

## Senate Bill 3 Issues

Dear Senator Hite,

I appreciated our short conversation last week after the Senate Education committee. As promised, I am providing you with a list of my concerns regarding SB 3. While certainly I commend the intention of the bill, there are several aspects of the SB 3 that are problematic. These include testing limitations that could preclude adequate identification of special populations, certain areas of exemptions for high-performing districts, and, finally, the definition of a high-performing district itself:

Testing Limitations – The mandate that no student shall exceed 2% of their time per year in assessments could be particularly challenging for the appropriate identification of gifted students. While assessments for students with disabilities are exempt from the limitation in SB3, the bill has no similar exemption for the proper assessment of gifted students. Whereas there may be an excessive amount of state level assessments and benchmark testing, this is in stark contrast to the dire situation and lack of assessment for identification of potential gifted students across the state of Ohio. The data regarding gifted identification tells a bleak story about the lack of systemic screening and assessment for this population, particularly students in grades K-3, minority and/or economically disadvantaged students, and students in the area of visual and performing arts. Sadly, 10% of Ohio's districts do not identify any gifted children in grades K-3. Almost one-third of districts identify fewer than 3%. The statistics are even more extreme if we examine gifted assessment data in grades K-2. In addition, economically disadvantaged students are half as likely to be identified as gifted as their non-economically disadvantaged peers. If anything, more whole grade screenings should be implemented for the identification of gifted students in Ohio. Given this state of affairs, gifted advocates are concerned that any steps to reduce testing in Ohio will negatively affect the already inadequate identification of gifted students.

As you heard from superintendents last week, the backlash against excessive testing from both educator and parent perspective is mostly aimed toward high-stakes state performance assessments, interim benchmark testing, and the use of these assessments for teacher evaluations – not assessments that give diagnostic information about individual students. Assessments geared toward understanding individual student learning needs were in place decades before state-wide assessments began. The use of assessments for the identification of special populations should not be compromised due to excessive testing for other purposes. I would strongly recommend SB3 be amended to exclude any assessments used to determine individual student learning needs, including the identification of gifted students, from the 2% testing limitation.

Areas of Exemptions for High-Performing Districts – While I will not speak to all of the areas of exemption in SB 3, I am very troubled by the ability of high-performing districts to allow any licensed teacher to teach any subject or grade level. Does this mean that elementary art teachers would be allowed to teach high-school Calculus? Could any teacher teach gifted students or students with disabilities? To have no background in the subject, grade or specific student population seems like a recipe for disaster.

Definition of High-Performing District – The definition of high-performing district in SB 3 currently is one that receives a grade of "A" on performance indicators met, an 85% of higher rate on the performance index (or a grade of "B"), 93% four-year graduation rate, and 95% five-year graduation rate. No growth data, sub-group performance, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading (even while there are exemptions from reading teacher qualifications in the bill), or college remediation-free rates are considered as part of the definition. Given this criteria, 125 districts would be consider high-performing. Of those districts 73 have a third-grade

reading proficiency rate of less than 95% (the rate required for high-performing in the governor's budget bill); 37 districts have grades of "D" or "F" either for the overall or a sub-group value-added measure, and, finally, 93 of those districts have ACT remediation free rates of less than 50%. Clearly, there are some issues many of these "high-performing" districts. It is also troubling that only one year's worth of data is used in the definition. Perhaps, a more nuanced set of criteria for high-performing might be a minimum of two years of data and should include the following measures with "A" grade ratings:

- Performance index
- Grade indicators
- Value-added including all sub-group scores
- 4 and 5 year graduation rates
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade reading proficiency scores
- College remediation free rate of at least 50%

To be honest, with a new set of assessments being implemented this spring and potentially another set of assessments implemented next spring, it might be a precarious time to set any criteria for high-performing districts. Everything is in a state of flux right now.

I hope this list of concerns is helpful to you as you move SB 3 through the Senate. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 614-325-1185 or [anngift@aol.com](mailto:anngift@aol.com).

Regards,

Ann Sheldon, Executive Director  
Ohio Association for Gifted Children