

ALLEN COUNTY EDUCATIONAL SERVICE CENTER  
TESTIMONY TO RETAIN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN GIFTED TRAINING

Chairwoman Lehner, Vice-Chairman Huffman, Ranking Minority Member Sykes, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on S.B. No. 216. My name is Judy Chaffins.

I would like to speak with you today about how the gifted professional development rule requiring thirty hours of training has benefitted the teachers and subsequently, students, in Allen County this year.

The power of the thirty plus hours of gifted training is the power of knowledge, communication and creative problem solving. Teachers need to understand gifted children and how to maximize their development. This includes both their academic growth, but more importantly, their social/emotional development--those life skills that set them up for a productive life.

Teachers get no training in their undergraduate education regarding gifted students and gifted issues. There has been little incentive for them to take additional training in it post-degree. And in most school professional development plans, the emphasis is on everyone and everything except gifted children. Their needs are relegated to the "nice to know" category versus the "need to know." For many teachers and administrators, when it comes to gifted children, they don't know what they don't know. The natural consequences of that is gifted students' needs are prioritized to the bottom of the list of mandated trainings year after year.

I trained forty-four teachers in response to this gifted requirement this past summer and am in process of training over 100 more this year. In my experience with this training, I have been pleasantly surprised at the enthusiasm and receptiveness of most teachers participating.

They have remarked how they have felt "in the dark" as to how and when their school identifies gifted children and other issues, particularly social/emotional and learning differences. I watched as they collaborated together to brainstorm new ways of grouping students to help meet their needs as a result of this new awareness. These teachers then sought new curriculum ideas to help gifted students grow.

One math high school teacher told me she did not need new gifted math materials. She felt a greater good could be served if I found her materials regarding teen suicides. That issue has increasingly impacted their district in the past few years. Some of those students have been gifted.

One high school art teacher incubated how to meet the needs of all of his students better after taking training in differentiation and invented a new teaching device called, "Table Teachers." Lesson plans are put on display for groups of students to pursue individually, or as a small group. With this approach, he has been able to deliver instruction to three different art classes during one class period. His AP scores have gone up exponentially as evidence this new way of thinking and teaching engages students. His average scores were 3.05 in 2015 and rose to a

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3.93 last year. Without participating in the training, this teacher would not have been so keenly aware of the need to rethink his classroom.

The ACT is a commonly used test high school students take to indicate their preparedness for college and career. Ohio's average ACT score was 22 for 2017. ACT has done research on students classified as underserved on their preparedness for college. These are students who face additional barriers to college and career success due to low-income, minority status, or being the first generation in their family to attend college. Only **nine percent** of ACT-tested graduates with all three underserved characteristics exemplified strong readiness for college coursework last year. The analysis indicates in order to increase the odds of these students succeeding, schools need to do early intervention and much guidance.

This is a significant factor to look at as applied to gifted students because the trend in recent history is to eliminate specialized gifted services, particularly in rural schools and at younger ages. Without trained teachers to encourage bright students, regardless of their circumstances, fewer students will have access to an education appropriate for their ability. This is a severe equity and opportunity gap.

You might ask yourself, or research, what kinds of experiences are gifted students exposed to while going through your own school system that equips them to handle college and career? Life skills necessary for all include resiliency, persistence, coping skills and realistic expectations for themselves and others. Sometimes we overlook guiding the development of those skills in gifted children because they seem to be successful without our guidance or we dismiss them because they make inappropriate social responses.

It is well known that many very highly successful high school gifted graduates go on to college and suddenly struggle. There are many reasons for that. If, in their growth through their early years, they were overly praised and rewarded for accomplishing learning they had already acquired with little or no struggle, they get a false sense of what learning and life is about. They do not learn life skills pertaining to hard work. They may never have to learn to develop organizational skills until they hit college. The independent nature of the college atmosphere can be a pitfall for them they do not fully understand. If they falter, they may overreact and drop out or make other poor choices with severe consequences, such as drug or alcohol abuse.

Gifted students may also not learn how to persist when faced with a new challenge that is difficult. Suddenly in college, they are sitting beside others who may have gone to a more rigorous school and are better equipped to handle college than they are. They may have been at the top of their class in all areas, but carry a score of a 25 on the ACT. The person sitting beside them often has the same high school profile, but because their school was more challenging, that student's ACT score is a 34. That is a huge difference in knowledge-base and the student with the higher score has typically been involved in more problem-solving experiences than the other, so they are also more skilled.

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In their growth from kindergarten through high school, gifted children acquire a superficial idea of success if not guided by knowledgeable educators. Getting “A’s” without much effort becomes the goal. Building a resume becomes a goal. But sometimes in building that resume, they lose sight of their own passions and values. They are performing, not developing their own unique path. They do not take risks, or even think they should. They play it safe to attain praises and rewards. And with our best intentions, we aid and abet the pursuit of these rewards that, in the end, do not always equip the student for life.

In planning for professional development, cost is always a factor. The good news is that every district receives money earmarked for gifted, although keep in mind this money has been inadequate for years.\* If a district does not employ a gifted intervention specialist or a gifted coordinator, that money can easily be used for this gifted training.

The cost to get licensed in gifted education is around \$10,000 per person and the burden of that cost falls solely on the staff member taking the graduate level coursework. We have had fewer and fewer staff members electing to get this type of license because there is no protection of job security and fewer and fewer job openings. I posted a gifted position last year and had no one apply that was already certified. It took me several months to fill the job.

Teachers want to do great work for all students. Training is a necessary part of their professional growth. Gifted training accomplishes so much to help them with all students. It is great teaching for the entire spectrum of students in their care, but gifted students will benefit exponentially from it. It is a win-win and knowledge is power. Teachers are so capable of developing better paths for gifted students in many creative, rewarding, and cost-free ways. We just need to make them aware of needs, issues, strategies, and resources. Please empower this to continue with the thirty-hour requirement.

In conclusion, are our gifted students really succeeding? If they are, are they succeeding because of us, or in spite of us? If, in spite of us, what might we have lost as a result?

Thank you for your time. I will be honored to answer questions you may have.

Respectfully,  
Judy Chaffins

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<b>Allen County School Districts Gifted Funding</b>	<b>1210: Special Instruction and Services for Academically Gifted</b>	<b>1211: Gifted Identification</b>	<b>2230: Gifted Support Services, Unspecified</b>	<b>2231: Coordination Services</b>	<b>2232: Training Services</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2017 Capped Gifted Funding</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>Spending Less Than Received</b>
Allen East Local	\$1,662.12	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,662.12	\$58,677.16	\$57,015.04	Yes
Bath Local							\$64,071.24	\$64,071.24	Yes
Bluffton Ex Vill							\$58,242.10	\$58,242.10	Yes
Delphos City	\$7.70	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$350.00	\$357.70	\$58,252.81	\$57,895.11	Yes
Elida Local	\$39,289.57	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$39,289.57	\$112,026.08	\$72,736.51	Yes
Lima City	\$267,522.39	\$1,002.40	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$268,524.79	\$231,333.34	-\$37,191.45	No
Perry Local	\$9,004.87	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$9,004.87	\$37,272.03	\$28,267.16	Yes
Shawnee Local	\$145,991.19	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$145,991.19	\$85,064.96	-\$60,926.23	No
Spencerville Local	\$10,926.87	\$3,130.33	\$0.00	\$35,087.74	\$2,792.64	\$51,937.58	\$53,929.56	\$1,991.98	Yes

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