

strategic plan for social interactions, or making accommodations to overcome other factors. Adults need your help in understanding what you need.

2. **Share your Passions** - If there is a topic, subject, or activity you are passionate about, share it! Ask if there's a way to bring that into what you're learning in the classroom. Share it with peers - you will likely find others who share the same passions or ignite a spark for someone else. This can help enrich your school experience as well as others. This can even turn into a positive project for the school or community. How can you use your passion to impact others?
3. **Connect with Others** - Fight the temptation to withdraw from others. While it may feel awkward or scary at first, putting yourself in new situations gives you an opportunity to grow. There is a lot to be learned from your peers, and a lot they can learn from you! Maybe start with finding a trusted adult in the school to check-in with from time-to-time, or finding a small group of students to eat lunch with. Check out the clubs, activities, after-school programs, community groups, and other options available for you to get connected. You may find a volunteer opportunity or a way to use your gifts in a new space. Keep an open mind - we all need connection to grow.

Whatever group you find yourself in, take the opportunity to be a voice for gifted students in your circle of influence. Start small, and watch how quickly you can make waves.

ADVOCACY CORNER

By Abbie Sigmon

What to Expect in 2025?

The last session I attended at NAGC '24 was the NAGC Business Meeting. NAGC Executive Director, John Segota presented the NAGC fiscal year revenues, expenses, memberships, and conference numbers. Shelagh Gallagher, NAGC President, spoke about growth, equity, and the future of NAGC. The two of them opened their session for questions and hands across the room shot up.

Shelagh noted that in this time of ambiguity and uncertainty in national politics NAGC's public policy positions have held firm from administration to administration. Now is the time to focus on long-range legislative plans and priorities at the federal level. Javits funding continues to be a priority for NAGC. With the same level of funding from 2022 to 2023 (\$16.5 million), NAGC is hopeful for continued funding for research into underserved populations, curriculum and best practices. Additionally, NAGC will continue to push for the Advanced Coursework Equity (ACE) Act which would address the schism between historically marginalized and underrepresented children who perform at the same level as gifted peers and their enrollment and service in gifted programs.

Trends at our own state level are mirroring those seen in federal politics. We have seen similarities with the recent passing of SB1 (which removed the powers of the State Board of Education) and conversations around the removal of the Federal Department of Education. As can be expected with republican administrations, there is a trend of smaller government in all forms.

Aron Boxer, founder and CEO of Diversified Education Services outlines this paradigm shift in stating that "[people are] feeling that there's too much control, too much oversight." when it comes to education at the federal level. "We will send education back to the states," Trump said in his announcement of Linda McMahon as Secretary of Education. Compared to conversations last budget season in the Statehouse, Senator Brenner (R-Powell) described the State Board of Education as "sluggish and incapable of getting through the bureaucracies." While knowing these trends will help the OAGC focus on lobbying for the upcoming general assembly, OAGC's policy positions do not change from administration to administration. We will continue to

advocate on behalf of the gifted child with a focus on gifted education funding, accountability, and services.

Funding

OAGC will continue to lobby for a change to the ratio between gifted students to gifted intervention specialists in grades K-6. Currently, HB110 requires that ratio to be 140:1. This ratio is leading to a degradation of gifted services throughout the state. The current recommended ratio in the gifted operating standards is 80:1 for students in self-contained classrooms or cluster-group settings. OAGC will continue to lobby for a reduced ratio of 100:1.

As mentioned during the Gifted Rule process of 2024, OAGC is firm in its position that general education teachers must have required professional development hours in gifted education. Alongside this position, OAGC recommends that the state retains the current level of gifted development funds.

Currently, there is a cap of the number of coordinators that may serve each district. This is an arbitrary and unfounded policy that OAGC disagrees with. This cap can hurt our larger districts.

Accountability

The latest Gifted Advisory Council meeting highlighted a slight upward trend in gifted identification in Ohio in 2023-2024 compared to 2022-2023 at 15.6% identified compared to 15.1% respectively. While this small increase should be celebrated, we are still below the 16.4% identified in 2019-2020 and still nearly 15% lower since 2009. Services continue to increase throughout the state with 69.4% of gifted identified students receiving services. These services, however, must be accelerated or supported at minimum levels by qualified gifted intervention specialists. Far too many districts indicate that gifted students are being served, even though the services provided are at undefined levels of differentiated instruction from a classroom teacher with minimal training in gifted education and without support from a gifted intervention specialist. We must be aware that districts are reporting sub-par service in order to gain input points on the gifted performance indicator. The Ohio Revised Code should be strengthened specifically outlined to ensure that reported gifted services are meaningful.

Services

- ▷ Gifted service must be required with appropriate staffing and funding. The rift between gifted identification and service cannot be ignored. The state of Ohio must recognize that gifted service must be mandated with appropriate staffing and funding so that all gifted students may reach their fullest potentials.
- ▷ OAGC recommends developing regional and alternative opportunities particularly in rural areas. Gifted students

deserve to be challenged and served at advanced educational levels, not simply at the highest level their district provides.

- ▷ Establish county or regional gifted magnet schools. ESCs, joint vocational schools, and interested school districts and universities should be allowed to develop gifted magnet schools that students in that region could attend.
- ▷ Expand open enrollment. Gifted students should be allowed to enroll in districts with gifted services if their own district does not offer them gifted services.
- ▷ Allow vouchers for gifted students. There are often few or no options for gifted students whose needs are not being met in their home district. Ohio should consider allowing vouchers for gifted students when districts are unwilling or unable to provide appropriate services.
- ▷ Create a virtual gifted middle/high school. Access to high-level coursework can be particularly difficult in smaller districts and/or rural areas. A state-supported virtual middle/high school should be provided to students regardless of location.

These funding, accountability, and service positions are not complete lists, though they give you a better understanding of our priorities in the next legislative session.

For the complete legislative position paper, please visit www.oagc.com/advocacy.

To keep abreast of all advocacy news, please check the OAGC website frequently for new policy and advocacy items: <https://oagc.com/advocacy/advocacy-alerts/>.

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