

## **State Board of Education Recap Accountability Committee Meeting Recap – 2.11.14**

Accountability Chairman Gunlock allocated a full hour for the committee to discuss the gifted performance indicator at the February State Board of Education. Committee members attending the meeting included Tom Gunlock, Debe Terhar, C. Todd Jones, Mark Smith, Rebecca Vasquez-Skillings (newly appointed), Stephanie Dodd, and Mike Collins. (The latter two came in late due to traffic issues). Other board members attending included Tess Elshoff, Sarah Fowler, Mary Rose Oakar, and Ron Ruddington. (Board members Deb Cain, Ann Jacobs, and Darryl Mehaffie did not attend the February board meeting). ODE Chief Research Officer, Matt Cohen, began the meeting by showing a [power point presentation](#) of the latest ODE proposal for the gifted performance indicator. The proposed would be made up of two components: A performance component which would include gifted value-added and a “gifted performance index differential with non-gifted” and a district input measures component, which would include identified gifted as a percentage enrollment and served gifted students as a percentage of enrollment. Districts would have to meet the gifted performance measures before the district input component would be considered.

While the proposal is generally better than what ODE originally proposed, OAGC still has some major issues with the design of the indicator. Of particular concern is the construction of the gifted performance index differential which essentially measures the gap in the performance index between gifted and non-gifted students in a district. The index does not correlate either to the service component of value-added and seems designed to get a better spread of results between all districts. Unfortunately, policy-wise, it is difficult to know what the differential actually measures. Gifted students can score at advanced levels on the OAs and the OGT regardless of service due to the low cut score for this level of performance. At the end of the presentation, Dr. Cohen, indicated to committee members that one of the things that would need to decide is the threshold for how many districts should meet the indicator.

Questions from the committee (very loosely paraphrased) included the following:

Rebecca Vasquez-Skillings – Has anyone else ever done this before? Answer – No.

Tess Elshoff – Does the GPI take into account all of the students identified? Answer – Yes, but we don’t break the data out into various categories.

Mark Smith – Are you sure that a gifted student in grade 8 has been challenged and has value-added growth? He was concerned about so many gifted students who do volunteer work because they finish their academic work so quickly. Answer – We will know more when there are high school measures available.

Ms. Vasquez-Skillings – What are we measuring? Capacity or the intention of services? Is this is an issue of reporting student by student. Does it need to be determined further? Are we using specific assessments? Answer – We are using the OAs and OGT. It is limited right now. The performance index is how we look at all students as a group. The OAs have enough stretch at the top.

After Matt Cohen spoke, Chairman Gunlock allowed Ann Sheldon and Colleen Boyle of OAGC to present. The [presentation](#) covered the history of the performance index, concerns about the ODE proposal (mostly having to do with the use of gifted performance index and the gifted performance index differential, OAGC's priorities, a recommendation for a different approach, and OAGC's general concerns, which include the lack of definition of service; the pressure to set a low threshold for meeting the indicator so that majority of districts could meet it; the limitations of using the gifted performance index as an accountability measure for gifted, and the under-identification and service of gifted students in general.

**Questions from board members were a little more interesting after this presentation. Again, loosely paraphrased:**

Mike Collins: It seems that there has been some compromise between ODE and the gifted community. How long would it take to work things out further? Is it 30 days; 60 days? What's reasonable? Answer (from Assistant Superintendent Tina Thomas-Manning) – This was our attempt at compromise. This is what we are recommending.

Mike Collins: We have a ceiling of 120 on the performance index. I think we need to review this again. I don't think we should decide how many districts should meet the indicator. I don't want us to be like Carnac the Magician. I don't want to start out having the answer before we've even asked the question.

Tom Gunlock to Mike Collins: I wish you had actually seen the ODE presentation. (Mike Collins apologized for being late, but said he had reviewed the presentation before the meeting.)

Sarah Fowler: What is an NCE? And are we using OAA scores? Answer – Normal Curve Equivalencies and yes, the OAAs are being used.

Ron Rudduck – Expressed concern about the fact that 200 districts aren't serving any gifted students and more than 100 are serving fewer than 15%. Half of our districts are serving hardly any gifted kids. We can't be concerned what the cut score is for the gifted performance indicator. We can't worry if hardly any districts can meet the indicator.

Tess Elshoff – How do we define services? Answer from Tom Gunlock – We aren't really going to talk about that now.

Stephanie Dodd – Said she hadn't seen all of Matt Cohen's presentation, but wanted to know if for smaller districts if there were enough gifted students to measure growth. Do we need some alternate measure? Answer – We need six students as a minimum to measure.

Tom Gunlock – We want the best solution for the gifted performance indicator. I don't want this to be ODE vs. gifted. We shouldn't have any pre-conceived notions about how this is going to look. And we need to work on this until we get it right.

**At this point, Matt Cohen was asked to come up to respond to the OAGC presentation. Things became a bit more heated at this point:**

Matt Cohen: First, the OAGC presentation was reflective of our previous discussions with the group. Second, I never said that there were a specific number of districts that should meet the threshold, but the impact of the threshold would be that a certain number of districts would meet the threshold. Third, we have to deal with the assessments we have which are the OAA's and OGT. They reliably measure the performance and are consistent for all students. We should not use a different system of assessments. There isn't a ceiling effect. In terms of using the gifted performance index differential, it is better because it doesn't bunch all districts at the top. (In previous comments, Colleen Boyle mentioned that 317 districts were five points away from the perfect score of 120 on the gifted performance index.) The reason we have levels of performance (e.g. proficient or advanced) is so that we can differentiate performance in a meaningful way. You can do it another way. You can look at scaled scores and the higher the score would be better. But there is no meaningful way to determine statistically if 420 is better than 440. That's the nature of tests. If we went to a system of higher scaled scores or NCEs, it says that you have a lot of confidence that is better. And we almost used NCEs at one point when the contractor was going to move to the three cut-offs rather than five. But what we have is "good enough." We could use NCEs, but it is a complication that isn't necessary. Though to a certain extent, OAGC's concerns are shared by ODE.

Colleen Boyle then asked to speak again. She pointed out that the achievement levels set were based on the general population and that NCEs are better able to describe achievement range at the top end.

#### **Questions from board members:**

Debe Terhar: Can we get enough data. Answer – It is a problem of measuring what we have.

Debe Terhar: It seems one of the categories was removed (% of identified gifted students served).  
Answer from Matt Cohen: I was trying to simplify the measure.

Debe Terhar: I think it is important. Answer: I can add it, but it won't change the results of the indicator for the most part.

Mike Collins: I would like to add this as well. It shouldn't be about what is easy; it should be about what we need. Why can't we look at NCEs? Answer: There are trade-offs between simplicity and being precise. I don't want to have to go around the state explaining what NCEs are.

Mary Rose Oakar: I have a question about jurisdiction. How do you reconcile what happens in the achievement committee vs. what happens in the accountability committee. How do you come to a compromise? How do we reconcile the work of one committee with this one? This is an important issue. Can you explain it? (Note: The question has to do with how the gifted performance indicator can function without a proper definition of service. In the gifted operating standards passed by the achievement committee, the parameters of time and caseloads for service were removed.)

Tom Gunlock: In accountability we measure what schools do. In achievement we say how the money is to be spent. (Note: That isn't really the crux of the issue for the indicator. It is more about the definition of service.)

Mary Rose Oakar: Can't we have a joint meeting?

Tom Gunlock: It is two different items.

At this point, Adrian Allison, superintendent of Canton City Schools, was asked to come up to represent the concerns of the Ohio 8, who had objections to the OAGC dashboard recommendations, but never reviewed the ODE proposal. Allison said that he been on both sides of the fence. That he had worked with Matt Cohen. This is an extremely complex issue. As a superintendent he wants clarity. As we continue to go through the process, we want to explain what is happening. It isn't just putting information on a report card that says you do or you don't. Not all districts have the capacity to serve or the resources to serve. We have to prioritize. We are happy to take this back and review the information and get back to you.

Debe Terhar: Did anything jump out for you in the presentations? Answer: We need to review it.

Matt Cohen to Chairman Gunlock: So what is our guidance? What do you want me to do?

Tom Gunlock: Give me some time to think about it.

Here is the Hannah account of the committee hearing:

>>Accountability Committee

*Dr. Matt Cohen, Chief Research Officer, reviewed "takeaways" from the last meeting including a general conceptual agreement with the measures under consideration for the indicator, a move to simplify computation; and to review the impact on different types of districts.*

*"The revised framework," Cohen said, "will simplify the framework, making the Indicator easy to compute and the system difficult to manipulate. The Gifted Indicator will include student performance measures and a district/school input measure. The Gifted Indicator can be calculated for districts/schools that have a Gifted Value-Added (VA) grade and a Gifted Performance Index (GPI). There were 557 of 609 districts in FY13 that have both of these measures.*

*"The Input Measure is a point system that includes gifted identification and service. This impacts districts evenly, and there is room to grow. The 30 point system of inputs tend to cluster in the 8-12 range for all types of districts with suburban districts tending to put in more types of input at this point in time," Cohen stated.*

*Smith asked what happens to the gifted child at the end of the program. Cohen said they are considering the ACT to give another performance measure for the indicator. Smith said, "I want to make sure that gifted students are challenged to go on to the next level." Cohen said that the quality of the program/performance needs to be revisited and looked at the perspective of how children do as they move forward.*

*Ohio Association of Gifted Children (OAGC)*

*Ann Sheldon, executive director of OAGC, and Colleen Boyle, supervisor of the Columbus City Schools Gifted Program, gave a joint presentation on the Gifted Performance Indicator, its history, concerns and recommendations. "The original gifted performance indicator (GPI) language was included in HB1 in*

2009 and was to be in place by December 31, 2011. The Gifted Dashboard was to have been completed by September, 2013, but we were told to stop work at some point in 2013. HB555 was passed in December, 2012 requiring a GPI for the 2014-15 report card. HB555 requires that the GPI is composed of the level of services provided, the performance on state assessments, and VA growth measures," Sheldon stated.

*The purpose of the GPI is to instill a level of accountability for both funding and services.*

*"Current assessments do not lend themselves to measuring above grade level performance, and they are limited to grades 4-8 reading and math. The cut scores for the levels of achievement are low, making the GPI a poor measure of performance. Growth measures are more useful than static achievement levels but there could be a ceiling effect for individual students," Sheldon noted.*

*Boyle said there are problems with the current ODE proposal. "Part of the concerns include viewing the percentage of served only as it relates to total students enrolled. This may let some districts 'off the hook' for serving students. While simplified, combining performance measures and growth measures may be too simple. The new proposal still is based heavily on the GPI," she said.*

*Boyle noted that the use of the OAs and the OGTs as a definitive measure of achievement for gifted students is problematic. "The PI differential between gifted and non-gifted in the district is troubling. There is little to no consideration for the performance of gifted students who are not tested in grades 4-8 and are not identified in math, reading, or superior cognitive areas."*

*OAGC has stated priorities in developing a GPI. These would include developing an indicator that provides parents, districts and policymakers a full picture of how gifted children are faring in their district. Also, Sheldon and Boyle would like to move away from the PI as currently configured as a way to gauge gifted performance. The gifted growth measures really do not "ceiling out" the performance of these students. A big concern is to develop meaningful measures for students beyond grades 4-8 and in non-academic areas; they want to create incentives for acceleration. Ultimately, the OAGC would like to ensure that economically disadvantaged/minority students are identified and served.*

*The presenters gave specific suggestions for the Dashboard including screening, identification and service percentages by grade band, as well as an extensive development of VA and achievement measures. They also would like to see measures for acceleration, staffing and funding levels, and the results of recent gifted service audits.*

*"An alternative approach to that proposed by ODE is to use selective measures from the Gifted Dashboard as the basis for developing the GPI. Some of the Dashboard measures could be incorporated into the calculation for the GPI with districts reported as meeting the indicator if they meet 80 percent of the included measures. Some measures may be more heavily weighted," they said.*

*Another alternative proposal is a point system similar to that proposed in the ODE input measures; more weight can be given to specific measures such as for service that has a higher priority. The measures can also be combined into various categories for an overall category grade.*

*Dodd asked if the presenters had seen the proposal by Dr. Cohen; both Sheldon and Boyle said they had. Vice President Gunlock said, "The goal is to find the best solution. This will be the first state to come up with a Gifted Indicator. I don't want this to become a conflict between the Board and other groups. I am really struggling with how to do this (GPI)."*

*Cohen returned to make some comments on the OAGC presentation, "I want to make clear my comment about the cut-offs. I never said what it should be. I simply said that the threshold is an indicator of who is meeting and who is not meeting. One of the key issues is how to deal with the current OAA and OGT assessments as an achievement measure. We are faced with the issue that we are stuck with the assessments we have. The problem is that we have a kind of 'ceiling effect' that can't be dealt with easily."*

*Cohen said his proposal "gives an opportunity to measure performance in a meaningful statistical way. An indicator cannot show every nuance; it is just a general measure of where we are headed."*

*President Terhar asked, "Can we get enough data?" Cohen answered, "This is a problem of measuring what we've got."*

*Boyle responded, "We don't doubt that the levels have research behind it. However, it was based on the general population. Our concern is that the achievement levels within the gifted range are really different. The NCE (Normed Curve Equivalent) is a better measure and can be more definitive. We are really concerned with this range and this data that we have available."*

*President Terhar asked Cohen about a category that was taken out of the Board Resolution. Cohen said, "This gets to issues of complexity and confusion. We felt that the best way to move forward was to take away some opportunities for manipulation by deleting the percentage of served as a percentage of those identified. It's a statistic of the other two." Terhar said, "But I think it's kind of important" to have that statistic left in. Cohen said, "By and large, it's not going to change anything, but we can change it – it's not a problem."*

*Adrian Allison, superintendent of Canton City Schools, spoke as a representative of the Ohio 8 Coalition. "I've been on both sides of the fence with this. This is incredibly complicated. As a superintendent, I want clarity. The report card or the dashboard may not incentivize districts to serve students better. When we are dealing with resources, we have to prioritize." Chairman Gunlock asked Allison to go back to the Coalition and prepare a response to Cohen's proposal.>>*