

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Erica Baer-Woods, OAGC President



OAGC President, Erica Baer-Woods

Friends and colleagues:

As I write this President's Message much before you will see it -- on Valentine's Day -- I am reminded of our "why". We are facing tumultuous educational waters, whether from rumblings of potential cuts to ponderous legislation. Forces from within and without leverage their opposition to public education, the heart of equity in a democracy. As Paine once wrote, "These are the times that try men's souls," and yet, we do not lose heart. We have, as educators, faced such waters before and prevailed because of our why. What is this why? It is our love.

Ask almost any educator why they chose the profession, and they will tell you a story: a beloved teacher, a coach, a mentor inspired them to "pour into" young people, and they pursued a career in education. Motivated not by money or fame, they pursued education for the lives they would touch, the difference they would make. For those in gifted education, the story is similar: parents of talented youth, desperate to find challenge for their children, gathered and formed NAGC. Families of the gifted, desiring change, formed OAGC and gathered like-minded educators. Born of love for the next generation, adults gathered to advocate for and effect change -- change that would forever augment the educational trajectory for highly capable students across the state.

As we navigate these waters of advocacy and equity together, I would remind you of Ohio's great gains for gifted children since OAGC's inception. We remain one of the few states with mandated universal screenings; we have witnessed implementation of required gifted professional development for service providers; and our state is currently crafting a vision for gifted education. While we celebrate these gains, our love tells us we still have much to accomplish: until each highly capable student has access to the challenge, rigor, and instruction that foster growth, creativity, and engagement -- whether through formal gifted programming, enrichment opportunities, or community-based programs -- our work remains. May our love -- our why -- inspire us to pull together, work harder, and continue the fight. Together, we rise.

All the best,
Erica Baer-Woods, OAGC President