide services to gifted students? Melanie Bolender responded – Some of the smaller schools could benefit from ESC services. There might be some opportunity for innovative programs that could be a way to get to these services. Right now we have no way to evaluate these programs.

Brenner – How can we define how a district gets an A and F if we don't know how these services are defined? Answer from Rebecca Vasquez-Skillings – Some of this has to do with the WEP.

Brenner – How does creating a WEP mean anything? Vazquez-Skillings responded – The WEP does mean something. But it's the fact that districts don't have to provide services that are a problem.

Brenner – How are they not providing services? Answer from Vazquez-Skillings – They are not required to provide services.

Nancy Hollister – Do we have a line item for gifted students and does it go to school districts. Or is there an amorphous type of funding. Answer from Vazquez-Skillings – Unless the funding is in place or dictated, it doesn't get spent for gifted students always.

Hollister -- I think there are all sorts of appropriations that say you can spend money on things, but if you don't have money to implement the programs it doesn't work. This is the disconnect. We need to develop gifted programs, but we need to pay for this. I love the idea of the council, and we need a rural voice. You can come up with the best standards in the world, but if you don't have the funding it doesn't mean anything.

Bolender – It is true that there is funding that is designated for gifted but there is no accountability for the funds. So it is a local choice. There needs to be accountability. I am concerned about the review. If a school district is saying they are serving gifted students than we really need as taxpayers to know that there are real services. I am concerned with the term experienced. If someone wrote a WEP last year, are they experienced? I know some teachers who are lovely and told they are going to be the gifted teacher one year with no training. Is that experienced? We need to keep working on this. The WEP needs to mean something.

Rebecca Vasquez-Skillings – If members could document their comments about review, the training for additional changes so we can get another draft ready.

Todd Jones – This is a process question. Are you suggesting there would be a new draft by the next meeting? Or would you like to see all of amendments and then have some discussion about them. They wouldn't be incorporated into a new draft. Vazquez-Skillings -- We might do some of both.

Jones -- This is a matter of process. I was not overwhelmed by the specifics about the changes being suggested. Vazquez - Skillings - Let's discuss the recommendations. There wouldn't be a new draft before the next meeting

Dodd -- Would it make sense to meet before the next month's meeting to discuss these recommendations? Vazquez-Skillings – We will try to work on that.