

Detailed Report from the Achievement Committee Gifted Presentation and Gifted Testimony 2.8.16 --

After the OAGC board members Colleen Boyle, Karen Rumley, and Patricia Naveau [presented](#) to the Achievement Committee, committee members asked several questions. These questions and answer are paraphrased as accurately as possible with notes on discrepancies as needed. Please excuse the inevitable typos.

Questions from the committee:

Pat Brun: As a career educator, I've filled out a few of those gifted ID forms and was always perplexed that we never actually provided services to those students. I am interested in several statistics including drop-out statistics of gifted students and the Quality Counts rankings that are now much lowered. My question though is about the funding issue. Districts aren't using all the funds they are given. How far would the funds go if they spend all the gifted funds they are allocated? **Answer: Colleen Boyle**—The allocated funds certainly won't serve all gifted children, but it would be better than what is happening now. **Karen Rumley** -- Coming from a suburban district where there has been a commitment to serving gifted students, we do spend the funds appropriately. But there are districts that are reporting services and funding but it is actually just a paper trail. It is just a manipulation of reporting. **Pat Naveau** – It is difficult in rural districts to serve gifted students. What happened in 1999 and 2000 (new laws) there finally was standardized identification. Many districts sought funding through unit funding to serve districts. Since the funding formula changed from unit funding, the approach to services changed with more regular teachers providing services. When gifted intervention specialists and coordinators are retiring their positions aren't being filled. And there are far fewer staff with any understanding of gifted students. The funding is not being used. Acceleration has been good in rural districts. We've been a leader in the nation and this has been wonderful; we've been able to use this in rural districts. This has been the primary way we serve students, but it isn't right for all students.

Todd Jones: Policymaking is the art of compromise. I've talked to many teachers and administrators that there are they want to take a different approach (than OAGC's recommendations). Where is there room for compromise? **Answer: Boyle** – Teacher training is one of those areas. OAGC originally recommended that only GISs provide gifted services. But we are now recommending a condensed approach for teacher certification for classrooms. And until that can be instituted, we are recommending specific levels and hours of professional development for classroom teachers providing gifted services.

Jones: Let me turn to funding data. In a budget bill the House instituted a contentious policy for funding. Money spent on gifted education used to be tracked, but because of the governor's veto we have lost the lost that ability. (Note from Ann: This is incorrect. Gifted funding is tracked.) To say that districts haven't spent the money isn't necessarily true. It is a reporting issue. **Answer: Boyle** – No, there is no reason for districts not to report the accurate funding for gifted. They should be reporting the gifted funds.

Jones – But there is no ability to track the funds. Districts don't have to report them. (Note from Ann: Neither one of these statements is correct. There are specific accounting codes for various gifted functions and ORC does require districts to report the expenditures and ODE is required to post the expenditures.)

Melanie Bolender – Is there funding that is earmarked for gifted or is it lumped in the formula?

Rebecca Vazquez-Skillings – There is funding but I believe that the methodology is changed and that there is no obligation to spend. (Note from Ann: This isn't quite correct. The methodology of funding has change from gifted units, and while the gifted funds are in the formula, ORC requires state funding for subgroups to be spent on the subgroups.

Jones – Money is based on identification, but there is no obligation to spend the money. (Note from Ann: Again, both statements are incorrect. Funding for gifted is not based on gifted identification; it is based on ADM. As stated earlier, ORC requires state funding for subgroups to spend on those subgroups.

Bolender – This process has gone on too long. I would like to condense this. We heard from this group first. I am concerned about the balance of the remaining testimony. We tend to listen to the last group speaking the most.

Ron Rudduck – With regard to OAGC's recommendations, there are two draft standards in play – the current one and the one from 2013. Are your recommendations based on the latest draft or the 2013 draft? **Answer: Boyle** -- The recommendations are based on last draft but are written to the 2013 draft as the 9.11.15 draft was not able to amended due to the brevity of the draft.

Rudduck – I've received reports of funding from districts. For many districts it is \$40,000 or \$50,000. That's not enough funds. There are some concerns from my superintendents about some of the recommendations with regard to minutes and certification. I appreciate Mr. Jones references to compromise. **Answer: Pat Naveau** went through the formula and how it is calculated for each district. There used to be a specific funding reporting sheet that treasurers. That no longer exists. We cannot assume districts are spending funding on gifted students, if we don't see any district evidence of it happening.

Sue Zake (ODE Director of the Office for Exceptional Children) -- We should have Aaron Rausch (ODE Budget Director) come to explain gifted funding at the next meeting.

Bolender – Has Battelle for Kids done anything for gifted services in rural districts? Shared services seems to be a good idea in the rural areas. **Answer: Naveau** – There are no regional gifted services through Battelle for Kids.

Bolender – Roughly 250,000 students were identified as gifted. 60,000 are served which means 74% of our gifted students are not being served. If these were students with disabilities there would be an outcry.

Stephanie Dodd – ESCs help for regional services. With regard to the draft rules from 2013, who wrote that draft? **Answer: Boyle** -- ODE put the advisory committee together to write the draft and there many stakeholder groups invited to participate. We spent hours working on the draft and had deep discussions. There were compromises. Not everyone got what they wanted. But the draft was co-opted in August and that was sent to the board to September, 2015.

Vazquez-Skillings – I've heard a lot about public participation and advancing the timeline. Also I am hearing about compromise. I'd like work on areas for compromise in this rule.

Dodd – Can you stay for public participation so I can ask you more questions? I hear from superintendents about the "once identified; always identified" issue. Maybe students identified got lucky. Is it possible for a kid to just have a good day? **Answer: Boyle** – Assessments are required to have

strong reliability so if a student is identified, it is legitimate. If a student is identified but doesn't get services, if there is no opportunity for growth, the student will tend to perform to the mean. If we un-identify students, we are actually punishing them for not serving them.

Dodd – So if a student is identified as served then that child should always be gifted? **Answer: Boyle** -- A child doesn't automatically become ungifted. Kids not served will not grow. Kids who are provided appropriately served should grow at appropriate levels.

During public testimony, the three board members came back to answer more questions. There were also several other witnesses. The following is a list of witnesses and the questions they were asked. The questions of the three OAGC board members were more heated than in the committee meeting. Testimony for all the gifted witnesses can be found at: <http://www.oagc.com/files/GiftedTestimony%20to%20State%20Board%201.8.16.pdf> .

Gifted Witness Testimony

Witnesses Arjun Kurup and Siddharth Kurup – Two gifted students from Troy City Schools

Mary Rose Oakar – Did you give this same testimony to your local school board. **Answer** : Not yet.
Reply – I think you should do so.

Witness Rachel Winters – Parent of a gifted student who almost dropped out.

Bruns – You've laid out the difficult path your son took and that well-meaning people were not helpful. Did your son have a WEP in elementary school and middle school and did it transfer to high school.
Answer: No. There was no transfer of the WEP to high school. The high school didn't have gifted services.

Witness Katie (Kathrine) Germaine – Student -- Gifted services in elementary were great. Middle and high school are a struggle. Honors program are not challenging. Regular classroom teachers don't have the training that they need. No questions asked.

Witnesses Colleen Boyle/Pat Naveau/Karen Rumley – Clarified funding/spending provisions and the laws that govern them. They also shared that it was difficult to compromise if we don't have dialogue with multiple groups involved. The July, 2013 draft was the last attempt to compromise with other stakeholders. There has been no other discussion. OAGC has attempted to reach out through surveys etc. but there has been no forum for discussion.

Jones – I have one comment and a question. (Warning from Ann: Due to the speed of Mr. Jones comments, this section is highly paraphrased.) Up until last month, I was chair of this committee. I find it shocking that there hasn't been a dialogue. Your lobbyist has only spoken to me twice in three years. (Note from Ann: Not accurate though for two years the standards were placed on hold and there was simply no need for dialogue.) As the chair I would like to have a dialogue. I would like a robust system of gifted education. I am not happy that some districts don't have gifted education, but that's the way it is and there is a local control. I am concerned about the amount of time and money about inputs. Three years ago I said that we have to have more outputs. I view identification is an outputs standard. But the outputs process had cold water thrown on it. OAGC said you need to move from that. We don't have to move away from inputs but we need to have some outputs. What is the drop-out rate for gifted students? (He threw some other items.) We need to have outputs so that we know what if the inputs are successful. (Note from Ann: To suggest that OAGC has poured "cold water" on outputs is beyond

inaccurate. Most of our suggested outputs were summarily rejected by ODE. Clearly, Mr. Jones forgot OAGC's presentation to the board and lists of ideas we presented two years ago. However, outputs for gifted can only measure so much. Inputs are needed as well.) It would be great if you came out with output standards. As the chair, I would have thought the best thing that we could have had would be to have the gifted experts come up with outputs. What are ways are there to put forth more outputs for gifted education? What concerns me that gifted advocates are also employed by gifted employees. (Note from Ann: Parents and students are not employed by gifted employees.) There are only two options. We have to have something on the table. **Answer: Boyle** – With regard to dialogue, if we are to develop compromise, our concern is that we have not been able to sit at the table. Our recommendations with regard to inputs had to do with bringing together multiple stakeholders including higher education and research. There are over 100 years worth of research not about employee needs. I served on the outputs committee and I was proud of the work we did, but the conversation needs to continue. Right after the indicator was put into place the PARCC debacle happened. 51% of superintendents don't want any gifted indicator. They don't want to have any accountability for the population. There are no audits and no sanctions. It is a free-for-all. It will be difficult to base our system of accountability on outputs under this scenario.

Jones – I asked for more outputs three years ago and you gave us nothing. (Note from Ann: Completely inaccurate.) **Answer: Boyle** -- One thing we fought to put in the gifted indicator but was rejected was acceleration. There were other things as well, but they can't all be quantified. We could come up with others. But no set of outputs is fully conclusive. Superintendents don't mind standards; they don't want the accountability that goes with it.

Dodd – There is almost \$68 million of gifted funding available. Gifted identification of economically disadvantaged kid is poor. It seems like we should be creating more opportunities for gifted students to excel. How could a WEP help our most needy students? And can you expand what you meant by the scope and depth of written education plan. **Answer: Naveau**-- A properly written WEP takes into account these needs. Some of the WEPs are mass-produced especially at the secondary level. The gifted performance indicator is good because in some districts they said what are quality services are. But other districts just want to document services especially without any oversight.

Dodd -- What was the biggest concern that superintendents raised? **Answers: Boyle** -- Resources. When you removed the issues that they perceived to be issues that weren't it all came down to funding.

Dodd -- Districts do a self-report. ODE staff do inquiries if they are out of sync. We do some audits. What did we do in the past? – **Answer: Zake** -- We did compliance monitoring. We don't do this anymore in special education. We are doing school improvement planning now. If gifted is prioritized in the school improvement plan then ODE will at it. If it isn't in the district improvement plans, we don't.

Dodd -- How did the gifted performance indicator GPI affect your district? **Answer: Boyle** – The first reaction was things are bad which led us to develop the Columbus Gifted Academy. Other districts are doing a good job as well. But some districts are saying they are great when they are doing nothing. And some districts who are doing a good job are getting punished because some districts are doing little for gifted students but are getting credit for it.

Bruns – Once a student is identified as gifted, is it noted in EMIS? **Answer: Yes.**

Bruns -- Is there an issue with administrators having a real knowledge about gifted? **Answer: Naveau**— The gifted performance indicator has been helpful for awareness. But many superintendents don't know what it means to get more points. What is the minimum we need to do to get points not who are the

gifted kids rather than how can we help them. Some want to know why can't they can't just hire an aide for an hour a week to serve gifted students.

Witness Valerie Congdon – Strongsville parent – Gifted classroom can be a safe zone.

Oakar – Over and over again, I have heard that gifted kids are often bullied. Is this true? Answer – There are perceptions out there by regular kids that the gifted kids thought they were better. It wasn't the case, but this was a source of bullying. 7th grade was terrible. It was off the edge. It isn't just the kids; sometimes it's the teachers. Half the gifted class was not in the top 10 percent at the end of high school. They were just trying to survive.

Oakar – It sounds like a disability. In life, they have to get along with diverse people. Answer: Socially it was fine. The gifted kids got along with diverse people socially just fine. It was the educational setting that was bad.

Witness Karen Sherwood – Strongsville GIS – Teacher's perspective. Regular teacher modifications are not gifted education. Higher order thinking skills is the best process. Need full-time specialists. Need extra depth and challenge. They couldn't handle her lessons by self-teaching. Annual progress at his or her level should be every child's moral and legal wrote. Unfortunately, the self-contained classes that have existed for 30 years are being dismantled. The few are being sacrificed for the many.

Oakar – Who decided to get rid of the magnet programs? Answer – the gifted performance indicator showed that self-contained made growth, but specific academic kids don't. So the district is sacrificing the few for the many. We will meet with more students, but the students who need the most intervention will get their services drastically cut.

Oakar – Why aren't Honors classes enough? Answer – Honors classes are open to all. Gifted kids learn differently. It requires two different techniques to teach gifted vs. regular students. AP is great, but Honors courses aren't enough. Early intervention is essential. This is particularly important of girls. It helps them become strong, independent women.

Representative Andrew Brenner -- Why don't we get rid of gifted education and just hand out 1.7 million WEPs? How would you accomplish this with our traditional grade set-up? Why don't we change this? Answer: Differentiation is imperative. We are talking about students who are well above the mean. Nobody questions the special needs of kids with a 70 IQ.

Brenner -- Senator Lehner and I visited Carpe Diem (a community school) last week where the kids move at their own pace. Why are we artificially holding kids back from learning when we could potentially move them ahead at their own pace? Why are we putting these restrictor plates on this group? Answer – Social-emotional issues come into play. To be with age group peers is important. I like your idea and I think it is interesting but gifted kids need more than just acceleration. (Note from Ann: Also, rigid end of the year state and federal testing requirements prevent this from happening.)

Ann Jacobs – What is the definition of gifted students? Answer – She was given the law referencing the gifted identification

Witness Diane Budke (parent) – Provided testimony that the only reason that she was able to get her son services was by citing the rule to district administrators. There were no board questions for Ms. Budke.