

Achievement Committee

Operating Standards for Gifted Rule

Board member Jones, chairman of the committee, introduced Sue Zake, Executive Director, ODE Office of Exceptional Children, and Wendy Stoica, Assistant Director, Diverse Learners for ODE, who provided an update to the status of the Operating Standards for Identifying and Serving Gifted Students. The standards are ready for the a five year review process. Stakeholder involvement included the Ohio Association for Gifted Children Executive Committee and the Gifted Advisory Group; drafts were posted for public comment. There have been approximately 30 comments posted so far, Zake noted.

The timeline for review states that the Resolution to adopt by the State Board must be completed by January, 2014.

Proposed revisions include two whole grade screenings for gifted identification, elimination of ratios for gifted service providers and addresses workload considerations.

Board member Jacobs said she's heard a lot from her constituency regarding a "dumbing down" of standards, although she noted that there were some positive comments. Board member Elshoff asked about the comments that were posted on the website. Zake said that generally the "tone is negative."

Board member Cain said, "I can't say that I would vote in favor of these standards as they stand right now. A gifted coordinator should be someone who knows something about the gifted. The ratios are important, and parents should know how their gifted tax dollars are being spent. Having these regulations in place guarantees the serving of the gifted who should not be shortchanged."

President Terhar commented, "We require special education teachers to teach special education students. We should provide the same for the gifted students. Are we behind the curve in comparison to other states? Is the report card really going to provide the kind of accountability we need for the gifted?"

Vice President Gunlock said, "I'm all for outputs in measuring the standards. 2014-15 will bring the indicator for the gifted on the report card. In my opinion, we do a lousy job with the gifted students; this needs to be done at the building level. I believe in qualified teachers for gifted, but I'm not sure I believe in the same for coordinators. All I care about is the outputs. Maybe these schools should take a look at their gifted programs. I think we're on track here, but we need to figure out a way to continue measuring the outputs."

Cain asked if the Gifted Advisory group endorsed the draft. Zake said they did not. "The difference is in what was proposed as to what is required; issues like ratios, amount of training, and several other concerns."

"Some high poverty districts are receiving As and Bs with regard to the gifted, so there's no reason why these other schools can't improve," Gunlock stated.

Jones said, "It is my view that we need to move to an output-based model. I ultimately don't care what is leading to the success, I care about the success itself. We have this input regime in place, but this system doesn't work very effectively. We do need qualified teachers, but I'm not convinced that we need qualified coordinators. The question is what level do we need such qualifications, and I'm open to be persuaded. These regulations do tie the hands of those involved; if they weren't, we wouldn't write them. My hope is that we can do something here in Ohio that is output-based that will lead to innovation. What we are doing is not working."

Public Participation -- Non-Agenda Items

Ann Sheldon, executive director, Ohio Association for Gifted Children (OAGC), said, "The ODE response to the poor showing for the gifted is baffling. Instead of increasing the quality of instruction to support gifted children, the new version of the draft for gifted operating standards effectively eliminates all standards of quality service."

Sheldon noted that the following provisions have been eliminated in the draft: quality criteria for service; caseload restrictions; direct contact time; gifted coordinator requirements that relate to the knowledge of gifted education; professional development; reporting of qualified personnel; funding accountability requirements; and the provision that allows ODE to reduce funds for non-compliant districts.

"The new philosophy of ODE is to move away from educational inputs toward an outcomes-based system. This is only effective if the following elements are in place: quality outputs; data collection; transparency; accountability measures; and oversight."

"The gifted dashboard that this board unanimously voted to develop was to have been unveiled this month and was to inform the board what elements should be part of the gifted performance indicator. Unfortunately, ODE never developed it," she commented.

Sheldon ask that the draft be rewritten with regard to the Gifted.

Cain asked, "Is it enough to test only the outputs for the Gifted Performance Indicator?" Sheldon said that the GPI is just one piece and needs expansion." What we have are standards that are easily reached, and if you water services down, we really question the value of the GPI."

Cain asked, "If the service time requirement was removed, how do you think districts would handle their output?" Sheldon said, "Services are very different now. Written education plans were required for gifted students, although they are really nothing more than a check-off list. What they found was that services were being watered down, i.e., 20 minutes a day counted as service, or one big event a year counted as service completed."

Jones said he suggested, "The gifted community would be well served to identify output structures that would be appropriate measures to incorporate into Gunlock's work on outputs."

Sheldon said she has no problem coming with outputs and gave several examples. However, she noted that there are many areas that cannot be adequately measured for gifted children, such as social and emotional disconnects. "I think we need to meet forward slowly with a mixed input-output system – a happy compromise." We need a level of protection like a waiver for highly performing schools. We have a problem with eliminating all quality inputs while we are generating the appropriate outputs.

Collins said he met with the gifted coordinators from his district. "There needs to be a viable process to identify what needs to be done and then to do it," he stated. "What was in the draft was entirely different from what was proposed by the Advisory committee. You can't have outputs without inputs – it doesn't make any sense."

The following parents and students spoke on behalf of Gifted Education: Robin Retzler, Beckham Retzler, Keegan Retzler, Angela Grimm, Karen Rumsley, Alicia Sauer, and Joan Ford.