



July 11, 2014

To: Debe Terhar, President, State Board of Education
Tom Gunlock, Chair, Accountability Committee

From: Tom Ash, BASA
Jay Smith, OSBA
Barbara Shaner, OASBO

Re: Proposed Gifted Indicator on School District Report Cards

We are writing to provide input to the State Board's Accountability Committee agenda for Monday, July 14, 2014. It is our understanding that the Committee has before it a proposed resolution for adoption, related to the Gifted Indicator component of the school district report card. The resolution, once adopted by the Committee, is expected to be presented for consideration by the full State Board of Education in its meeting on Tuesday.

We understand the Board's obligation to set standards for this new report card indicator. As part of the new "dashboard" approach to disclosing school and district performance, the subgroup of students identified as gifted is just one of several new areas of focus established by law. While there may not be agreement among all stakeholders on what all those components should be, we do agree the law requires the Board to establish standards for the Gifted Education Indicator.

However, our three organizations have concerns about portions of the Gifted Indicator proposal currently being considered by the Accountability Committee. Our concerns are as follows:

1. Inputs should not be included as part of the gifted grade or indicator on the report card. Measures for other components of the report card are based on outputs/results.
2. The proposed "inputs" portion of the gifted indicator calculation does not allow for any type of alternative student acceleration option to qualify for the districts' service of students identified as gifted (i.e., A.P. courses, acceleration to the next grade level, etc.).
3. It appears from our read of the committee recommendations that one component of the Gifted Indicator on the report card would be based on the number of students (or the percentage of the total student population) identified as gifted. We do not believe there is value in such a measure.

We would like this point clarified. While we support the notion that districts should be following the law by screening students for purposes of gifted identification, we are concerned that this component would serve to reward districts for identifying students as gifted and consequently could lead to over identification.

We want to be clear that our organizations believe strongly that all students should have the opportunity to receive a high quality education, no matter their ability or potential. We are not suggesting that students identified as gifted should not be served.

Yet, Ohio law requires that students be screened and identified as gifted where appropriate, but the law is silent on how school districts serve those students. In fact, there are no legal mandates for the method by which the gifted education funds provided through the new school funding formula are utilized.

This flexibility allows schools to serve all the students in their district in the manner that best meets their students' needs locally. The Gifted indicator on the new report card will serve as an accountability measure that will publicly demonstrate how successful districts are in serving their gifted students.

Therefore, the Gifted Indicator standards should not go beyond the authority of law by requiring specific service methods and mandatory levels of gifted identification to receive a favorable grade on the report card. We urge you to reconsider portions of the proposed resolution on the Gifted Indicator standards by considering the three issues outlined above.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. Please advise if we can provide additional information.

C: Dr. Richard Ross, State Superintendent
State Board of Education

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