

Ways Districts Have Spent Their Gifted Funds When Given Flexibility

The education bureaucracy groups that represent school boards, superintendents, and treasurers are have come out in support of maximum flexibility for districts to spend gifted funds any way they see fit. Unfortunately, we have some experience about how this plays out at the district level. From 2009 to the current budget year, districts that previously had received gifted unit funding and identification funding were allowed to spend the funds for unspecified gifted services under a maintenance of effort provision. Rather than actually spending gifted funding on gifted students, a good amount of this funding was diverted to other functions. After a quick poll of individuals in districts who are aware of how these funds were spent, I have compiled a short list. I saved my favorite for last:

1. EMIS coordination – Rationale – some students are gifted, therefore. Some data entry was for students who were gifted.
2. General Office Supplies – Rationale – they may be used on gifted students.
3. Grant coordinators – Rationale – some of those funds generated from grants might be used in classrooms where there are gifted students.
4. Filing cabinets – Rationale -- Some files held information on students who were gifted.
5. Gifted testing – in districts where there is no evidence of testing. A review of an ODE audit showed a district with EMIS records where 0 students were screened, assessed or identified in any category or grade level. ODE staff indicated the district was in compliance because they had a gifted identification plan on file, and ODE takes it on faith that is implemented even when presented with evidence that it is not.
6. “Computer Assisted Programs” – (e.g. Study Island, an OAA test prep program)
7. Video Cameras for Visual Performing Arts identification – even though the district does not identify any students in VPA and doesn’t have a process for doing so.
8. New computer for the superintendent. The gifted coordinator was given the superintendent’s old computer, which subsequently crashed losing all gifted student data in the process....
9. Classroom teachers who had gifted students in the classroom – the students are on a written education plan, but the classroom teachers have no background in gifted, no training, and do no differentiation. This is apparently very common practice across Ohio.
10. Advanced Placement training for teachers in AP classes that are open to all students and may or may not have any gifted students in the classroom. Also, a common practice noted.
11. Regular classroom teacher on leave of absence who happened to have a gifted license. The teacher was fired before returning to the classroom.
12. Gifted coordination services from a gifted coordinator who was deceased.