

June, 2016 Detailed State Board Meeting Notes on Gifted Discussions

(NOTE: As always, this report is designed to provide the most detailed discussion of the events that occurred during the State Board of Education meetings. The discussion between board members, witnesses, and ODE staff is paraphrased as accurately as possible. Please excuse the inevitable typos. Links to the actual audio tapes of the discussions are provided throughout the document. Explanatory notes are also provided as needed.)

6.13.16 Achievement Committee Notes

(Audio link is at [ftp://ftp.ode.state.oh.us/ODEMediaWeb/State Board Meeting Audio/June 2016/6-13-16-Monday-Part%201.mp3](ftp://ftp.ode.state.oh.us/ODEMediaWeb/State_Board_Meeting_Audio/June_2016/6-13-16-Monday-Part%201.mp3) . The gifted discussion begins at 1:35:20.)

Two new members were added to the achievement committee. New state board member Nancy Hollister and former achievement committee board member, Ann Jacobs are now part of the nine member committee. This month, committee members Rebecca Vazquez-Skillings (chair), Todd Jones (vice chair), Pat Bruns, Stephanie Dodd, Joe Farmer, Nancy Hollister, and Ron Rudduck were present. Board members Melanie Bolender and Ann Jacobs were absent.

After a discussion about lowering the cut scores on two end-of-course exams (Integrated Math II and Geometry), the committee moved to a discussion about the gifted operating standards as they currently exist. The discussion was led by ODE Director of the Office of Exceptional Children, Sue Zake. She shared that last month committee members had asked staff to come up with a set of gifted definitions. She introduced Maria Lohr and Mike Demczyk and indicated that they will be preparing the next draft of the gifted standards. (Note from Ann: This is an interesting change as the gifted staff have not been in the room for any of the gifted operating discussions for the past year.) She also indicated that Monica Shaner is a part-time gifted staff, but was not present at the meeting. Zake went through a [prepared powerpoint](#) and provided basic information about referrals and the opportunity for testing which included assurances for inclusion of under-represented populations such as refusal to test on referrals. No sub-group can be denied an opportunity to be assessed. Other items included the policy of once identified; always identified. Zake then covered what services are and how they are defined. In general, services need to be in the area of identification and the individual student need. There must be a written education plan for services to be considered services in EMIS. Eligibility criteria must be objective. Zake also covered who is responsible for preparing the written plan along the goals, the measurement, method of delivery etc.

The next series of slides provided examples of what constitutes services and what does not. Services are not a spelling bee, a field trip, or extra homework. Zake indicated that defining what is not service may be as important as what it is. A general course where a general education teacher is given professional development on how to differentiate for the student can be service. AP courses are not a service unless it is written in a WEP. Services must be no cost to the student and parent. Courses taught by trained arts instructor may be service. Zake went through setting requirements, caseload maximums and number of minutes of services. She discussed the role of general education teachers and arts instructors and indicated that professional development and support from a GIS are essential to classroom teachers providing services. Finally, Zake discussed when acceleration is a gifted service. In the first year they are counted as a gifted served. In order to continue to be counted as service there would need to be a WEP going forward with other services defined in subsequent years.

Questions from committee members were as follows:

Stephanie Dodd – In the first slide after identification regarding referrals, what does this mean? Answer – a referral could come from a parent or from an educator with regard to an individual students. Referrals can also come from screening instruments from a district. So there could be a variety of means.

Dodd – So, if a parent requests testing the district has to do it? Answer – Yes, a team would come together to look for evidence that supports the referral. We know that it can't be based off of grades or someone's opinion.

Dodd – So about the statement about not un-identifying a gifted student. This is something I've heard both sides of. Districts say a student shouldn't always be identified. But should they ever be unidentified because they are actually gifted or because they haven't been provided services? Answer – The practice and research in the field nationally would substantiate once identified that gifted students should remain identified. This may not mean that the child receives services.

Dodd – Are the services described as “not services” included in the current rule language? Or are these just examples of best practices. Answer – We made the definition more practical for this presentation, but the services are defined based on current operating standards.

Pat Bruns – As a former teacher, with regard to maintaining gifted identification, how would we know this? How would they know a student has been identified? Even if they aren't receiving services? Answer – You would need to look at a student's records in addition to what you learn about the student as a teacher.

Bruns –In the settings and requirements section with regard to a general education teacher – AP, Arts – providing services, is it in the current standards you said they needed further, but I thought that additional training was the crux of our argument. Do they need additional training? Answer – One of the defined service areas is AP and arts. The definition speaks to collaboration and consultation with a GIS and professional learning in gifted education especially in differentiating.

Bruns – Is this in the current draft or the current operating standards? – Answer – It is in the current operating standards.

Dodd – Is there a timeline here? Where do things stand? What should we be expecting? Answer – Tomorrow we are having the last groups of professional associations presenting. The principals' associations and the ESC association is going to be presenting. Based on the conclusions of those presentations, we will move to redrafting new language in July. And then we will move through the process in the fall in order to get it to approval.

Rebecca Vazquez-Skillings – I understand that there will be some pilot online programs for gifted being considered so that the course content would meet the standards for instruction? Is this already enabled though in the current standards? (Note from Ann: This is a pilot program in Westerville, apparently.)

Answer – Online instruction is already enabled in the current standards. It is up to the creativity of who is providing services and how they deliver those services.

Vazquez-Skillings – Do the online standards need to have a separate level of approval to become certified? Answer – I would have to look into this, because currently it is defined as being . (Note from Ann: No, distance learning is already a defined service.)

Vazquez-Skillings – I want to talk about the report card, but I know that this is a topic for another committee. The first year of acceleration is a service. There would need to be other services. Subsequent years need a WEP with specific services? Answer – Yes, something beyond the grade level that the student is in. Something that enhances it.

Vazquez-Skillings – AP – where the teacher is a general education teacher and not a GIS, is that acceptable? Answer – Yes, in these settings, we are looking at expertise in the content area.

Nancy Hollister – Is this program a mandated service that districts have to provide? Answer – It is a not a mandated service. These are the rules that apply if the district provides services.

Hollister – Is there any type of cost to these services? Having had children in all venues, I assume a WEP is critical to the success of these services. Is there a cost estimate to do this? Answer – Aaron Rausch gave a presentation on projected expenditures vs. costs. We discussed expenditures but not necessarily costs.

Hollister – I missed that. This is going to be a conversation in my district. They will be interested in the costs. Answer – We can get you that presentation.

Bruns – About the WEP, would it ever be written indicating that working in a self-contained class would be the recommended way to go, especially to meet social-emotional needs? Answer – Yes, a WEP could be written for stand-alone programs where a GIS is the teacher of record for a group of students. We’ve have a few presentations from students who were in these types of services.

Bruns – So if a district doesn’t have a stand-alone program, but the WEP says this is the best case scenario so we have kind of a dichotomy. Is there any recourse for the parent to say you have to provide this service.? Answer – No.

Vazquez-Skillings -- Is a WEP required if the child is identified and not served? Answer – No, the WEP is required only if the child is receiving gifted services.

6.14.16 – Panel Discussion on the Gifted Operating Standards

(The audio link is at

[ftp://ftp.ode.state.oh.us/ODEMediaWeb/State Board Meeting Audio/June 2016/6-14-16-Tuesday-Part%203.mp3](ftp://ftp.ode.state.oh.us/ODEMediaWeb/State_Board_Meeting_Audio/June_2016/6-14-16-Tuesday-Part%203.mp3) . The gifted discussion begins at 29:24)

ODE Senior Executive Director of the Office for Curriculum and Assessment, Stephanie Siddens introduced the panel: Dr. John Richards, Ohio Association of Secondary Principals, and Dr. Julie Davis, Ohio Association of Elementary Principals, along with ESC representatives Dr. Brian Bontempo, Superintendent of the Lake County ESC, and Judy Chaffins, Director of Gifted Services, Allen County ESC.

(Note from Ann: It is interesting that the association staff represented the elementary and secondary principals associations. All other associations were instructed that “lay leadership” were to provide comments not association staff.)

Stephanie Siddens -- This is part of a series of presentations to the full state board on the gifted operating standards. We can continue to seek input on the operating standards from stakeholders.

John Richards and Julie Davis – Thanked the board for the work of the board and the opportunity to speak. Their remarks were very general in nature. They indicated that their association represented a very wide opinion. They had polled their members, who want some “guard rails” and the most importantly want some flexibility to meet the needs of unique students across unique communities. Their members want local control, because it is best to have flexibility at the local level. By maintaining flexibility vs. being too prescriptive, there could be some unintended consequences such as increased difficulty in scheduling, transportation, and staffing levels. The associations do not want additional requirements unless there is additional funding. With increased funding, they could do more, but flexibility and local decision making is most important to our members. College credit plus is already helping to meet the needs of many gifted students. The testimony for the associations can be accessed at <http://www.oagc.com/files/OASSA.OESSA%20GiftedTestimony2StateBoE.pdf> .

Brian Bontempo – We believe in high standards for all gifted students. We value high quality identification. We need to adequately fund the services. ESCs support the identification language in the draft standards. They also believed the standards provided flexibility and adequately defined staffing for ESCs. They do not believe that the proposed rules clearly describe standards for quality and extent of gifted services and they do not believe that the components of the gifted performance indicator are essential to the evaluation of gifted services. The standards by definition should set a minimum expectations and support services. Standards should set a balance. We need a minimum level of standards, and we need to provide flexibility to meet the needs of students. Indicators only are not enough to ensure that gifted students are served. We likely need to have inputs and outputs. It is not possible to just have outputs today. We need universal access to opportunities. There should be inputs with appropriate parameters. Where districts cannot do this on their own, ESCs can assist them. The operating standards should support this support. In addition, more funding is needed. ESC units are funded at half their value for example. This approach is dismissive of ESCs and the support of gifted students. In summary, one, fund gifted services adequately and, two, support rules that support high quality professional development and ensure gifted students are treated equitably. A link to the written testimony can be found at http://www.oagc.com/files/OESCA_Gifted_OH%20State%20Board%20of%20Ed_061416.pdf

Judy Chaffins (who spoke with no written comments) -- As a practitioner, while I agree with many of the idea forthcoming regarding flexibility, as I read the latest draft of the standards (the 9.11.15 draft), what will happen is not quality services, they will superficial services. This will happen with good intent and well-meaning people. We can't wait until middle and high school to provide gifted services. They lose a lot if we wait. We have little kindergarteners coming in reading. It does involve upsetting schedules for teachers. We can't just give it lip service. The draft will allow districts to put in superficial services. For

instance I have two districts in my area, what they want is to give GISs one period a week to students for 40 or 50 minutes. That isn't adequate, that isn't excellent; it isn't high quality; it is feel good; cheerleading, it is feel good, and it is cheating our gifted students. Our kids deserve more and our teachers need to be trained better. There are WEPs all over the state where teachers HQPD is not true. Some teachers get two hours at the beginning of the year and maybe two more throughout the year. We have as a nation a dismissive attitude toward these students' needs. We need as a state and this state board needs to stand up for these children. The parents don't know how to advocate especially in rural and urban areas. They don't understand or have the resources for these families to access. It is only the privileged who get more. We have a great disparity, and we have a great opportunity to do the right thing. Put some minutes or some requirements of services so that our teachers who are trained aren't burdened with a different group of students every hour. I could on forever. I've seen a million abuses by well-intentioned people.

Questions from board members produced an unusually thoughtful discussion:

Todd Jones – I'll ask the question I've asked before. The current regulations prescribe the number of minutes and how services are inadequate. The current regulations are what they are. The issues you raise are not regulatory issues; it sounds as if it is change needed in law so you talk to the two of them (referring to House Education Chairman Andrew Brenner and Senate Education Chairwoman Peggy Lehner). So you are asking for more money, but if there aren't adequate services going on, that is a local decision. If the current structure doesn't lead to changes, what will? We would like to get more money to get services. But we don't think it is important to use these funds now so districts are making their own choices about what is important. You are saying don't add anything more if you aren't given more money. Can you talk about these two issues?

Answer from Richards – The key terms from our members was maintaining flexibility. Most districts feel they are reflecting the wants and needs of their community. What we heard which I agree with is there is more of a legislative issue, it there is going to be increased specificity than there should be more funding to do this. This is our feedback.

Answer from Chaffins – I'm going to suggest that regardless of the funding, what the standards do is allow us to have quality services if districts do choose to provide them. If the standards are vague, that mitigates that high quality. If districts can interpret what services are, there are people who are in the position to make the decisions who aren't trained to make these decisions. But if they do offer services, they should be of high quality. Otherwise, there will be no quality services but they will be condoned by the standards. If districts don't offer services, so be it. But if we are going to have standards they should be high standards. The standards should stand for quality. They should not stand for vagueness. We keep saying high standards, why not here? If you choose a program and a trained teacher, all the research and practices show what is needed to ensure these students will result in growth either academically or social-emotionally -- not just be warehoused in a room so that we can pat ourselves on the head and say we have a gifted program.

Jones – I hear a push and pull in your standards. We want the state to aspire to higher standards. The difference is that you say these services in the current operating standards will lead to results. We have results mechanisms for results. Prescriptive standards describe how you go about how you do it even down to the minutes. You're saying we know you don't have to do, but if you do tell us how to do it in a very prescriptive way. No where do I hear how the success will be measured just that if you do "x" it will lead to "y" and you should trust us. When we discussed other standards this morning such as graduation standards and assessments, we have objective outcomes. What are the objective outcomes you would be comfortable with? Is there anything you can offer? What are the outcomes that would you be comfortable with for students and buildings and districts?

Chaffins – We have value-added and we have the standards. I really don't understand where you're your question so I don't know how to answer the question.

Jones – Okay, well let me be more direct. Gifted students, how do we know if they are doing well? Are you telling me that performance measures and value-added aren't enough because I have a gifted lobbyist over here telling me it's not.

Chaffins -- Well, it's not! Gifted kids are more complex than that. All children are. don't know if we need more. Gifted kids need more than outputs. is appropriate for this population.

Jones –Are you rejecting the concept that we can outcome measures at all?

Chaffins – No, but you have kindergartens, 1st graders and 2nd graders how are you going to measure that? Not everything based on objective criteria. Some of it would have to be measured by future growth.

Jones – I absolutely believe that. But I'm looking at two sides here. There's the judgment about the needs of individual students and then there is the aggregate performance that tells us how a district to see if they are doing well. Some gifted students do well; some don't, but on the aggregate we can judge a district. I want to know what are the metrics to judge them? Do you outright reject the idea that we can have metrics to measure. ? If so what are they?

Chaffins: No, I don't know how to answer you. It's obvious to me, but I'm in a different place from you.

House Education Chair, Andrew Brenner – You are suggesting that we need high gifted standards and performance, but what if we shifted the entire funding system based on high performance standards. Do you think more districts would focus on gifted students then?

Chaffins: This would be complete conjecture on my part, but probably.

Stephanie Dodd—Could we have a copy of the testimony? Regarding the funding, I hope the board will have a conversation about recommendations for the next budget. What in the current rule do you like or not like?

Davis – As I mentioned, I like the flexibility aspect. The biggest issue is that we are not required to serve gifted students. That's a big issue for me. And, if we are required to then we should have the funds. The whole issue is circuitous, because we are not addressing issue number and number 2.

Bontempo – We believe that providing the guidance to The funding and flexibility are important. The proposed rules do not define the standards.

Chaffins – Minutes and teacher ratios are important; these are the first two that come to mind. Trained teachers are critical. These are the most important and ones I see the most abused. These are the most watered down.

Dodd -- It is my understanding that principals serve as gifted coordinator, do they have adequate training to do so?

Davis – My answer would be no, just as I would not be have the ability to be special education coordinator unless they had specific training previously as a teacher. To be a principal I didn't have to have one course to meet the needs of special education and gifted students. Most of my 2000 members would say the same thing.

Richards – Most are not prepared. I'm not sure how many principals are considered a gifted coordinator. I didn't have that experience in my district. I would have to find out from my members.

Senator Peggy Lehner – For the last six months, there has been a parade of gifted advocates over the last few months saying that what we aren't doing enough for gifted students. As I was mentioned by Mr. Jones, I have to comment. Frankly, this is an opportunity for the board to lead. The recommendations should be as strong as possible. If we have vague standards from this board, then General Assembly will follow. This is the opportunity to say we need to have the highest possible standards. The standards aren't the how; they are the what. If we set high standards, high service will follow. At the minimum the standards need to be as high as possible. The minimum should be that we are required to serve gifted students in the state of Ohio. I don't know we don't do this. To back away from the education that gifted students we need, that I don't understand that. Set the standards high and the legislature will follow. If we are allowed to get away with low standards and inadequate funding, then we'll do that. The legislature is looking to the State Board for recommendations and we should not give the state the state the opportunity to pay for low standards. We need to set the stage for better teacher preparation. We are neglectful of that. We are certainly neglectful of gifted training. It does take additional training. That's my two cents. You mentioned us Mr. Jones; you may want to not do this in the future.

Mike Collins – I want to applaud what you just said, Senator Lehner. I want to remind you that if the education leaders don't look at and implement the educational standards, flexibility doesn't mean anything. In my own district hadn't made it a priority, the size and scope of a gifted environment wouldn't have occurred if we hadn't had strong standards. Standards don't tell how; they tell about how. Model curricula tells us what. Don't let us confuse what standards are. There needs to be flexibility in how you execute. But it is not what you are supposed to do. What do we consider our responsibility

and what do local boards consider theirs? We have a responsibility to set the example and provide guidance. It isn't a question of local flexibility, but I don't want 611 sets of standards in the state of Ohio for gifted or anything else. Let us talk about the subject of standards and what needs to happen. The past standards had prescriptive lesson plans. Model curriculum provided guidance. (Note from Ann: I think he is talking about curriculum standards.) I'm with you on flexibility, but I'm us that we set standards as we see fit.

Pat Bruns – College Credit Plus – Do you know how many gifted students taking CCP have WEPs?

Richards -- I don't know. We don't have that data.

Bruns – The reason I bring this up is that unless there is a WEP attached to that, it is not counted as no service. So if CC+ is appropriate for the student, it should be on their WEP. So we need some more education on this. This is an example that the ESCs can play a role in research and training etc. This is an opportunity at the ground level to give districts insights. I'm with my colleagues here by saying we need to stand strong on requiring gifted education specialists.

Rebecca Vazquez-Skillings – My questions is about the WEP. When the state began to require gifted education in 1999, we did not require a WEP. (Note from Ann: Actually, identification has been mandated since the early 1980s. In 1999, there was an overhaul in identification law, but the mandate existed previously.) What is the importance of having a WEP?

Davis – I'll give you some context. My first Masters course was in gifted education because I had a lot of them. What I know is that most gifted kids will let you know by six if they are gifted or not. Should we have a plan to serve gifted students once they are identified? I also think we should have legislation that we mandate gifted services and have the funding to follow it. We need to know what we are responsible for and measured, that's what we were going to do. Services kind of depend on the zip code about who is served. My colleagues would support me to say that we need gifted services mandated and the funding.

Richards - I would look at WEP as a guard rail. Our members support that.

Chaffins – The WEP is required if the district is reporting students as served in EMIS. The WEP process has created more conversations between me and the districts and parents. They are not all high quality, but they have to have them. They are also supposed to have trained teachers, but that doesn't happen because there is no compliance. We need integrity especially for the foundation of our future, which lies in the hands of our gifted students.

Jones – Like Mr. Collins we've sat through many debates and views on gifted education. Whatever standards are written we want quality standards. The disagreement is what is the policy of the state about the nature of gifted services? The state does not required services. It is a fair debate, that you are not providing services or some degree of services. It is my view that we should a spectrum rather than the hard line that we have here. We need better services that lead to better outcomes. What constitutes accountability? On the report card, how do we hold districts and teachers accountable? This

is typically done by prescription. Services are described as “X” and not “Y.” We heard you say that WEPs are an acceptable means of holding you accountable. Should we have them for every gifted student? What are the other chunks in terms of outcomes and process that you want to be held accountable? The bottom line is that board members don’t trust you to make these decisions. Otherwise, we wouldn’t need standards. If we trusted you, we wouldn’t need gifted standards. What is acceptable on a process basis and outcomes basis to hold you accountable.

Davis – My remarks were about the child. I wasn’t thinking about accountability, but about what was best for the child. The more we serve that child’s needs, I think they would thrive and achieve higher. And then teachers and principals scores would follow. If we are measuring our success by scores then those scores would follow. But I think we need to look at what is best for the child.

Richards – With regard to WEPs, the view is that we need flexibility. We support a guard rail of a WEP that should be in place with that WEP should drive things an individual basis. That’s where the flexibility comes in. If we are looking at this from an individual student standpoint, we don’t want it be so specific that we aren’t addressing individual student need. It’s a bit of a tension here to meet diverse communities.

Mary Rose Oakar – I don’t think anyone who has discussed what happens when a gifted student doesn’t get the courses that need. My nephews got D’s; they got bored in school. They finally had some opportunities, and then one became an engineer and a lawyer but they, could have gone off the wayside. I think we want to follow the federal law that says that we should educate children to their capacity. This should be for all children not just special education students. We need to have a standard I think the state is loaded. We do have the money. Look at the rainy day fund, even if we do it as pilot projects, we can do this. It isn’t enough to say it’s up to local control, because some local boards are fabulous and some boards that are like sheep. If these kids don’t get what they need, they go by the wayside when they don’t the proper training. If you are saying if we had the standards and the funding we would be happy to do it. But I think kids go off the wayside if they don’t get the proper training. It is interesting to hear different opinions. Mr. Jones doesn’t speak for me, God bless him. He tries.

Ron Rudduck – We want what’s best for kids and what is in our power. If we put something that is in operating standards, it is in administrative code. Once it is adopted it has the same force as statute. We have to be very careful about what we put in these standards. If we put something very specific that become in law. If we mandate these as a board and districts don’t follow it and if we don’t monitor it then someone could sue school district and say you are not following the law. That’s why funding is important and what we put into the standards. Of the three of you here are you familiar with the current standards and the revised standards that were worked on a few years ago. (Note from Ann: Mr. Rudduck was referring to the standards that came out of the gifted advisory council in 2013). Were you in agreement with those standards from the earlier revision?

Richards – We can say yes we are. But we would have to poll our members.

Tess Elshoff – Going through all of this over the last several years, I’ve really tried to understand everyone’s point of view and aspect of everything. If we continue to add require more regulations, will

they be fulfilled by the districts and what are we going to get? I know what a WEP can look like. I have one right here. Here are the two goals: Student will work cooperatively with others during assigned group work and will complete assignments independently with creativity and thoughtful articulation. For a gifted student, that's common. So how are those goals helpful? This is just a check off. I'm concerned that if we ask for more, that districts are just going to check off a box. Do you feel that it would be best to create a requirement for WEPs? Or are we looking at wrong and should we prepare all teachers across the board so that they can touch each child individually every day.

Answer from Chaffins – Teacher training is imperative because they whatever service students get unless it is full time, students are and as a side note most aspects of gifted training will help a teacher with all students. It is differentiation. It is gifted specific. But you cannot deliver K-12 services across the board without specialists. It is their dedication in training and support that are needed. In gifted education, we are looking at increased number of kids with autism and gifted. Professional development is absolutely essential for every adult who is teaching. We need teachers in the classroom teachers and we need to have those specialists. You cannot expect classroom teachers to do know everything about a special needs or gifted child. We have to have both and we can do both without a lot of money. ESCs could help districts.

Answer from Bontempo - There is a systems approach. You have to address professional development and standards. Regional help can work if we have the tools and the resources. A rising tide lifts all boats. Some districts can run with this, but some need the support of ESCs.

Answer from Davis – The provisions in ESSA could help. There is a shift in language that is subtle but profound changing the emphasis from all students to each student. Answer from Richards – We need both. But we have to have the right training. We cannot pretend that just anyone can serve gifted students.

Answer from Richards – I don't want to say it is an either or, but we have to start with the "who." Without the right people with the right training then the "what" becomes irrelevant. We have to stop pretending that just anyone can teach gifted students.
