

Chairwoman Lehner, Vice Chairman Huffman, Ranking Minority Member Sykes, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB216. I am especially concerned about the provision that would prohibit the State Board of Education requirement that general classroom teachers providing services to gifted students receive professional development in gifted education.

My name is Sally Roberts. I am writing from the background of an elementary classroom teacher, gifted intervention specialist, gifted services supervisor (now retired), and parent of two gifted adults. For me, the time I devoted to public education became an amazing journey of discovery.

My first teaching assignment was in a third-grade classroom in 1969. As I think about the hundreds of students that have been in my elementary classrooms over the years, the faces of gifted students like Janice, Eric, Diane, Tom, Sarah, Ben, and Greg, come to mind. They were students in my classes before I had coursework in gifted education. While I did the best I could with what I had available to me, I want to apologize to them for the educational malpractice I committed during those years in the classroom when I was unaware of their special needs.

When my own children were identified as gifted almost 30 years ago, I was still unprepared as a parent. There was no support at the district level to help students or parents understand the implications of that identification. Teachers there at the time, including me, simply did not have the coursework or professional development to help them understand and act on strategies to help gifted students - neither teachers nor principals had the expertise to deal with that special needs population in a consistent, educationally sound manner.

My eyes were opened in 1994, when my school district posted an opening for a gifted teacher, and I started taking courses in gifted at Wright State University's graduate program. I began to reflect on my general classroom experiences and had many "a-ha" moments. My attitudes and strategies in dealing with gifted students began to evolve and had a profound effect on my thinking and actions. I was assigned to the gifted resource room for six years. It was the hardest work I had done in my career.

In 2000, I left the gifted classroom to become the district's gifted services supervisor. A part of my responsibilities was to act as a liaison between gifted students and their families and the teachers and administrators in the district. In some cases, I was more of a referee between frustrated parents who were just beginning to understand the need for and language of advocacy on behalf of their child and educators who were resistant to acknowledging that any gifted student might need accommodations to provide support and ensure growth. As you ponder that statement, please keep in mind that a gifted student, with an IQ of 130 or above and/or in the top 5% in a specific area is as far from the mean as a student with an IQ of 70 or below and in the lowest 5% in a specific area. The recommended hours of professional development specific to gifted education would have helped all educators understand and be able to act on that information.

What does section (D)(8)(b) of the "Rule" require? Only that general classroom teachers who are counted as providing gifted services to identified student have ongoing professional development in gifted education and ongoing support from an educator who holds a gifted license or endorsement so the classroom teacher can:

- differentiate instruction using accelerated content depth, and complexity
- adapt or create curriculum to incorporate advanced, challenging content
- modify learning strategies and select alternative assignments and projects that have depth and complexity
- understand the social and emotional needs of gifted students and the impact those needs have on learning
- recognize and respond to characteristics and needs of gifted students from underrepresented populations
- use data from to measure and monitor the growth of gifted students
- select, use, and interpret technically sound assessments for academic decision making, and
- participate in the development of a student's Written Educational Plan.

You can see these competencies listed in the 2017 Ohio Operating Standards of Identifying and Serving Students Who Are Gifted <https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Other-Resources/Gifted-Education/Rules-Regulations-and-Policies-for-Gifted-Educatio/Gifted-Operating-Standards-OAC-3301-51-15.pdf.aspx>, beginning on page 7.

I am asking you to take steps to help ensure that services provided to gifted students are of high quality by affirming the need for professional development according to the 2017 Ohio Operating Standards of Identifying and Serving Students Who Are Gifted <https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Other-Resources/Gifted-Education/Rules-Regulations-and-Policies-for-Gifted-Educatio/Gifted-Operating-Standards-OAC-3301-51-15.pdf.aspx> and the Ohio ESSA plan to reduce sub-group size.

- Support the provision in the rule that requires general education teachers who are reported as delivering gifted services receive professional development in gifted education.
- Support the requirement that qualified staff oversee gifted service models and delivery.
- Support accountability for academic growth of gifted students by allowing the sub-group size to phase down to 15 students from the current 30 student size.

Why should you do this?

- Do it for Chase, who, as a second grade student, told me that he got the concept (his word) of double digit addition the first time his classroom teacher taught it... and then she taught it 22 more times. Chase skipped 3rd grade, and was a National Merit Scholarship finalist.
- Do it for Becca, whose mother told me that after Becca's first day in the gifted resource room, she came home with tears in her eyes. Her Mother's eyes filled with tears, too, when Becca told her, "Mom, these people get me!" Help general classroom teachers get it, too.
- Do it for Justin, whose vocabulary and math skills were far above grade level, yet he struggled with reading and writing. In fact, he was retained in first grade. Justin was a twice exceptional student...learning disabled and gifted. Educators without training in gifted education had completely missed his abilities because they were focused on what Justin couldn't do rather than on what he could. Professional development would have helped teachers recognize him as a member of an underserved population and would have prevented that retention from happening.
- Do it for Ryann and Jessica, whose general education teachers and principals did not believe that gifted children should be clustered for instruction or be subject or grade level accelerated. Professional development would help them understand that those are two effective strategies to meet gifted students' needs.

Please remove the provision in SB 216 that prohibits gifted professional development standards. Do it for the thousands of gifted students whose talents will be diminished or lost when they are not appropriately served. Won't you please stand with these, our brightest students, and insist that Ohio provide for their educational needs with qualified gifted education staff and general classroom teachers who are trained to meet the needs of gifted children?

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