

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Erica Baer-Woods, OAGC President

As many of us are well aware, these past four years have brought us into previously uncharted educational waters. From the uncertainty of navigating a pandemic; to empathetically and strategically addressing students' postpandemic learning gaps; to the lightning-fast advent of accessible AI and state-mandated science of reading instruction, each of us has been called to expertly and strategically navigate these siren songs chiming for our attention while simultaneously serving our gifted students' unique learning needs. At first thought, these waters can seem overwhelming. Gone are the comfortable years of leaning on tried-and-true lesson plans; we must now meet the demands not only of new mandates but also of new technologies (AI), which can render previous years' plans not only insufficient but even deleterious. If students can easily generate our research papers via AI or essay helps, then they are no longer engaging with the rigor necessary to develop the critical thinking or "stretch" necessary to fully actualize their potential.

It is within this dynamic, charting these waters, that our gifted community becomes ever more necessary: as educators, we need each other. Through cooperative brainstorming, strategic resource sharing, informed and collaborative conversation, and creative engagement with (rather than collective hiding from) these changes and mandates, we can jump together into these new waters, leveraging our collective creativity, discoveries, and expertise to better serve students and families. So much is changing, and so quickly, that no individual educator can stay abreast of the developments. Instead, it is through our synergistic alliance that we, as an organization, can forge new and exciting pathways of educational discovery, applying and synthesizing our discoveries not only to promote the additional rigor, creative thinking, and differentiated instruction our students need but also to come alongside our colleagues



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in other disciplines (i.e., special education, core subjects, or the arts) to share our successes, concerns, and best practices to benefit students across Ohio. As your incoming president, it is my joy to navigate alongside you. I look forward to this year—the celebrations, the challenges, and the opportunities it brings—and am excited to join you in serving the best interests of students and families through our collaboration, our conferences, and our conversations.

As you begin the 2024–2025 school year, may you feel the support of your colleagues (both locally and across the state), grow both personally and professionally, and experience the wonder of watching students' minds grow, change, and explore as you present them with relevant educational challenges. Welcome to this year, and welcome (again) to the OAGC!