

President Elshoff, Vice President Hollister, Superintendent DeMaria, and members of the board. My name is Suzanne Palmer, and I am the President-elect of the Ohio Association for Gifted Children and a district gifted coordinator. I am here today to share with you the great concern I have with the newly published list of approved test instruments for gifted identification in the state of Ohio.

To give you a little background, I have been a district gifted coordinator for almost ten years now and am very familiar with the Chart of Approved Test Instruments that has previously been provided to us from the Ohio Department of Education to ensure compliance with the screening and identification of gifted students as prescribed in the gifted operating standards. I, along with my colleagues, felt confident in the provided list because of the manner in which the assessments were reviewed prior to placement onto the list. Under the previous process, assessments were reviewed by a gifted testing committee that was comprised of a team of professionals that included a representative with a background in gifted education, psychology, and assessment, a school psychologist who understood assessment and served as a district test coordinator, another school psychologist who specialized in gifted education research and assessment, and finally two assessment statisticians from ODE. The work of this committee resulted in a seven-page document of quality assessments that we as coordinators could feel confident would allow us to make informed decisions about the appropriate assessments in all areas of gifted identification to meet the needs of our district's student populations.

I believe that in an effort to stream-line the approval process for state assessments, it has created a disservice to students in the state of Ohio when it comes to gifted identification. That gifted testing committee is no longer in existence, and we now have just a one-page document of approved test instruments that consists of only 23 assessments of which approximately half are approved for gifted identification and does not contain approved test instruments for all areas of gifted identifications which are mandated by the state to identify students as gifted. This is in sharp contrast to the extensive list we had prior to this newly published list and allowed us to thoughtfully reflect upon and select the best instruments for our given populations.

The department of education provides coordinators with helpful suggestions when it comes to selecting test instruments for gifted identification and I would

like to highlight a couple of those now and the concerns with the new list as it applies to the recommendations from the state.

**Understand Your Students** - *Know the areas of identification you wish to assess and make a list of the instruments that measure those constructs. Compare the demographic data of the norming sample to your district profile. Look for norming samples that align with your district population in terms of gender, economic status, race and disability factors. Also, remember that “fairness” does not necessarily mean using the same test with every student. A test that may be an excellent screening tool for most students may be inappropriate for some.*

With this particular list, we are now limited in the ability to consider such factors as disability, economic status, race, and gender. There are very limited individually administered IQ and achievement tests a part of the list. The Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, 5th Edition is an IQ assessment has always been described to me by psychologist as the “Cadillac” or Gold Standard in cognitive assessments because of the information that it provides about the learner. It is also one of the most universally accepted intelligence assessments throughout the nation and is successful at identifying our twice-exceptional students. But it is one that is no longer permitted to be used here in Ohio.

With the limited number of assessments available on this list, it presents a real challenge in identifying our underrepresented populations. For example, per the gifted operating standards we are required to provide an additional testing opportunity for students who score within the established screening range. In reviewing the list, I am concerned as a coordinator that I will not have a second assessment available for a student who needs a second nonverbal cognitive assessment should he score in the screening range of an assessment. This is not providing a fair testing opportunity for this particular student.

**Seek Expert Advice** - *Consult with district school psychologists and other gifted coordinators. Investigate what other like districts are using and determine if those tests are appropriate for your needs. Read critical reviews of tests from the Buros Institute, gifted education journals and other non-biased sources. Seek advice from test publishers regarding questions about*

*proper administration and scoring, but do not rely on marketing materials from publishers as your sole source of information for test selection.*

This particular tip on ODE's website is one that the community of gifted coordinators consistently practices, and at one time was practiced by the Ohio Department of Education in the manner in which it selected its approved test instruments.

**Be Informed** - *The purpose of the identification process is to give students an opportunity to demonstrate their potential. Understand the connection between identification and services. No one test is appropriate for all situations or with all students. A fair and accurate assessment and identification system is a key ingredient in a high quality, comprehensive continuum of gifted education services.*

No one test IS appropriate for all situations or with all students. Therefore, the compilation of seven pages of assessments gave us great flexibility to provide a fair and accurate assessment.

Of even greater concern is that currently on the list there are no test instruments on the approved list for screening of both the visual and performing arts and creative thinking ability. This presents a real challenge as we are required to conduct whole group screenings for creative thinking ability at least once during both the K-2 and 3-6 grade bands per the gifted operating standards. Nor would we be able to administer screenings for any visual and performing arts referrals we receive. Again, this puts us out of compliance with law as we are required to identify students as gifted in both the areas of creative thinking ability and the visual and performing arts.

The list is very limited and does not encompass all of the areas we are required to identify students as gifted and does not ensure "fairness" in the identification process for our diverse population throughout the state of Ohio. Please consider adding those assessments previously approved through the gifted testing committee to the current list. This will address the issue of creative thinking ability and the visual and performing arts assessments. It will also provide greater choice to ensure that we identify the most appropriate test for all underrepresented populations and to address gender, economic status, race, and disability.

Another concern I have is with the approval of an instrument that was not approved by the gifted testing committee but has been added to this new list of instruments. It is my understanding that the gifted testing committee, again a group with expertise in the area of gifted and testing, did not find enough research to validate its content against other nationally-normed achievement assessments for gifted identification. It is important to understand that while this instrument may be a good tool for other purposes, if it is on the list of approved instruments, it must be used for gifted identification. In addition, while my particular district might not select to use this instrument, if I have a child who transfers in with scores from this assessment, I must accept these scores for gifted identification. So, I ask that the department consider involving those with expertise in the field in the approval process as they can provide the most informed lens to approving assessments that can ultimately change a student's educational path.

I do appreciate the department's attention to this matter in regards to the opportunity for the grace period that has just been recently added. This is extremely helpful to my district as an assessment that we use on a regular basis (over 250 times during the FY18 school year) is not on the newest list, and thus would have needed to be replaced with a different assessment. Given the date of the release of the new list, this did not allow for me to budget appropriately for a new test for FY19 year.

However, moving forward, the gifted community needs some assurance that during the next year that the ODE process that created this assessment list that is so harmful to the appropriate identification of gifted children will be altered so that the needs of gifted assessment are fully addressed. The gifted community, as always, is happy to provide assistance and input. But we need to know that during the next year, that our input and expert advice will actually be considered and respected by the individuals at ODE in charge of the assessment process.

Thank you for time, and I appreciate your action on this important matter.