



President Terhar, Members of the Board:

My name is Ann Sheldon, and I am the executive director of the Ohio Association for Gifted Children (OAGC). I am here today to discuss the proposed changes to the gifted operating standards. As most of you are aware, newly released value-added results for gifted students show that many districts are doing a mediocre or poor job with the gifted student subgroup. The ODE response to the poor showing for gifted is baffling. Instead of increasing the quality of instruction to support gifted children, the new version of the draft gifted operating standards effectively eliminates all standards of quality service.

To be more specific, the draft eliminates (among many other smaller provisions):

- **Any quality criteria for service** including time requirements and the need for qualified gifted intervention specialists to provide service or support in regular classroom settings. This will allow districts to indicate that even as little as one day of service per year can count as served. In addition, no set preparation or support to general educators providing services is required.
- **All caseload restrictions and direct contact time with gifted students** for gifted intervention specialists. Gifted intervention specialists may be required to meet with an unlimited number of students for as little time as possible so that districts can indicate more students are being served.
- **Any gifted coordinator requirements that relate to the knowledge of gifted education.** For all intents and purposes, anyone (with or without an education license much less a gifted license) may now be the gifted coordinator. As written, the school secretary can also now serve as the gifted coordinator, which we believe is contrary to Ohio Revised Code.
- **All reporting of qualified personnel, professional development,** and assistance to regular classroom teachers thus removing any meaningful data collection to analyze the effective use of resources.
- **All funding accountability requirements.** The General Assembly allocated a record amount of gifted funding that was meant to be spent by districts to serve gifted students. Taxpayers are paying for these services, but there is little guarantee that any those funds will be spent to support gifted children. We believe this change conflicts with the intent of Ohio Revised Code, and finally,
- **The provision that allows ODE to reduce funds for non-compliant districts,** which is required under Ohio Revised Code. Without this provision in operating standards, ODE audits are useless.

The new philosophy of ODE is to move away from educational inputs toward an outcomes-based system. OAGC is not necessarily opposed to a gradual move toward at least a partial outputs-based system. However, this type of system is only effective if the following elements are in place:

- **Quality Outputs** that truly reflect the progress and achievement levels of the student subgroup being measured.
- **Data collection** on elements of service such as staffing, training, service settings, etc. so that districts and policymakers can determine the most and least effective use of resources.
- **Transparency** for how subgroup resources are being used so that parents and the general public can determine whether the district is making good use of taxpayer dollars.
- **Accountability measures** that are meaningful so that districts care about whether the population is appropriately served with consequences for districts that are non-compliant or do a poor job identifying and serving the population.
- **Oversight** to ensure that districts are truly identifying gifted children and that service numbers actually reflect best practice service.

Unfortunately, none of these elements are currently in place for gifted children. In fact, the new draft of the operating standards actually reduces or eliminates existing transparency, data collection and accountability

measures. Districts will soon be able to say they are serving gifted children when in fact those students will have no additional support. It is a victory for adults in the education system who want the public to be in the dark about how poorly many of our brightest students are educated in Ohio. But it is a major blow to gifted children, their parents, taxpayers, and the state as a whole.

Devising effective and measurable outcomes for gifted children is not an easy undertaking. Currently, there is only one measure that is of any use as a gifted outcome: the very new gifted value-added subgroup measure. This measure is quite limited in that it only looks at gifted students identified in math, reading, or superior cognitive ability in grades 4 – 8. The use of the new gifted performance index (PI) based on the current OAAs is of highly questionable value. The cut scores are incredibly low on OAAs and the OGT. In addition, the State Board is required to develop a gifted performance indicator. The indicator was supposed to have been in place by December, 2012. The implementation was pushed back, and is now scheduled to be developed for the 2014/2015 school year. The gifted dashboard that this board also unanimously voted to develop was to have been unveiled this month. The dashboard was to inform the board what elements should be part of the gifted performance indicator. Unfortunately, ODE never developed it.

If the new ODE gifted ranking system that was recently released is a model for the gifted performance indicator and other output measures, I am very troubled. The gifted ranking is mostly a quick-and-dirty snapshot of items based on the low-level OAAs and OGT. All but a few districts would qualify for an “A” on the gifted performance index ranking. And any district that is not following the identification laws is given a free pass as it is not included in the overall ranking. With service standards critically weakened in the new draft operating standards, districts will be able to increase the illusion that more gifted students are being served thereby making the new gifted “opportunity ranking” a joke. Part of the gifted performance indicator is “level of services provided” to gifted students. If services are watered down to mean virtually anything, districts will be able to easily ace this output. That output measure will have little meaning, which subverts legislative intent.

I need to specifically address two comments from board members during yesterday’s Achievement Committee. First, it was stated that 51 districts do not serve any gifted students. That is inaccurate. Over 200 districts serve no gifted students; 51 districts do not identify enough students to receive a value-added rating. Only 20% of Ohio’s gifted students are served in Ohio. The move to an outputs-based system does not change the fact that districts are not required to serve gifted students. There are no repercussions for districts that do not identify or serve gifted students. There are no “gifted police.” Parents who complain to their local boards are told that the state does not require service, there are few funds, and that there are higher priorities in the district. Parents, particularly in smaller, rural districts, are easily intimidated by superintendents and board members, who are often viewed as powerful figures in the community. In some communities, having a gifted child is not seen as a positive. It is often better not to rock the boat.

Second, it was stated yesterday that the gifted value-added results “prove” that the inputs-based system does not work for gifted students. That is also inaccurate. This measure is so new that we have no analysis that tells us any such thing. What the value-added results likely show is that the lack of mandated services does not work for gifted students. If the inputs applied to all gifted students, we would see different results.

OAGC asks that before board members remove all quality standards for gifted students that you wait until quality outputs, accountability measures etc. are in place and have been evaluated as to their effectiveness. We specifically ask that the provisions that hide the quality of services provided, that eliminate standards for contact time and case-load maximums, and that eradicate staff qualifications as well oversight and accountability be rewritten. As the draft stands now, it will be highly detrimental to gifted boys and girls (particularly in poorer districts), their parents, taxpayers, and the public at-large.

For more information, please contact Ann Sheldon at 614-325-1185 or [anngift@aol.com](mailto:anngift@aol.com) .