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THE OAGC REVIEW is published three times each year: spring, fall, and winter. The deadlines for submission of articles and advertisements are February 15, June 15, and November 15, respectively. Permission to reproduce items in the OAGC REVIEW is to be obtained from the authors. Submit articles to executive director Ann Sheldon at anngift@aol.com.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Sarah Lee



I can't believe that we are just a few months away from closing another school year—and what a school year it has been! The 2020 school year closed in a way that few of us could hope to fathom. We were unprepared for the effects that this worldwide pandemic would have on education as we know it. School administrators were required to respond to the situation with limited time and resources. Although this year has brought a lot of uncertainty, fear, and unknowns, I have seen an extreme level of dedication and commitment from educators to meet the needs of their students. I have the pleasure of working as a gifted coordinator and gifted intervention specialist in a rural district in southeast Ohio, and I know how challenging it has been for so many. We had to move from our comfortable in-person approach to a completely remote environment that was foreign to some educators and students alike. My own position in the classroom changed to accommodate our district needs, while still working to meet the needs of our gifted students.

In our current hybrid teaching model, about 60 percent of our students physically attend school three days per week and complete virtual instruction on the other two days, while the other 40 percent are completely virtual learners. Before students began, our staff worked tirelessly to learn the new tools and programs required to convert paper-and-pencil work to online interactive material, to record screencasts, to stream live lessons, and to prepare tutorial videos for both students and parents. The first few weeks were intense, with a lot of fears, tears, and frustrations from staff, students, and parents alike, but through it all we banded together and adjusted to the new routine.

This pandemic has changed not only the way that our educators approach teaching but also how many organizations are able to function. The OAGC was no

exception. Our executive director, secretary, and board members quickly rose to the occasion to ensure that our annual conferences would continue. We attended other virtual conferences, contacted other organizations for tips, tested various platforms and apps, spent hours behind the scenes recording, downloading, uploading, and moderating and learned a *lot* of lessons along the way. Our conference model was quickly propelled into the 21st century with our first virtual fall conference. Through the lessons learned from the Annual Fall Conference and Coordinator Conference, we hope that our upcoming Teacher Academy is another huge success. Although we are all waiting for the normal, in-person conference again, we have found many tools in the on-line format that we hope to continue into the future.

As the vaccine begins to roll out and we become more accustomed to this new routine, hope is there, hope for a new normal or a return to the normal we once knew. One constant through all these changes is that our students are here. Whether your district is fully virtual, hybrid, or in person with six feet of distance and masks in place, the students are ready to learn, and we are all dedicated to doing whatever it takes to ensure their success. As we closed the 2020 school year, we did not know that we were on the precipice of some of the most challenging times of our careers, but we made it work the best we could. We will continue to be flexible, dedicated, and committed to our gifted students.



*Approved by the
OAGC Governing
Board,
February 22, 2021*

FUNDING

Gifted education funding in Ohio has gone through multiple revisions over the last decade. After the dismantling of the gifted unit funding system at the end of the 2009–2010 school year, gifted education operated under a maintenance-of-effort provision until 2014. This system gave districts absolute discretion, with few or no barriers to using state gifted education funds to meet the needs of gifted children. Unfortunately, the approach resulted in staggeringly negative consequences for gifted students across the state. The system produced, at least on paper, significant increases in funding through a formula that was calculated *inside* the core funding formula itself. (In the gifted unit funding system, all gifted education funds were allocated *outside* the core funding formula.) Because the accountability provisions are weak and go unenforced by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE), the only money that is indisputably allocated to gifted education is the \$3.8 million in educational service center (ESC) funding for gifted coordinators and gifted intervention specialist units.

The current gifted education funding formula allocates \$5.05 per average daily membership (ADM) for the identification of gifted students. In addition, funding for one gifted coordinator unit is allocated for every 3,300 students in a district's gifted unit ADM, with a minimum of 0.5 units and a maximum of 8 units for the district; in addition, one gifted intervention specialist unit is allocated for every 1,100 students in a district's gifted unit ADM, with a minimum of 0.3 units for the district. The value of each unit (\$37,750) is very low, which calls into question the adequacy of the level of funding. However, because services for gifted students are not mandated and because the ODE has not enforced how gifted education funds are spent, the majority of school districts report that they are not spending their allocated amount of formula funding on gifted students. (Please see "2019 State of Gifted Education" for more details.) Under-spending on gifted education is a particular problem in smaller, rural districts. This trend is due, in part, to the cut in gifted ESC unit funding six years ago, from \$8.1 million

to \$3.8 million. Smaller districts are heavily dependent on ESCs to provide gifted services. The theory was that districts would use gifted funding inside the formula to pay ESCs for gifted services if needed. However, many districts do not believe that gifted formula funding need be spent on gifted students. This is an issue for many smaller districts that spend disproportionately less of their gifted formula amounts than the other, larger groups. The funding formula in the governor's proposed budget will likely exacerbate this problem, as wealthier suburban districts would receive increases for gifted education, and smaller, rural districts would suffer funding cuts.

Under contract from the Ohio Department of Education, the Ohio Education Research Center (OERC) conducted a gifted cost study in 2018. Most of the recommendations were incorporated into the Cupp-Patterson school funding bill (HB 305/SB 376) in the 133rd General Assembly and the current bill, HB 1 in the 134th General Assembly. While the OAGC agrees with some of the conclusions of the study, it expresses the following concerns with the study's conclusions:

1. The OERC recommendations largely shift the funding of gifted students to local districts, minimizing state contributions.
2. The OERC study did not offer a concrete solution on gifted funding accountability or a service mandate for gifted students.
3. The OERC study underplays the importance of ESCs in the support of gifted students in smaller, rural districts.
4. The OERC study uses a 140:1 student/gifted intervention specialist ratio at the K–8 grade levels, a level that is not supported by best practice or current administrative code. The OAGC believes that this ratio will lead to degraded services. This ratio would not pass constitutional scrutiny.

For a full list of the OAGC's concerns regarding the OERC cost study and the Cupp-Patterson school funding bill, please refer to OAGC testimony which can be found at <http://www.oagc.com/files/SheldonTestimonyHB305.Dec.1.2020.pdf>.

Legislative Positions for the 134th General Assembly

The OAGC believes that some modifications to the gifted funding formula would be beneficial: removing gifted funding from both the cap and the transitional aid guarantee in the core formula and increasing the value of the gifted unit. The more significant issues, however, are (1) ensuring that all districts are held accountable for gifted education funding already allocated and (2) providing more support to smaller districts. To that end, the OAGC recommends that the legislature do the following:

1. **Restore gifted ESC funding to the 2011–2012 level of \$8.1 million.** ESCs supporting smaller, low-wealth districts should be given priority in funding. Standards should be developed to ensure that state funding for ESCs is set at a level adequate to provide services. HB 110 keeps the current level of funding at \$3.7 million which we support.
2. **Remove the cap on gifted funding in the foundation funding formula and if possible, move the funding outside the transitional aid guarantee to allow more funding to flow to smaller districts.**
3. **Increase the level of unit funding within the foundation formula to ensure that adequate staffing is provided to districts.** Minimum levels of funding should be established for smaller districts.
4. **Specify that gifted funding to districts is designated in the Cupp funding report and the gifted expenditure report so that district expenditures and state gifted funding can be compared.** State gifted funding allocated to districts has not been transparent since the 2018–2019 school year.
5. **Reestablish funding for gifted research and demonstration projects and use a portion of the Straight A funds to fund a rural, gifted initiative.** Summer Honors Institutes that were defunded in 2010 should also be reinstated.
6. **Provide additional funds to support services for under-represented gifted students.**

If the OERC gifted cost study recommendations are to be incorporated into a new funding formula such as the Cupp-Patterson bill, the changes requested by the OAGC

should be included. (Again, please refer to OAGC testimony on HB 305/SB 376 which can be found at <http://www.oagc.com/files/SheldonTestimonyHB305.Dec.1.2020.pdf>).

ACCOUNTABILITY

Flexible use of gifted funds has been tried, and it has failed. Although ORC § 3317.40 states that districts are intended to use student subgroup funding for that specific subgroup, 286 districts are spending below their (capped) allocated gifted funding amount. Only 58 percent of Ohio's gifted children receive services, and many of those services are on paper only. Identification has declined by more than 10 percent since 2009. If all gifted students were performing well, this state of affairs would be less concerning. However, very few districts met the 2019 gifted performance indicator. Please note that these figures are for the 2018–2019 school year. We know from preliminary data that the identification and service of gifted students has been negatively affected for the 2019–2020 and current school years. This lack of accountability for funding and performance has not benefited Ohio's gifted students. The OAGC recommends that the legislature do the following:

1. **Increase the level of accountability for gifted education funding by requiring all districts to spend gifted funding in the foundation formula on identification and on appropriately licensed gifted personnel.** Districts showing great promise in this area could be exempted from this requirement.
2. **Require the ODE to post data on what gifted services are offered at each district by grade band, as well the number of licensed gifted personnel employed or contracted by the district.** The data already exist and will allow parents to compare the types and levels of district services.
3. **Revise the subgroup accountability language (ORC § 3317.40) to allow the ODE to use the full gifted performance indicator to gauge the success of the gifted subgroup.** Currently, the ODE uses only the gifted performance index and gifted value-added scores. ODE staff

has indicated that they are unable to do more because of restrictions in the ORC. As more components are added to the gifted performance indicator, it will become more important for the ODE to factor them in to determine the relative success of the subgroup.

4. **Require districts indicating that they are serving gifted students to provide services that are either accelerated or supported at minimum levels by qualified gifted intervention specialists.** Too many districts indicate that gifted students are being served, even though the services provided are undefined levels of differentiated instruction from a classroom teacher with minimal training in gifted education and without support from a gifted intervention specialist. This is no more than a cynical attempt to increase service numbers to gain input points on the gifted performance indicator. Beyond the inherent ethical questionability of this practice, it greatly hinders the determination of whether and which gifted services have the greatest effect on gifted student performance. If anything can be called service, then nothing is service. While the new gifted operating standards should help address these issues, the law should be strengthened to ensure that reported gifted services are meaningful.
5. **Ensure that any changes to district report cards maintain the gifted performance indicator.** The indicator should be changed to increase emphasis on identification of and service to underrepresented student populations, with changes to how minority populations are defined. Changes to the value-added scores and the gifted performance index should also be explored along with revisions to how points are allocated to districts with smaller populations of minority and economically disadvantaged students.

OTHER CONCERNS

The OAGC recommends that a taskforce be created to address the gifted equity gap in Ohio, which is severe. Ohio, in general, has an equity gap between gifted students who are economically disadvantaged and those who are not. Economically disadvantaged students are less than half as likely to be identified as gifted as their noneconomically-disadvantaged peers. Even worse, Black and Hispanic students are only 36 percent as likely to be identified as gifted as are their non-Black, non-Hispanic peers. In addition, Ohio's gifted rural students are falling behind on almost every measure. They are less likely to be identified or served. They are less likely to receive services from qualified gifted education professionals. Funding for gifted education in rural districts is inadequate. Cultural norms in some rural areas do not support gifted students. Funds for ESC gifted units should be increased to support rural areas that are vastly underserved. Finally, funds should be allocated to develop solu-

tions to combat the equity gap in all districts as well as rural gifted initiatives.

The supplemental endorsement license Option B provision should be removed. In 2018, the ODE allowed districts two options to assign teachers without the appropriate licensure or endorsement into various roles, including gifted intervention specialist. Option A of the supplemental licensure requires that the teacher receive the appropriate coursework for the license or endorsement. Option B, however, requires no coursework and currently has few or no controls on the quality of how the teacher would acquire the knowledge appropriate to their assigned role. The OAGC objects to the use of Option B for supplemental endorsement as bad policy for students and teachers forced into these roles with little to no expectation that they will receive appropriate training.

The OAGC requests that the General Assembly remove or revise the provision that allows "qualified" administrators to serve as gifted coordinators. In many districts, this provision has been misinterpreted to mean that anyone can be a gifted coordinator. This provision has undermined even the minimal level of support that gifted children receive in many districts, where few individuals have training in gifted education. Presently, entire counties in Ohio lack access to licensed gifted coordinators. Not surprisingly, districts in these counties lag in providing services to gifted students, whose performance is suffering as a result.

The ODE gifted assessment reviews must include appropriate gifted reviewers. Until 2018, gifted assessments were reviewed by individuals outside the ODE with specific gifted assessment knowledge. The elimination of these outside reviewers in 2018 resulted in a list of approved gifted assessments that was limited. Particularly disturbing was the inconsistent use of scoring rubrics, which allowed for assessments with low reliability scores to be approved for use as gifted identifiers. The OAGC believes that gifted assessments should be reviewed by experts in the field and used at the district level as they had been prior to 2018.

The OAGC requests changes to College Credit Plus (CCP). The OAGC is concerned about certain of the changes regarding College Credit Plus in 2018, particularly with regard to new restrictions on student access to the program. Specifically, the OAGC is concerned with the following:

- The inability of parents to appeal to the State Board of Education any local school district's decision to prohibit the student from participating in CCP after the deadline.
- Restrictions on access to certain courses as determined by rules developed by the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE), when institutions of higher education

(IHEs) already have full latitude to implement common-sense restrictions through prerequisites and program admission requirements.

Furthermore, the OAGC seeks to clarify existing ORC language that we believe the ODHE has misinterpreted and has thereby directed IHEs and districts to act counter to ORC § 3365:

- Despite inclusion within the CCP statute of Option A, (ORC § 3365.06(A)) offering families the opportunity to self-pay CCP tuition, fees, and books, the ODHE deems courses paid for by families as “outside of CCP,” forcing public IHEs to charge a higher, non-CCP tuition and stripping students of crucial components of the program, such as weighted grades and the application of the course toward graduation requirements. Families whose funding from the state is limited have no choice but to self-pay for courses in order to take full advantage of the program.
- Despite the requirement in ORC § 3365.04(E) to weight CCP course grades and to rank students identically with the highest weight awarded by the school for honors or other advanced standing courses, the ODHE has directed districts that they need weight only *some* CCP courses.

Additionally, the OAGC is concerned that although the ORC stipulates that CCP courses must be nonsectarian, there was an oversight in failing to stipulate that CCP admission procedures and continuing enrollment requirements *also* be nonsectarian so that students are not subjected to religious discrimination.

The OAGC is also concerned that the current rules developed for CCP prohibit students from taking more than 30 college credits per year, with a cumulative limit of 120 college credits. This unfairly penalizes 7th- and 8th-graders who are accessing CCP. Also, some college programs require more than 120 college credits. Finally, the OAGC believes that there are not enough funds for nonpublic and homeschooled students to meet the demand for CCP courses. In addition, many public-school students will be unable to afford CCP fees to private colleges and universities. Even students not meeting the threshold for free and reduced lunch may find it difficult to pay the ceiling amount per credit hour, especially if those students are taking multiple courses each semester.

The OAGC recommends removal of the language rescinding the ability of parents to appeal to the State Board of Education a district decision on CCP participation that restricts access to courses.

The OAGC recommends that language be added to clarify that (1) all participant-paid courses that fall under

Option A shall follow all other Option B CCP procedures, including a requirement that the IHE charge the same rate normally charged to districts under Option B; (2) grades and class rank for all academic CCP courses shall be weighted identically with honors and/or advanced standing courses; (3) all IHE CCP admission procedures and ongoing enrollment requirements shall be nonsectarian; and (4) rules shall not impose a cumulative limit on credits earned.

The OAGC also recommends that increased funds be allocated to ensure that all students have full access to CCP, including nonpublic students, homeschooled students, and public-school students who wish to access private college CCP courses.

The OAGC remains opposed to charging students for CCP courses or textbooks and to any restrictions on students’ taking courses off the high school campus.

The OAGC requests that funding be allocated to hire and support appropriate gifted staff at the Ohio Department of Education. The ODE has very few staff to support districts in the area of gifted education in Ohio. There are three full-time ODE gifted staff, and the workload is well beyond their capacity to complete. Gifted students make up 16 percent of the student population. Because of drastic cuts in gifted staff across the state, districts need more support from the ODE. The ODE must be able to audit district compliance and develop best-practice models that are desperately needed by districts.

THE OAGC’S GIFTED EDUCATION POLICY POSITIONS

- **Develop regional and alternative opportunities, particularly in rural areas.** Fewer districts are offering gifted services to students. Because districts are not required to meet the needs of gifted students, many children waste precious time, as well as state and local tax dollars, sitting in classrooms that deliver material at a level and pace that is inadequate for them. Many of these students are unable to advance to the level that is appropriate for them because districts fear losing their grade-level assessment scores. The time has come to develop other public-school opportunities for these students.
- **Establish county or regional gifted magnet schools.** Educational service centers, joint vocational schools, and interested school districts and universities should be allowed to develop gifted magnet schools that students in the region could attend. The OAGC supports the House provision to conduct a feasibility study on establishing 16 gifted regional schools, but also believes that Straight A funds could be used to help establish these schools in the second year of the biennium.
- **Expand community school opportunities for special-needs students.** Community schools for special-needs populations, including gifted students, should be allowed in any county.

- **Expand open enrollment.** Gifted students should be allowed to enroll in other districts 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 unable or unwilling to provide appropriate services.

Use Innovative Techniques to Reach More High-Achieving Students. Ohio is behind in several areas that have been extremely effective in building highly skilled workers, particularly in STEM.

- **Provide funds to support gifted student initiatives.** Because gifted students represent 16 percent of the student population in Ohio, but only 54 percent of this population is served, it would make sense that a certain percentage of the proposed innovation fund be used to finance initiatives to support gifted children: for example, the development of gifted regional schools, gifted online programs, accelerated programs within districts, and collaborative programs using business, universities, and other entities in creative ways to serve gifted children.
- **Create a virtual gifted middle/high school.** Access to high-level coursework is particularly difficult in smaller schools and more rural areas. Ohio gifted students could benefit from a state-supported virtual middle/high school or supported access portal in which high-level courses approved by the ODE could be provided to students regardless of location.
- **Develop a math/science residential high school for high-achieving students.** More than 15 states have residential high schools, and research on these schools has shown their effectiveness in developing and retaining math and science talent within the state. Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, and Tennessee all have residential STEM high schools. Ohio is behind the times in this area.
- **Develop summer programs for gifted students, particularly in the areas of visual and performing arts and creative thinking.** Students identified in the visual and performing arts and creative thinking are very poorly served across Ohio. Summer programs could be supported at universities or by other consortia to serve these students outside the school year. The Summer Honors Institutes that were defunded in 2010 should be reestablished.

Remove Barriers for Students to Reach Their Potential. As Ohio moves to educate students to compete in the world economy, it is critical that a number of policy provi-

sions be enacted to ensure that all students can move ahead to fulfill their potential. To that end, the OAGC recommends that Ohio undertake the following initiatives:

- **Require services and appropriate staffing.** Providing appropriate educational opportunities for gifted children can no longer be optional. Gifted students often spend a disproportionate amount of their school day reviewing information that they learned long ago. Artificial boundaries must be removed for these students. For Ohio to be competitive, gifted children must not be held back.
- **Develop a grouping policy.** Research has long recognized instructional grouping as one of the most educationally and socially effective and cost-efficient methods to support gifted children. The ODE should be required to develop a statewide instructional grouping policy for districts to adopt.
- **Provide teacher and administrator preservice training.** To fully prepare all educators to support the needs of gifted children in the classroom, the OAGC recommends that all classroom teachers receive preservice training in gifted education. Even though the Ohio Revised Code requires all teacher preparation programs to include some gifted training for all preservice teachers, very few programs actually comply with the law. Ideally, all educator preservice programs, *including those for administrators*, would provide, at a minimum, a three-credit-hour course, taught by a professor or instructor with graduate-level expertise or training in gifted education, to address
 - knowledge of the nature and needs of gifted children, including social and emotional aspects;
 - knowledge of the laws and administrative rules regarding the identification of gifted children;
 - understanding of the common myths and misconceptions surrounding gifted children, including those that tend to discriminate against children who should be referred for assessment but frequently are not;
 - the ability to use strategies to adjust the depth, breadth, and pace of curricula through appropriate methods of differentiated instruction, appropriate grouping, pre- and postassessment, and acceleration; and finally,
 - the ability to understand that a gifted intervention specialist or coordinator should be consulted when a gifted student's needs exceed what the classroom teacher can meet.

For details on this paper and other gifted education issues, please contact Ann Sheldon, OAGC executive director, at 614-325-1185 or anngift@aol.com.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Anxiety, Depression, Underachievement, and Executive Function Skills

By Susan Rakow

In the winter 2021 OAGC Review, I addressed issues of stress, anxiety, and depression in our gifted kids. This article, like the previous one, is adapted from my book, *Educating Gifted Students in Middle School: A Practical Guide* (3rd ed., 2021, Prufrock Press), though the concepts and strategies are relevant for all ages.

Picking up where I left off, I want to connect these emotional states to underachievement and then to the possibility that students may lack essential executive function (EF) skills, which can also be at the root of stress. It's also possible that the EF skills that students developed in face-to-face learning environments don't translate to virtual or hybrid learning at home. In the current environment, some students are working from home in their pajamas, in bed, with their cameras off so that they can do other activities (such as play games on their Switch) during class. Given what we know about set and setting and their impact on performance and mood, this is not the ideal way to "do school," and it sends the wrong sensory messages from the body to the brain.

UNDERACHIEVEMENT

Underachievement typically surfaces around middle school and can continue into high school and beyond. Boys may begin this pattern as early as grades 4 and 5, and girls may start somewhat later, around grade 8 or 9. Though there is no universally accepted definition, underachievement is typically characterized as a discrepancy between a child's productivity as evidenced by school performance and some index of potential, such as intelligence, achievement, or creativity test scores or observational data.

We first notice underachievement when students' grades drop, they stop completing homework, or they delay completing projects. We see a discrepancy between our expectations and what students produce. Underachievement is a learned behavior, sometimes connected to gender expectations, parenting approaches, twice-exceptionality, or cultural and economic disadvantage. Of course, it's all relative isn't it? For some, underachieving is getting an F instead of a C; for others, it's anything less than an A+.

There is a difference between underachievers and selective achievers; the latter group consists of students who have chosen to put their energies into other areas within or outside of school. "Gifted students may choose not to exert effort in

areas that are not important to them while expending effort to excel in areas that they enjoy and value" (Siegle, p. 15). We also see gifted students who are nonproducers, that is, they have decided that it is enough just to be gifted and that they don't have to actually *do* anything. But it's important to remember that underachievement in any form is not a given; it is a symptom of an underlying problem or conflict.

We may also see what Winstanley (2010) calls "conforming coasters," those students who like working in their comfort zone and pleasing their teachers or parents. Some of these may also be risk avoiders for many of the same reasons—seeking comfort in the familiar and successful rather than taking a chance that they may fail or struggle.

Gifted students from poverty and from culturally diverse and underserved populations may become what Siegle calls "involuntary underachievers." "Forty-four percent of lower-income students who enter first grade in the top 10 percent will not score in the top 10 percent by the time they reach fifth grade" (Siegle, 2013, p. 28). This drop may be due to unintentional bias, lack of resources and programming, or institutional barriers. These students may not see a connection between school and economic or personal life success.

The most common characteristics among underachieving students are low self-esteem and low self-efficacy. Self-confidence may vary by subject area. Nevertheless, when gifted students struggle in one area, it may affect their willingness to work and their sense of self in other domains. A poor sense of self-efficacy is the perception that students don't have the ability or power to change . . . themselves and/or their circumstances. "If underachievers fail at a task, they blame their lack of ability; if they succeed, they may attribute their success to luck" (Davis, Rimm, & Siegle, 2017).

Too many gifted students equate having to work hard with not being smart. "If a child does not experience a relationship between efforts and outcomes, he is not likely to expend any effort to achieve" (Davis et. al., 2017). Excessive pressure from parents can contribute to underachievement if they are setting unreasonable standards, and many parents are unsure what reasonable standards should be for their child in a given grade. This uncertainty can be compounded by virtual or hybrid schooling.

Perfectionism contributes to underachievement (as well as anxiety and depression) because while excellence is achievable, perfection is not. According to Olszewski-

"Reversing underachievement is about guiding children toward leading fulfilled lives." —Sylvia Rimm

Kubilius, perfectionism “involves not just the desire to be perfect, but also the fear of not being perfect and the belief that one’s acceptance as a person is dependent on being perfect. The root of perfectionism is a self-esteem issue” and often lies within the family, though we see the results of it more at school (2010, p. 14).

Many perfectionists are prone to dichotomous thinking—something is either great or terrible. Some students will refuse to start or complete an assignment because it won’t be perfect, so why do it at all? There may be a significant gap between students’ ideas and the skills and resources available to make these ideas a reality. We can help children set reasonable goals and realistic time frames for project assignment completion. This will help students manage perfectionism and decrease the avoidance behaviors that contribute to underachievement.

For some of these same reasons, many gifted students will avoid competition unless they are sure that they can win or be the best. Kids may say they’re quitting something because they’re just not interested any more or that the sport or class has become boring; but what may really underlie this refusal is realizing that they’re not the best in the group or not as good as a sibling or friend. Sometimes this avoidance looks like withdrawal; other times, it becomes defiance or aggression. In the current pandemic environment, anger may manifest itself in this way when what kids are really angry about are the restrictions and isolation they may be facing. Anger is like air in a balloon; if you push on it in one place, it just moves to another place. It doesn’t just go away.

Some classroom environmental factors that contribute to underachievement are lack of respect for the individual gifted student, strongly competitive classrooms, low expectations, inflexibility and rigidity, and exaggerated attention to errors and failures. When the curriculum is too easy, repetitive, or unrewarding, gifted students may also choose not to engage. Teachers who are limited by online teaching/learning platforms or their own inexperience with them may find themselves reverting to more didactic instructional methods that may not work for their gifted students.

Gifted boys underachieve at two to three times the rate of gifted girls. They seem to believe that language arts is less important and that they have less ability in this area than in STEM classes. For gifted girls, we need to pay attention to those who are doing just average work when evidence suggests that they could be doing a lot better, especially in STEM classes.

Siegle and McCoach state that in order to be achievers, students first need to possess skills adequate to perform the task. Then motivation combines valuing the task or outcome, expecting success based on messages from the environment (school and home), demonstrating self-efficacy and confidence in their ability, and finally, having realistic

expectations and appropriate strategies to successfully reach the goals (self-regulation). Teachers and parents can facilitate development of this combination of attitudes and skills, which will result in both task engagement and achievement.

There are six steps in Sylvia Rimm’s Trifocal model for reversing underachievement (2008): Assessment, Communication, Changing Expectations, Role Model Identification, Correction of Deficiencies, Modifications at Home and at School, and finally, determination of the type of underachiever (Conforming or Nonconforming, Dependent or Dominant). She recommends the following approach to reversing underachievement using the acronym ALLIANCE:

- Ally with the student privately about interests and concerns.
- Listen to what the student says.
- Learn about what the student is thinking.
- Initiate opportunities for recognition of the student’s strengths.
- Add experimental ideas for engaging curricular and extracurricular activities.
- Nurture relationships with appropriate adult and peer role models.
- Consequence reasonably but firmly if a student doesn’t meet commitments.
- Emphasize effort, independence, realistic expectations, how strengths can be used to cope with problems, and extend possibilities patiently.

Drawing on his surveys and work with gifted youngsters, James Delisle (2018) suggests a range of options for addressing underachievement that focuses on students’ social-emotional needs as well as their academic ones: Autonomy (internal locus of control), Access (to appropriate in- and out-of-school learning opportunities), Advocacy (students ask for what they need), Alternatives, Aspirations (perhaps through exposure to books and films that expand understanding of possibilities), and Approachable Educators.

We need to consider all the factors and strategies described above and determine who our underachievers might be. Then it can be useful to consider each one and what the child’s underlying abilities, issues, or personality and learning style might suggest about appropriate interventions. But for many of these kids, EF strategies will be of great value and can be implemented by parents, schools, and teachers.

EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS

For many gifted kids, the missing link between potential and achievement is the lack of executive function skills. In the past, educators have associated EF skills with the needs of the special education population, especially students with

ADHD or learning disabilities. But gifted students who are missing these skills may encounter significant impediments to achievement, as well as feelings of anxiety and depression.

We might question “How can this be possible when this kid is *so smart*?” And the real answer is that no one develops skills that they don’t need. If students throughout elementary school find the curriculum, assessments, and assignments so easy that they don’t have to learn to study, organize, or work hard at difficult material, then they never develop the habits of mind or study/learning skills necessary in later grades.

There are multiple definitions of EF. I have found two to be most useful in my work with gifted students in the clinic as well as in schools and classrooms. Shannon Fruge and Paula Majeau developed and outlined a classroom-based approach, while Richard Guare and Peg Dawson took a more psychologically based approach. This section will focus on skills that are most appropriate for teachers.

| Guare and Dawson | Fruge and Majeau |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response inhibition • Emotional control • Task initiation • Metacognition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mindfulness • Knowing one’s self as a learner and metacognition |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustained attention • Goal-directed persistence • Working memory | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active listening • Active reading and comprehension • Note-taking, study skills, and test-taking |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning, organization, and time management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time management and routine • Planning and organization |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-advocacy |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility | |

TIME MANAGEMENT, ROUTINES, PLANNING, AND ORGANIZATION

We need to teach students directly where materials are kept, what they need for each class, how to organize their notebook or binder for specific classes, and how to use their lockers and online school and class information. This is especially true for gifted students who are in advanced/accelerated groups and classes; they can handle the content, but they need help with the organizational strategies.

Many of our students seem to live in an eternal now, with no real sense of time. They may benefit from a matrix strategy that helps them determine the importance and urgency of a task as a way to prioritize their work.

| | Urgent: ½ hour to 2 days | Less Urgent: 1 day to 1 week |
|-----------------------|---|------------------------------|
| Important | <i>Tasks are written and organized into these boxes</i> | |
| Less important | | |

(Midwest Educational Therapists and Associates, 2019)

Students can be helped to understand how long an assignment will take (which will assist with time management) by asking them to estimate how long they think it will take and then to jot down how long it actually did take. Parents can help with this.

It is also helpful if we have a particular routine for starting and ending our classes or, if students are at home, for setting up virtual school and/or homework times. I would encourage reminders of the day’s assignment even if you’ve distributed a weekly assignment schedule, as we often need to be flexible and change these based on school interruptions or how we have adjusted the pace of teaching to meet students’ needs and pace of learning.

What I’m going to say now is going to be met with resistance and claims of “Get with the 21st century!” But one of the most important things we need to do is to get students, *all* of them (until high school anyway), to use a PAPER PLANNER!! Not a Google Calendar or a phone app, but an actual PAPER PLANNER!! Here is a sample of the one that I developed for middle grades learners.

| Week of: | Mon | Tues | Wed | Thurs | Fri | Sat | Sun |
|---|-----|------|-----|-------|-----|-----|-----|
| Math | | | | | | | |
| Social Studies | | | | | | | |
| Science | | | | | | | |
| English/ Language Arts | | | | | | | |
| Other Subject | | | | | | | |
| Other Subject | | | | | | | |
| After-school Chores and Activities | | | | | | | |

Weekly Assignments

Write down all assignments neatly and clearly. Put an X into the box for every subject where there’s no homework. Put a checkmark next to (or cross out or highlight) all completed assignments. Do the most difficult or most disliked assignments first. List long-term assignments or tests every day until they’re due (© S. R. Rakow, 2020).

It is important that students learn how to record assignments by hand daily, record tests and long-term projects, and keep track of after-school commitments and activities. If students are successful with a paper planner, then they can graduate to a tech-based one because the habit-patterns will already have been developed. This requires communi-

cation and collaboration between home and school, especially during the first quarter or semester of each school year. Teachers (or at least the last teacher of the day) need to check the planner to be sure it is completed by hand and accurate. Then parents need to check that it is brought home. Depending on whether the student is responsibly bringing home the planner and completing his/her work or on the age and grade of the student, parents may need to sign the planner or even check for assignment completion. Even if assignments are posted electronically, students must copy them *by hand* into their planner each day. This is step one in building responsibility and an understanding that as we get older and have more and more events, responsibilities, and assignments (and people!) to manage, we have to develop strategies to keep track of it all. We cannot carry it in our heads the way we did in early elementary school when often, teachers just put the homework papers in the Take Home folder. This is a developmental process, and if adopted schoolwide, by eighth grade most students will have realized either that they need the paper planner or that they can be effective with the online assignment resources.

Gifted students often struggle with long-term projects. They may first need help choosing something that can be completed by the required deadline. If there are only six weeks before the due date, a science project that uses plants that take three months to grow won't work. An author essay that requires reading all their books probably can't be completed in three weeks. Students also need interim checkpoints to help identify realistic steps toward their goal. Students may require help accessing appropriate resources (human and material) in a timely fashion; if they plan to interview an expert, they need to make these arrangements *way* ahead of time and not to expect the person to drop everything to meet/talk with them on the day that they call. If students get into a flow state with this project, remind them that there is *Learning for School* (meaning "just get this done") and *Learning for Self* (reminding them to keep learning about this topic even after a project is submitted).

ACTIVE LISTENING, READING, AND COMPREHENSION NOTE-TAKING, STUDY SKILLS, AND TEST-TAKING WORKING MEMORY

Active listening is the result of being able to sustain attention, but it needs to be taught and reinforced. The attention span of healthy teens and adults ranges from 10 to 20 minutes, but it is probably decreasing with the impact of technologies. So I'm not sure how kids can sustain attention, especially our youngest students, spending all day on a screen for virtual school, synchronous or asynchronous. Many kids are used to doing multiple things at the same time, and this means that sound (music, talking, and your direct instruction) just washes over

them with no real attention being paid to engaging with the content or remembering it.

Daniel Goleman, in his forward to Alan Wallace's book *The Attention Revolution* (2006), writes: "Few things affect our lives more than our faculty of attention. If we can't focus our attention—due to either agitation or dullness—we can't do anything well. We can't study, listen, converse with others, work, play, or even sleep well when our attention is impaired. And for many of us, our attention is impaired much of the time." So helping our students develop their abilities to pay attention will enrich not just their academic lives but their whole lives, and will allow them to much more fully gain the satisfaction that comes from full engagement with the present moment.

Active listening involves paying attention to what is being said and responding in ways that let the speaker know that you've heard and understood them. We can help students learn to look at the speaker, restate what was said in their own words, ask questions when appropriate, and use positive nonverbal responses like nodding or smiling or sitting upright. Using a children's book such as *Why Should I Listen?* could be a great introduction to this topic in a fun way, and then we can reinforce these behaviors in the classroom. We can support and enhance active listening by breaking lectures into 10- to 20-minute chunks, as appropriate, with time for activities like Think-Pair-Share or writing down two things they just heard or a question they have.

Active reading/comprehension is not just for ELA classes. For many gifted students, middle school (or accelerated high school) history or science class is the first time they have to use an actual content textbook. They may have no idea how to read for details and facts, how to value the captions below pictures, how to use headings and subheadings, how to use an index or glossary, and so on.

A range of note-taking strategies needs to be taught, and (this may not surprise you) I suggest that these notes be taken by hand rather than on computer until the strategies are mastered. There are multiple ways to take notes, though Cornell Notes seem to be popular right now. But taking notes using graphs and charts, mind maps, color and sticky notes, and/or classic outlining should also be taught so that students can find the method that works best for them. Teachers should also embed a note-taking strategy into their lessons in ways that are most relevant for their content. For example, a cause-and-effect chart may be valuable in a social studies class, while a flow chart diagram might be better for scientific processes. Helping students learn to use abbreviations can make the process faster.

For students with various disabilities, recording lectures or taking pictures of teachers' presentation slides can help. If teachers are asking students to take notes on oral presentations, they still need to use the active listening strategies

described above and to make sure they are pausing long enough for students to write. I also encourage teachers to check periodically the notes that students are taking and to help them learn which strategies best suit them. I have found it valuable to help students make a connection between their notes and their test scores or grades.

Many gifted students think “I looked it over” is a study strategy, in part because this may have worked for them in the past. They don’t know how to make or use flashcards, how to memorize a map or diagram, how to review math processes, or how to study for a social studies test that includes both essays and fact questions. So I encourage teachers to teach these directly. Teachers also need to tell students what content will be covered on a test, whether it’s on lecture or lecture plus textbook, and what format it will take (essay, short answer, multiple choice, true-false, and so on). Needless to say, I don’t believe Quizlet is effective for all students, but mine is a minority opinion. Students need to make the cards physically (excellent for reviewing facts, definitions, vocabulary, names and dates, and so on) and then review them out loud with someone else asking the questions. This can be practiced in class. Any card they answer correctly gets put aside, and then they need to study only the ones they still need to learn. Distributing blank maps or diagrams and having students use tracing paper, transparencies, or any other clear plastic material to practice labeling can be helpful, as can using the same technology that will be used on the test to have them practice.

Making sure students are paying attention when we give directions (especially multistep ones) and having a visual to support what we’re saying can improve follow-through. We can also ask students to paraphrase what they heard, learned, or saw. Improved working memory can be valuable at home as well as at school, as kids get better at remembering not just the lesson but also their instrument or their lunch!

SELF-UNDERSTANDING AND METACOGNITION

SELF-ADVOCACY

Metacognition is a powerful form of executive functioning; it’s the ability to think about thinking. Throughout their education, students should increase their understanding of the kind of learners they are, what study skills work best for them, and what their own priorities are, both at school and in their broader lives. They need to understand how they respond to frustration and challenge and whether those responses are effective, satisfying, or productive. For example, taking a break from homework every 20 to 30 minutes can reinvigorate us . . . if it isn’t a three-hour break to play a video game, check social media, or watch YouTube. Are there foods and drinks that help us focus (like proteins and water) and others that just give us a sugar or caffeine buzz (energy drinks, coffee, donuts) resulting in a crash into fatigue a little

later? Do our students know who and how to ask for help . . . and that asking for help isn’t a sign that you’re dumb? Do students know how to clarify directions if they’re unsure? If students find assignments boring or repetitive or if they need to be in a more advanced class, do students know how to let teachers know this in a respectful way? If talented students are performing in a community theater or music performance, can they let teachers know about this demand on their time and energy . . . and can we help figure out ways to be responsive to them?

PROCRASTINATION AND TASK INITIATION

What is procrastination, and why is it so hard for some people to get started? Procrastination is postponing or not starting something that needs to be accomplished to reach a goal. It can be minor (waiting until after dinner to start something rather than doing it right after getting home from school or work) or major (doing anything and everything *but* the thing that needs attention . . . often resulting in it never getting done).

In my experience, most people who consider themselves procrastinators never really change . . . they just redefine the last minute. And my favorite T-shirt message says, “If it wasn’t for the last minute, nothing would get done.” Nevertheless, this is *not* necessarily the message we want to give our gifted kids who are susceptible to the kind of procrastination that can become crippling or contribute to anxiety and depression. Some causes of procrastination have roots in a poor fit between the student and the task (homework that is boring or unnecessary, advanced content for which students don’t have adequate background, work requiring a skill that a student doesn’t have). Sometimes the student is overscheduled or impeded by perfectionism and fear of failure that get in the way of starting the task.

Sometimes inability to start a task is rooted in students’ feelings of anxiety or of having stalled out. Students can learn to separate things into smaller chunks and even to cover up everything on a page but the one part or step that they’re working on. Rather than being presented in paragraph form, directions can be bullet-pointed so students can more easily see each step. This can make tasks seem more manageable and less overwhelming.

Some people believe that they can work better under pressure, whether this is true for them based on their experiences or not, and sometimes there’s a clear misunderstanding of how long something will take. In high school, I was assigned an in-class essay, and I had trouble getting started. While I stared off into space, the teacher approached me and asked why I hadn’t written anything. I replied that it was hard for me to get inspired in a 50-minute class. His response: “Well, now you have only 40 minutes to get inspired!” Teary eyed and frustrated at what I perceived to be

his lack of understanding, I nevertheless got right to work, having learned an important lesson.

We can help students develop different ways of thinking and a range of approaches such as outlining, breaking tasks into smaller steps, starting at the middle, and figuring out that they can write an intro after they have something/anything on paper. They can change the environment where they work for a new perspective, focus on how they'll feel and what they'll do when the task is completed, or decide how to reward themselves for starting or finishing.

MINDFULNESS, RESPONSE INHIBITION, AND EMOTIONAL CONTROL

Daniel Siegel reminds us that “With presence, our ability to be aware of our emotions and make them work for us instead of against us will be improved. And our ability to focus attention so we can learn what we want to learn will be strengthened. As if that were not enough, other studies of mindfulness meditation show that we will be able to approach rather than withdraw from, challenging situations and actually feel more meaning and fulfillment in life” (Siegel, 2013, p. 113–14).

Our bodies, minds, and hearts are not separate from each other, so helping students understand how their emotions figure in to their behaviors will allow them to have greater insight into managing their feelings and not responding to every physical or emotional impulse. For example, if in the middle of reading difficult passages in a textbook a student suddenly feels hungry, learning how to say, “I’ll just finish this chapter and then go get something to eat,” will allow them to improve their comprehension of the material. This is response inhibition. If they get up right then, they may forget what they just read and have to go back and read it again. An emotional regulation visual aid and self-management worksheets allow students to use their metacognitive skills to improve learning.

If a student is stuck on a challenging math problem and feeling frustrated, learning to put it aside and take a break or call a parent or friend for help rather than skipping the rest of the homework can enhance resilience and confidence. When students are excited about upcoming sports or social events, it can be helpful to develop ways to get work done so that they can fully appreciate and

participate in what’s ahead. Engaging kids in discussion around questions like “What can you do when you feel . . . (angry, frustrated, sad, bored, excited) while doing homework or taking a test?” can help generate effective strategies, build emotional control, and allow students to learn from each other.

The most important next step is to look carefully at our kids and identify the areas over which we have control to determine what’s getting in their way and ours. What we know is that if we change *our* behaviors and attitudes, we can affect them in profound and long-lasting ways.

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Mindfulness is a broad term encompassing a range of strategies for helping students learn to focus their attention and manage their brain, body, emotions, and behaviors. Too many people still mistakenly believe that it is a religious practice. But in schools and classrooms around the world, teachers and counselors are using it to help create more mentally healthy classrooms and to combat anxiety and impulsivity. “Research shows that students who practice mindfulness exercises often improve their attention, grades, behavior, mood and ability to self-regulate. Said differently, mindfulness can help our students slow down and ultimately make smart choices even when emotionally triggered.”

(February 28, 2019, Mindful Schools, www.mindfulschools.org)

Susan Rakow (LPCC, Ph.D.) is a licensed professional counselor with the Family Achievement Clinic/Humanistic Counseling Center. She retired after 30 years of teaching gifted students and after 10 years of directing the graduate program in gifted education at Cleveland State University. She has authored numerous articles in professional publications and presented at local, state, and national conferences around the country. Susan can be reached at srrakow@gmail.com.

RECHARGE, REBUILD, REBOUND

By Rebecca Renegar, OAGC Teacher Division Chair

Spring is in the air. The sun is shining, the cold and clouds of winter are on their way out, and the light at the end of the Covid-19 tunnel may very well be in sight. At this time, most schools are developing plans to help their students recoup learning losses that occurred over the course of the pandemic. Now is our moment to shine, to help our districts realize that academically struggling students are not alone in having diminished learning opportunities and in needing social-emotional and executive functioning supports. We must advocate for the needs of a frequently overlooked population of students. As districts plan for the coming months and look for ways to engage students over the summer in meaningful learning activities, we have an opportunity to contribute to the discussion about ways to meet the needs of all students by providing enrichment and extension opportunities in addition to addressing deficits and losses.

While gifted education uses a strengths-based frame work, there are times when we also work to address student deficits in order to help them be more successful in developing their strengths. Two areas that educators frequently target are social-emotional learning and executive functioning strategies. Could these two areas possibly be the key to helping students rebound from the challenges of this past year?

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL NEEDS

Some gifted students struggle with perfectionism, anxiety, and social skills. Isolation and time spent learning online may have exacerbated some of these issues over the past year. I have seen many instances of gifted students becoming exceedingly perfectionistic in the absence of regular and constant reassurance and feedback. In some instances, online learning has placed students in a vacuum and sent them into a tailspin leading to procrastination, anxiety, and incomplete work. What a wonderful opportunity for schools to help students who have developed these behaviors learn to moderate them. This time could also be used to teach students strategies for managing stress and making healthy lifestyle choices. Sitting behind a computer screen has reduced the amount of time students have to engage in social

interactions through face-to-face conversations and discussions with others. Summer and after-school activities designed to engage students in socially interactive skills (collaborative work, debates, discussions, and so on) can help students to retrain some of their social habits.

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SKILLS

One of the best ways to help students academically is to give them the tools to manage habits of mind, planning, self-control, time management, and organization. A colleague of mine recently described a student's astonishment at the usefulness of a to-do list. Sometimes we take it for granted that our students are aware of and know how to leverage the organizational strategies that we use on a regular basis. Perhaps some of the time being used to "catch students up" would be infinitely better spent in teaching study habits and tools as well as time management and organizational strategies. Doing so would prime the engines for taking on the task of making up for lost learning time. Extra learning opportunities could include different methods for organizing and prioritizing tasks and time, strategies for getting started and following through with tasks, and basic study skills. It is important that students be provided with multiple options for organizing their time and space so that they can find the ways that work best for them.

As we plan for upcoming opportunities, a focus on these areas not only can help students as they recover academically from the pandemic but also can help them rebound to be stronger and healthier students in general. As my choral director in college used to say, we need to give the audience a little ice cream so that they will endure the broccoli. We need to remember that students who will be giving up their summer and after-school time will likely be more challenging to engage. Now is a great time to collaborate with others outside the gifted department to think about how to engage students effectively (think fun summer camps!) and how to address academic and foundational skills that will help them recoup losses and be well prepared for future learning. Carpe diem! And let the sun (and our advocacy for gifted and talented children) keep shining.

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We are pleased to announce that the **OAGC 69th Annual Fall Conference** will be held at the Hilton Columbus-Easton.

In order to receive the special conference rate of **\$175.00**, please call and make your reservation directly to the hotel by **September 27, 2021**.

Please call 614-414-5000 to secure your reservation with any major credit card. The group code for the OAGC discount is "OAGB." You may also go directly to the OAGC reservation page on the Hilton Web site: <https://www.hilton.com/en/book/reservation/deeplink/?&ctyhocn=CMHCHHF&groupCode=OAGB&arrival=20211017&departure=20211019&cid=OM,WW,HILTONLINK,en,DirectLink&fromId=HILTONLINKDIRECT>

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Take Interstate 71 South to Interstate 270 East to the Easton exit (**exit # 33**). Exit onto Easton Way.

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Take Interstate 70 West to Interstate 270 North.

Take the Easton exit (**exit # 33**) onto Easton Way.

Remain on Easton Way through one stoplight, crossing over Stelzer Road.

Make a right on Chagrin Drive into the hotel parking lot.

(The hotel is on the corner of Chagrin Drive and Easton Way.)

FROM THE WEST: INDIANAPOLIS ...

Take Interstate 70 East to Interstate 670 (airport exit).

Remain on Interstate 670 to Interstate 270 North.

Take the Easton exit (**exit # 33**) onto Easton Way.

Remain on Easton Way through one stoplight, crossing over Stelzer Road.

Make a right on Chagrin Drive into the hotel parking lot.

(The hotel is on the corner of Chagrin Drive and Easton Way.)

COORDINATOR

COVID Adaptations:

Over the past year, teachers have had to change the way they do business. This could be anything from the daunting task of figuring out how to put all of their lessons into a learning management system that students can access virtually to adjusting to working with students while adhering to the six-foot social distancing requirement. This has been a big ask for teachers, but overall, the change has been good. It put a lot of teachers outside their comfort zone, but that is where the greatest learning takes place. We do this to students all the time by introducing content they don't know or by asking them to write when they don't feel confident or to give a presentation that they are nervous about. I have seen a lot of positive transformation in education as a result of this recent, shall we call it, "forced change." Teachers have come to question practices that they previously were perfectly content to use. They have learned to collaborate with people whose guidance they might hitherto have neglected to seek, and most important in my opinion, they are paying more attention to the social and emotional development of their students rather than just focusing on academics.

Gifted coordinators were not immune to this change. All aspects of our jobs were sent into turmoil, as well. Engaging in professional development with teachers without being in the same room, offering academic extracurricular activities to students who aren't supposed to gather, or providing assistance in a virtual academy equivalent to in-person gifted services—all presented obstacles to overcome. There have been a lot of challenges, but luckily, we are in the challenge business.

Here are three practices that I found myself altering because of changes in school due to COVID:

Collaborating a lot more: Collaboration has increased in all aspects of my work, not just among folks working with gifted students. I find myself in meetings (albeit virtual ones) with coordinators around Ohio, gifted staff in my district, principals, district office personnel, curriculum coaches, regular education teachers, and teacher-based teams. Because we all are trying to figure out exactly how to navigate this treacherous jour-

ney, we have realized that in numbers there is not only safety but good ideas, as well. We saw this craving for collaboration at the Coordinators Conference in December. As a result, more communication is happening, which is always a good thing.

Leaning into the technology: I used to deliver professional development in my district either by waiting for a PD day and offering workshops or classes that teachers could opt to take or by pulling in teachers who worked directly with students and developing the rigorous curriculum needed to challenge these students. Then I realized that this could be done virtually and that it didn't even have to be live. Before the COVID pandemic, I would send out monthly tutorials on strategies for working with gifted students to everyone in the district and would get a handful of views. Once March hit and the school shut down, suddenly I was getting hundreds of views. I've also learned how to give (what I hope are) engaging workshops through Zoom or Google Meet, so that I can work with educators even though we cannot be physically present. Making such changes causes one to reflect upon one's own practice rather than simply to continue to do it the way it has always been done. I've also learned from others who are presenting what works and (sometimes just as important, although it can be painful to sit through) what doesn't.

I have also had to figure out how to translate good teaching to a virtual setting. I had the good fortune of teaching several gifted students through various camps and programs before coming to my teachers and talking about strategies that worked and others that did not. I have learned how to run National Junior Honor Society meetings, Destination Imagination practices, Invention Convention programs, and even board games through a presentation platform. It took some innovation, but students now have access to opportunities they had not had before.

Personalizing the learning: In our district, more than two thousand students (20 percent of our student population) chose to attend school full-time in a virtual setting. In addition to trying to make sure that these students received

CORNER

Here to Stay

By Todd Stanley, OAGC Coordinator Division Chair

services, I wanted to offer enrichment opportunities that they otherwise would miss by not being at school in person. I started a Google Classroom titled the Enrichment Depot, in which I placed asynchronous videos, activities, projects, and websites that students could explore if they were interested in learning beyond what they were studying in their classrooms.

I also offered synchronous classes for students. I taught bubblegum science and chess to elementary students, logic puzzles and TED Talks to middle schoolers, and ethical dilemmas in Marvel movies and literature circles for high schoolers. These students came not because they were forced to but because they were looking for some sort of outlet for their curiosity. They were in it for the learning and didn't care whether it was for a grade. In these settings, I was able to personalize their learning, challenging them from where they were and differentiating among students at various levels. Most important, I really got to know these students, had conversations with them, and asked them how they were holding up—something that I didn't have a lot of opportunity to do as a coordinator and missed dearly from my classroom days.

The nice thing about these changes is that although they were made to adapt to a situation, they are for the better. If the past school year has taught me anything, it is that some things have long needed an update and that others need to be jettisoned altogether. Because we have been forced to be innovative, we have risen to the challenge. My biggest fear is not that the pandemic will continue; it is that once it no longer forces us to make these changes, we will revert to our old, outdated ways of education.

As gifted coordinators, we also must change from old habits to new and lead and continue that change. We are sometimes the only advocate that children have, the only voice to air their frustrations, the only person who understands what it is like to be them. The one thing that does not change, no matter what happens, is that we must always do what's best for kids.

Higher Education Division Requests Your Help

WE NEED YOU

By Jennifer Groman, Higher Education Division Chair

The Higher Education Division is collecting information for two projects: (1) university program information and (2) tips, tools, and suggestions for taking the OAE gifted education exam. We welcome and encourage all OAGC members to contribute toward one or both of these projects. Details and submission information are listed below.

1. **University program information:** We are gathering updated information from universities with talent development MEd/PhD programs and gifted intervention specialist endorsements throughout Ohio for the OAGC web page. This will provide Ohio teachers with what they need to make an informed choice for PD, endorsement, and degree programs in gifted education and will provide coordinators with a way to advocate for PD, endorsement, and degrees in gifted education with their district administrators and teachers. This project is ongoing. If you have information for any programs not listed on the OAGC web page (<http://www.oagc.com/higherEducation.asp>), contact me.
2. **Tips, tools, and suggestions for taking the OAE gifted education exam:** We are collecting tips, tools, and suggestions for individuals taking the OAE gifted education exam. I know that university programs have been doing this and doing it well, but a helpful site or archive of ideas from those who have taken the exam (without revealing specific questions, of course) and from those of us who teach and work with individuals as they prepare for the exam might be a welcome addition and something we can work on as a division. If you have ideas or want to be part of the team putting this together, contact me.

I have created a Padlet page where division members can add ideas to both these directives, as well as a place to offer suggestions for other directives to work on in 2021. See https://padlet.com/jgroman/OAGC_HigherEd_Initiatives or QR code



My contact information is sacred-la@hotmail.com. Please put OAGC in the subject line.

Jennifer Groman is an assistant professor and director of the graduate program in talent development at Ashland University, as well as a visiting lecturer for the talent development program at McNeese State University.

She lives in Wooster, Ohio.

ADVOCATING FOR ADVANCED LEARNERS

By Sara Watson

Despite the commonly bandied-about phrase, “meet kids where they are,” testing incentives in modern American education often emphasize meeting basic proficiency standards over pushing already high-performing kids to excel. “Advanced kids are ahead of the curve, they’ll be fine,” is a common mantra. The implicit—and sometimes explicit—message is that there’s no need to push bright kids to do more. Perhaps for this reason, even before COVID hit, data suggested tremendous unevenness in the reach of gifted services across Ohio. While some districts provide comprehensive gifted services across K–12 education, others provide service only to certain grade bands and in certain subject areas. In the absence of a right to formal gifted services designed to stretch kids’ abilities, how can parents effectively advocate for learning strategies and programming that will push bright children forward? The 2020–2021 school year has been exhausting, but the end is in sight. As we look forward to the next academic year, here are some tips for effective advocacy for gifted kiddos.

Positive Messaging. First, it’s always a good idea to assume good intentions on the part of your children’s teachers and building and district administrators. No matter your end goal, you are more likely to succeed if you maintain a positive message. Let’s say that you are concerned about the relatively slow pace of the general education class curriculum and how it is affecting your young child’s academic engagement. Let’s face it: your child may indeed be bored in class. That said, it’s probably not the best idea to structure an entire conversation with your child’s teacher around that talking point. Instead, frame your conversation positively. Involve teachers and administrators in brainstorming specific solutions. What ideas do they have about how to enhance your child’s engagement? Access to adaptive learning programs? Independent projects? Don’t be afraid to think outside of the box here, and be willing to experiment. At the fall OAGC Parent Day workshop, for example, Jim Delisle told an anecdote about a teacher who encouraged a child’s dual interests in science and literature by encouraging independent projects involving science poetry. After all, what’s wrong with odes to subatomic structures in iambic pentameter?

Overlapping Goals. If you are considering advocacy efforts that extend beyond your child’s classroom, the same advice about positive messaging holds. But when it comes to beyond-the-classroom advocacy, it’s also important to communicate how your goals align with those of your school or district and with those of other stakeholders. For example, say that you are part of a group that is interested in getting your school to create a robotics club or that would like your district to develop a science fair or debate tournament. Your group’s idea may be objectively brilliant, but in a world of scarce resources, you are more likely to persuade decision makers of its value if the idea aligns with their preexisting commitments. Mission and vision statements can be useful starting points for identifying common values—but so too is knowledge of previous initiatives that your school or district has instituted. How can you gain this knowledge? Attend school meetings. Tune into your school board meetings. If you can articulate how your proposal will build on your organization’s existing efforts, you’re more likely to succeed.

Inclusive Programming. Whenever possible, try to advocate for inclusive programs. Class- and race-based equity gaps in gifted identification are a long-standing structural problem that is difficult for any one local group to move the needle on, at least in the short run. But you do have the power to advocate for inclusive programming—that is, programming that supports but is not necessarily limited to gifted students. Where you can, encourage your district to promote broad access to programming to *all* kids who have the interest and motivation to try new things. Advocating for inclusive programs has both intrinsic and instrumental value. The most obvious benefit is that there are lots of bright kids who are near the testing thresholds required for official identification as gifted. These students, too, could benefit from innovative programs. From a strategic perspective, advocating for inclusive programming also broadens your potential base of support and may reduce the perception that you are advocating for only a very small group of already privileged students.

Be a Partner. As you advocate, consider what you have to offer. It’s okay to ask for resources, but consider also how you might contribute. What resources and skills can you bring to the table? Would you be willing to volunteer twice a month to co-coach a school organization? Could you help with grant-writing support to get a new program underway? Volunteer as a judge at a districtwide tournament? Parents often underestimate the potential gifts that *they* possess and that could be harnessed for the broader good.

Be Thankful and Stay in Touch. Finally, whether or not you have achieved your advocacy goal, remember to express your gratitude—for the new program or (if your effort was not successful) for the opportunity to share your idea and to solicit feedback. As I often tell my kids, it can never hurt to say thank you. If your efforts were successful, don’t hesitate to share good news emerging from your initiative, even a year or two down the road. Effective advocacy is a journey, not a one-shot game.

Essex School @ Ashland University

By Jennifer Groman

The Martin W. Essex School for the Gifted and Talented™ at Ashland University is *transitioning* to a new home, moving from Otterbein University to Ashland University. The design of the school is also *transforming*, taking the best from the past Essex Schools and the past Governor’s Summer Institutes.

The Essex School @ Ashland University is for rising sophomores, juniors, and seniors who are identified as gifted in the state of Ohio. It is a virtual summer camp learning experience, from 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, June 20, through 7:30 p.m. on Friday, June 25.

Each morning, a choice of plenary sessions will give students a chance to explore a unique topic through the lenses of *identity* and *change*. These small-group sessions will be led by expert faculty from throughout Ohio.

Daily lunch breaks can be taken independently or in brown-bag social sessions with fellow Essexers, faculty, and staff.

Monday through Friday afternoons will be devoted to in-depth, small-group intensive courses led by an expert in the field. We are currently recruiting university faculty for these sessions, so while we cannot yet be specific about individual topics and instructors, we are seeking faculty from the physical, biological, and social sciences, mathematics, songwriting, comparative religion, and literary fields, and we anticipate having a variety of disciplines to choose from.

Weekday sessions will end by 4:30 p.m., with the exception of Friday, June 25, which will end at 7:30 p.m. after a parent night and talent share to culminate the week.

Dates for the 2021 school are June 20–25, 2021. The tentative cost for Essex @ Ashland will be \$150, with scholarships available. Contact Jennifer Groman and Pat Farrenkopf at essex@ashland.edu for more information or see the information below for the website and application.

Website address

<https://www.ashland.edu/essex>

QR code for the application



Jennifer Groman is an assistant professor and director of the graduate program in talent development at Ashland University, as well as a visiting lecturer for the talent development program at McNeese State University. She lives in Wooster, Ohio.

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Beauty All Around

No! Really!

By Tara Toft

As the snow fell last week, I was reminded of the beauty of nature no matter the season. It struck me how softly the flakes drifted to the ground, gently joining the others that had fallen before, yet were still preserved by the cold air. I was in awe of the truly silent night . . . until a train roared by.

We just moved to a new home in the middle of a farm field with train tracks just beyond the trees at the edge of the wide expanse. This is *so* our lives right now. Isn't it? Peacefully settling into the new normal and then BAM! Another new, different version of teaching and learning comes barreling toward us. We're virtual, then we're in person, then virtual again. With the hope of vaccines to protect us from COVID, we thought we'd be able to ease into welcoming all our students back to our classrooms. But now we have the fear of the unknown: Will the vaccine work for me? Do I have an underlying condition that will cause an adverse reaction? Will there a vaccine even be offered to me? What about new strains of COVID? Will I be able to hug my grandchildren before I retire? It is all so depressing, isn't it?

Next analogy: The new COVID realities are like my eyesight.

Happy birthday to me! I'm another year older, which means that my eye doctor is going to tell me that my eyes aren't getting any younger. Because of COVID, I'm on a mission to move from my bifocal glasses (which fog up in meetings when I'm wearing a mask) to bifocal contacts. I got my first set to try and was so excited not to have to wear glasses anymore. Nope. They were not working for me. I got another version, one eye for distance and another for multifocal up close. Guess what? I was excited again . . . and let down again. Isn't just like our lives lately, too?

Now for the mashup!

I've decided to change my perspective and to focus on the beauty in the midst of the chaos. Some positives I am finding during the pandemic include:

- Our district has been thrust into digital tools, which we always planned to do but kept delaying.
- Our district was planning to identify students as gifted in the arts this year until COVID made us rethink how we could safely conduct auditions and interviews. We

persevered and were able to collect some digital submissions while also holding some in-person interviews. We even streamed in some of our arts experts so that we could still have a panel of educators and artists to meet with our students.

- Several members of my family, myself included, actually had COVID just before the holidays and luckily recovered. That made us more comfortable with being together over the holidays, including my kids and grandkids, whom I actually got to hug.
- Other illnesses, such as the flu, have been kept to a minimum, likely because of the mask-wearing and social-distancing protocols in place due to COVID.
- Gifted educators from around the state have come together in virtual meetups like never before, providing insights and support for one another during these chaotic times.
- Virtual OAGC conferences, while scary to get off the ground, have allowed for longer access to quality professional development sessions for our participants.

Now I'd love to hear about *your* positives. Tell me what has gone *right* for you in this season of so many wrongs. Use this QR code to access a quick survey and share your successes. I want to flood our next OAGC *Review* with more of the wins we've had around Ohio!



Tara Toft is the coordinator for advanced academic studies for Sandusky City Schools. She proudly serves as the Region 2 representative for the OAGC. She's also the proud grandma (Oma) to Desmond (3) and Mason (1).

The Gifted School

by Bruce Holsinger

Reviewed by Barb Bodart

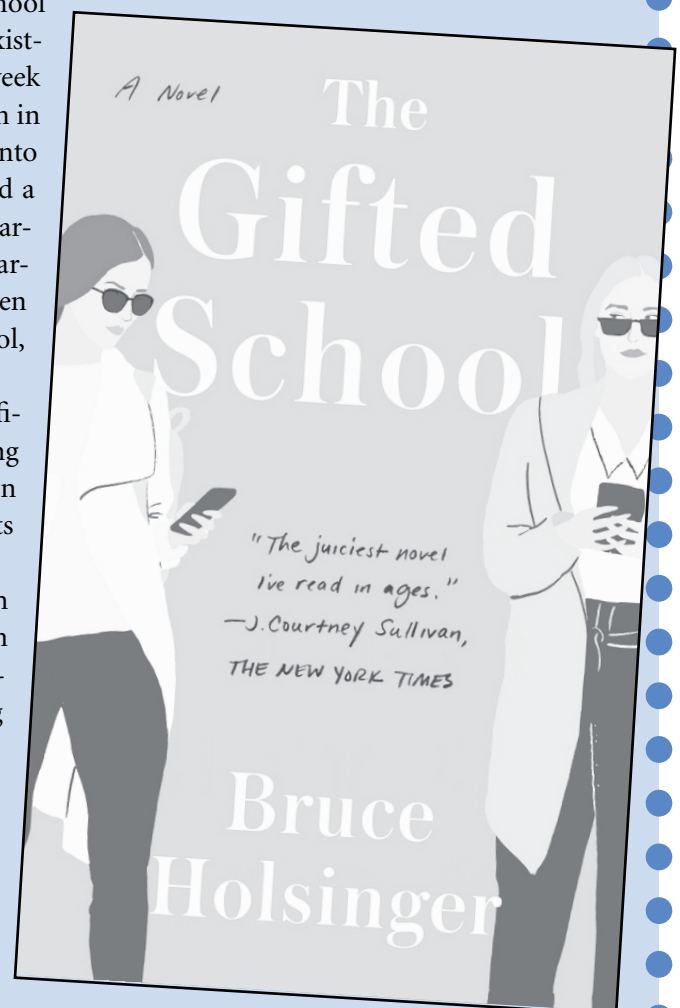
My curiosity piqued, I decided to download and read *The Gifted School* by Bruce Holsinger, a novel that had drifted around the gifted listserv a while ago. Would it truthfully portray the gifted world, or would it further exacerbate misperceptions about the gifted community through hyperbole and oversimplification? Sadly, the latter case is true.

My own experiences and biases aside, I did find the book entertaining. The story is a work of fiction and should be read with that in mind. It contains engaging, yet sad characters. Each of four women, whose lives are intertwined, suffers some sort of family dysfunction. You have, of course, the divorced mom, the widowed mom, the almost-divorced mom, and the outwardly perfect mom with a perfect family. The children appear as minor characters amid the drama and display a range of gifts from cognitive to specific-subject, athletic, or artistic abilities. Here we have the gifted archetypes: the brain, the chess whiz, the jock, and the artist. The disadvantaged bilingual child makes an appearance, as well.

When the public school announces a plan to add a gifted school within its domain, the adult friendships suffer. In place of the existing private institutions with their hefty price tags and once-a-week pull-out gifted curriculum, the mothers envision their children in this new, all-day, free-gifted program. Parental pride morphs into a bitter, unethical competition among the adults. What would a desperate parent do to ensure placement? How far would a parent go, and what would happen to the children? Insecurity, arrogance, elitism, and competition increase among the children as the mothers scramble to secure a coveted spot in the school, leading to some outlandish and dishonest actions.

Whereas Ohio lays out definitive criteria for gifted identification, this fictional Colorado school uses a cognitive test along with subjective criteria. Because the requirements for inclusion are not clearly established, the parents vie for the very few spots for their children in many different ways.

We all know parents who, to bolster their own egos, push their children to succeed. They sometimes want their children to practice for a cognitive test, as Todd Stanley wrote in an earlier issue of the *Review*. No one can blame them for wanting the best for their children. Unfortunately, the novel reinforces the ever-pervasive accusation of elitism in gifted education. It highlights the extreme behaviors that can be found in both gifted children and their parents, without dispelling any of the myths. Despite its being a work of fiction, I fear that some readers who already oppose gifted education will use it to further their animosity.





CALL FOR NOMINATIONS 2021

The following OAGC Governing Board positions will be elected in May to serve a two-year term of office: treasurer and first vice president; chairs-elect of the Coordinator Division and Higher Education Division; and regional representatives from Regions 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11. Please nominate yourself or a colleague by completing the nominating form. Nominees for each position must be current OAGC members. Regional representatives must work or reside in the region of representation. Nominees must consent to be nominated. Nominations must be postmarked by **April 30, 2021**, and may be sent to

Heather Kardeen, OAGC Nominating Committee
 PO Box 2333
 Dayton OH 45401
 E-mail: oceanluna@twc.com

Duties of the Treasurer

- Manage the OAGC finances.
- Serve as chair of the Finance Committee.

Duties of the First Vice President

- Serve as chair of the Membership Committee.
- Oversee major initiatives of the Governing Board with an emphasis on membership recruitment and services.

Duties of the Division Chair-Elect/Division Chair

- Become the next division chair.
- Provide leadership for division programming.
- Serve as liaison between the Governing Board and the division members.
- Function as a resource person in disseminating information to the division.

Duties of the Regional Representatives

- Attend OAGC Governing Board meetings and activities to contribute to board decisions and to gather information to disseminate throughout represented region.
- Serve as liaison to the membership through regular communications.
- Promote membership and support advocacy efforts on behalf of gifted children.
- Assist in forming new and supporting existing affiliate organizations in their region.

Region 1 counties: Delaware, Franklin, Licking, Madison, Pickaway, Union

Region 3 counties: Allen, Auglaize, Hancock, Hardin, Mercer, Paulding, Putnam, Van Wert

Region 5 counties: Brown, Butler, Clermont, Clinton, Fayette, Hamilton, Highland, Warren

Region 7 counties: Adams, Gallia, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto

Region 9 counties: Ashland, Holmes, Medina, Portage, Stark, Summit, Wayne

Region 11 counties: Athens, Fairfield, Hocking, Meigs, Perry, Vinton, Washington

Monstrously Fun, Rich Math Curriculum for Grades 2 through 5

By Anne Flick

A buzz had been developing among gifted homeschooling circles about *Beast Academy*, a grades 2–5 comic book math series for gifted learners. As a middle school accelerated math teacher taking on her first group of gifted second- and third-graders in a traditional school, I wondered if the textbooks could lead my young students where I knew they needed to be for the high-school-level mathematics I would eventually teach them.

With comics all the rage now, these books were a lock to appeal to my gifted learners when they were seven and eight. At students' impassioned request, the group even came to school for an extra week each of two summers to finish the last chapter of that year's book. Surprisingly, the kids were so enamored with the series that they were crushed to finish it at the end of fifth grade. Extraordinary student engagement is a strong benefit of this program, but that is not reason enough to use it as a math textbook. The strongest benefit is the quality of the instruction. Despite the comic book medium, these books deliver rigorous mathematical content.

HIGH-LEVEL MATH WITH RICH PRACTICE PROBLEMS

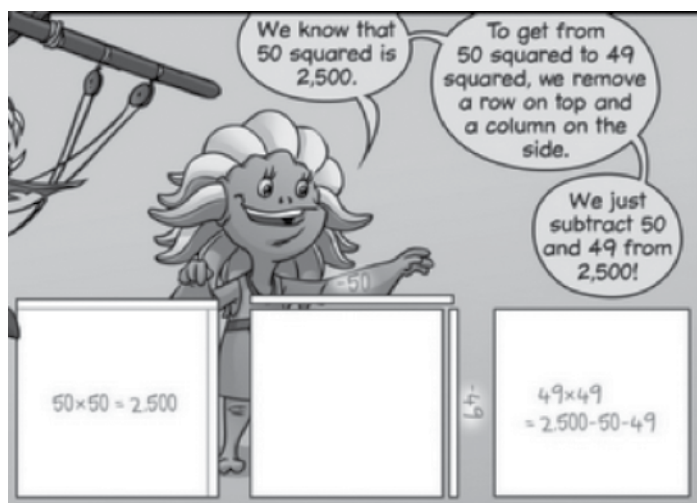
Published by Art of Problem Solving, *Beast Academy* is designed for youth highly gifted in mathematics. The full curriculum for grades 2–5 addresses nearly all Mathematics Common Core State Standards, including several standards through grade 8 that include exponent properties, the Pythagorean theorem and its converse, and calculations with scientific notation. Materials at each grade level include a series of four paperback but sturdy, full-color, entirely comic guide books that include all instruction. Four accompanying, consumable practice books include rich problem sets tied directly to the lessons in the comic guide books.

Almost all students need a mentor or teacher to maximize the program, making it valuable in a gifted math classroom. Published over the last several years, the series has been popular among homeschoolers, but the publisher gradually is developing features and resources to make the program more teacher-friendly (G. Mass, personal communication, June 27, 2019). As of this writing, though, there are no teacher resources, so the teacher must create assess-

ments and any supplementation.* The materials address National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) P-12 Gifted Programming Standard 3.1.4 on all counts, providing curriculum that “incorporate[s] advanced, conceptually challenging, in-depth, distinctive, and complex content for students with gifts and talents.”

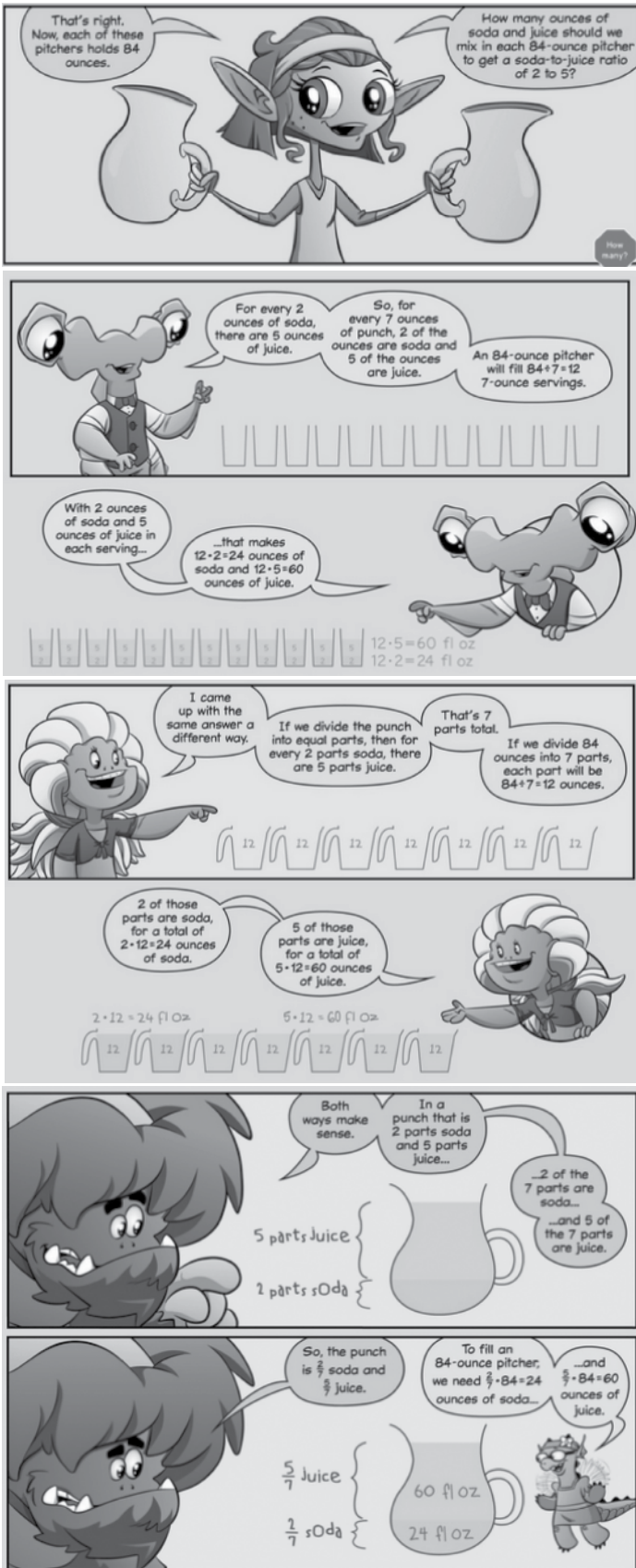
Like Art of Problem Solving's materials for pre-algebra and beyond, *Beast Academy* reveals the beauty in mathematics by building a keen number sense; however, shortcuts, tricks, and gimmicks are absent. For example, third-graders learn not only about perfect squares—presented from the beginning with geometric squares—but also how to reason out the square of any two-digit number ending in 0 or 5. Then that reasoning is combined with the concept of building (or deconstructing) a square, one strip at a time on each dimension, to have *third-graders* able to reason out the square of any two-digit number (fig. 1). Such exploration well beyond grade-level concepts provides a stimulating challenge to the strongest young mathematicians.

FIGURE 1. ADVANCED NUMBER SENSE IS BUILT EVEN IN EARLY GRADES (BATTERSON & OWEN, 3B, P. 61)



Furthermore, the little monsters use different methods to solve a problem whenever possible. The comic format's speech bubbles offer a unique means to demonstrate to students the reasoning in each approach and to model the thinking of true mathematicians (fig. 2).

FIGURE 2. MONSTERS MODEL MATHEMATICAL REASONING WITH MULTIPLE APPROACHES TO A PROBLEM (BATTERSON & OWEN, 5C, P. 45-47)



RIGOROUS PRACTICE WITH FUNDAMENTAL SKILLS

Of course, basic skills and concepts like multiplication, division, and fractions must be introduced and mastered in these grades too. Responsive to gifted learners' abhorrence of drill and kill, *Beast Academy* authors include few routine and simple problems. Even in cases where straightforward practice of a new, basic skill is required, that practice is structured in a game format that incorporates problem-solving, strategizing, or spatial reasoning along with the computation drill. A case in point is the Fraction-Sum Link puzzle (fig. 3).

FIGURE 3. PUZZLES REQUIRING STRATEGY AND SPATIAL REASONING MAKE DRILL OF ESSENTIAL BASIC SKILLS MORE CHALLENGING AND ENGAGING (BATTERSON & ROGERS, 4C, P. 66)

In a *Fraction-Sum Link* puzzle, the goal is to connect pairs of numbers whose sum is a given target.

- Paths may only go up, down, left or right through squares.
- Paths must begin and end at a number, but they may not pass through squares that contain numbers.
- Only one path may pass through each square.

Below is an example of a Fraction-Sum Link puzzle and its solution. Paths connect pairs of fractions whose sum is 2.

Target Sum: 2

| | | | |
|--|----------------|--|----------------|
| | $\frac{3}{7}$ | | |
| | $1\frac{3}{7}$ | | $1\frac{5}{7}$ |
| | $\frac{2}{7}$ | | |
| | $1\frac{1}{7}$ | | $\frac{4}{7}$ |
| | $1\frac{4}{7}$ | | $\frac{6}{7}$ |

$\frac{3}{7} + 1\frac{4}{7} = 2$
 $1\frac{3}{7} + \frac{4}{7} = 2$
 $\frac{2}{7} + 1\frac{5}{7} = 2$
 $1\frac{1}{7} + \frac{6}{7} = 2$

The bulk of exercises, however, go far beyond basics, asking students to apply their new learning to novel problems. These challenges are carefully stairstepped so learners are prodded to wrestle with ways to use a newfound skill, ever so incrementally, until they are solving problems that are perfect for gifted learners, far beyond typical textbook fare.

SCAFFOLDING TO SUPPORT EXTREME CHALLENGE

Such rigor poses a challenge when it comes to homework. Parents occasionally do a double-take when asked for help on problems that look nothing like those they had in math class, but the authors offer scaffolding to offset this issue. Especially challenging problems are labeled with a star—or two stars, for even more difficult problems.

Hints that correspond with all “star problems” are devised to enable parents (and teachers) to get students started in the right direction. While still leaving kids the opportunity to engage in the productive struggle that the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (2014) emphasizes is essential for all students, *Beast Academy’s* hints allow learners the satisfaction of conquering the challenge. In addition, answer pages (45 of them for the 83 pages of problems in book 5D, for example) offer thorough, step-by-step solutions, including multiple approaches for many problems. These explanations also support parents who help with homework.

ALGORITHMS DE-EMPHASIZED

The avoidance of algorithms in favor of number sense leaves some missed opportunities to offer both. The series never circles around to the traditional multiplication algorithm, instead having students multiply each digit’s full value, based on place in the number, by the same in the other factor. While this step in the learning process is vital for developing number sense, it leads to a long list of addends, requiring a half page of paper to record and add, which can be daunting in fourth-grader handwriting. The traditional long division algorithm is provided, but as one brief instructional practice book page at the end of the decimal chapter, more than a year after long division is taught. Even supportive parents have been thrown by the omission of these common algorithms. As much as I appreciate lead author Jason Batterson’s argument that mathematicians simply use a calculator for basic computations with big numbers (personal communication, January 8, 2017), my students cannot use a calculator on their timed standardized tests. Therefore, I concede to reality and introduce the multiplication algorithm before annual testing in fourth grade and do thoroughly teach the division algorithm in the fifth-grade decimals chapter.

BEAST ACADEMY ONLINE

Recently the company added an online option that can stand alone as a full curriculum or supplement the print materials. Digital versions of the guide books are included, as are about a dozen optional, supplemental brief teaching videos for each chapter. Boasting 800 lessons, 600 videos, and 15,000 problems, the subscription includes all of grades 2–5, so gifted learners can move at a rapid pace, progressing easily to higher grades without making additional purchases.

Featuring problems similar to those in the practice books, the online practice leverages technological features

like drag and drop. The format also develops students’ facility with entering mixed numbers and exponents online—a realistic need for kids who face computerized state exams. The online problems address perfectionism, a common gifted characteristic, by giving the learner another try if he answers incorrectly—and allows the student to move on after a second error. Every problem, correct or not, is followed by a step-by-step solution, so learning still can happen even if the student either guessed right or gets stuck and just can’t figure out the answer. Kids who understand already quickly click on to the next problem. Students also can refer to the linked guide book lesson and example problem presented at the start of the problem set for additional reinforcement of concepts.

There is no overkill in these math books. In fact, even gifted students below the exceptionally or profoundly gifted levels are likely to benefit from more practice with select concepts. That’s where assigning some of the online problem sets helps immensely, as there is no way to Google an extra worksheet on 90 percent the problem types in this series. They are creative, engaging, rigorous, and even humorous problems with no parallel in mainstream instructional materials. The very strongest math students thrive with either the online or the print program, but most gifted learners achieve mastery more easily and retain better with access to both the online problems and the print practice books. *BA Online* had more than 15,000 active users in June 2019, less than a year after enrollment opened to individuals and before it was offered to schools (G. Mass, personal communication, June 27, 2019).

GIFTED SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS INCORPORATED

How many math textbooks depict common gifted social scenarios? Several of the comic book chapters for each grade level end with the “abduction” of the lab teacher by Calamitous Clod, a villain with alliterative locution who bears a striking resemblance to the missing instructor. Clod challenges the monsters to solve a seemingly impossible problem to release their professor. Using math skills from the chapter, the characters model collaboration, listening to and building upon each other’s ideas. Students follow suit when grouped in the classroom to work on tough problems, employing Mathematical Practice Standard 3 of constructing viable arguments and critiquing the reasoning of others. Additionally, the text normalizes subject acceleration, as the monsters welcome an advanced student onto their team. He comes to the school to be with other students who love math (fig. 4).

FIGURE 4. ONE MONSTER IS SUBJECT ACCELERATED
(BATTERSON & OWEN, 5A, P. 51)



Moreover, many of the common emotional characteristics of gifted kids are reflected in the student characters and storylines. Likely twice-exceptional, Grogg is an oversized furry purple creature who needs more processing time and struggles with executive functioning. Young mathematicians learn not to take themselves too seriously as Grogg himself lightheartedly points out his own occasional faux pas (fig. 5). Winnie, the precocious pink blonde, gets impatient with Grogg but sees that he often comes up with a solution when no one else can. Meanwhile, Lizzy, the tiny winged dinosaur, helps when the group is stumped; she's usually consulting a reference book. Alex, the multiarmed blue hammerhead with a pocket protector, is practical and straight-laced. While hard-working and largely successful, this team copes with failure when it loses one of its math competitions. Even the practice book reduces perfectionism through the use of stars with the extra-challenging problems and hints—giving students permission to get stumped sometimes with highly rigorous content.

FIGURE 5. GROGG LIKELY IS TWICE EXCEPTIONAL
(BATTERSON & OWEN, 4A, P. 78)



Much of the kid appeal of these books is the humor. Students laughed aloud at the monsters' similarities to their parents, as well as at creatures like rhinocaptors, octapugs,

and pandakeets. The vibrant covers of the 16 books include a movie theater scene for book 3D that took the kids about 10 seconds to giggle at. There even are amusing little Easter eggs, like the four monsters' robot counterparts on the opposing team, as well as some page numbers in the square roots and exponents chapters: and 2^6 .

This curriculum is worth exploring for a self-contained gifted math class or a pullout program with time equivalent to a year-long math course. It addresses one facet of NAGC P-12 Gifted Programming Standard 3.1.3, enabling educators to “replace the core or standard curriculum to meet the needs of students with gifts and talents and those with special needs such as . . . highly gifted.” Now that my students have completed pre-algebra, I have seen the value of the number sense and problem-solving skills nurtured by *Beast Academy*. The series feeds young mathematicians' love of the subject while providing them fun comics to bond over—so much so that they may want to continue it together into the summer.

*Graphing is not covered. Additionally, fifth-graders need a lot more chunking and practice to master the equations skills expected.

This article originally appeared in the February 2021 issue of *Teaching for High Potential* published by the National Association for Gifted Children.

RESOURCE

beastacademy.com

REFERENCES

- Batterson, J., & Owen, E. (2012–2018). *Beast academy math guide* (vols. 3A-5D). San Diego, CA: AoPS Incorporated.
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- National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. (2014). *Principles to actions: Ensuring mathematical success for all*. Reston, VA: NCTM.

Anne Flick, M.Ed., a Cincinnati gifted coordinator teaching accelerated math and accelerated English to students from grades 2–8, also teaches graduate courses in Xavier University's gifted endorsement program.

OAGC ANNUAL AWARDS

NOMINATION FORM

Nominee: _____
 Home address: _____
 City, State, ZIP: _____
 Home phone: _____ E-mail address: _____
 Position/Title: _____ Years in position: _____
 Employer: _____
 Employer address: _____
 City, State, ZIP: _____
 Employer phone: _____
 E-mail address: _____

ANNUAL AWARDS CATEGORIES

See criteria and guidelines on the following page

Choose one:

OAGC STATE AWARDS

- _____ Promising Practice School District
- _____ Civic Leadership
- _____ Distinguished Service

OAGC DIVISION AWARDS

- _____ Parent of the Year
- _____ Teacher of the Year
- _____ Coordinator of the Year
- _____ Higher Education

Nominated by: _____
 OAGC member: Yes _____ No _____
 Position/Title: _____ OAGC Region (if member): _____
 Address: _____
 City, State, ZIP: _____
 E-mail: _____
 Day phone: _____
 Night phone: _____

- Please attach material to support the nomination, which may include contributions, affiliations, leadership positions, publications, qualifications, and pertinent accomplishments of the nominee that demonstrate exemplary service to the field of gifted education.
- Submit three, but no more than five, letters of support.
- E-mail this completed form and supporting materials in PDF format to Kay Tarbutton at sktarbutton@sbcglobal.net.

Questions? Contact Beth Wilson-Fish, ewilsonfish@gmail.com

NOMINATIONS ARE DUE BY
September 1, 2021

OAGC ANNUAL AWARDS GUIDELINES

GENERAL GUIDELINES AND CRITERIA

- The state and division awards shall be presented at the annual fall conference.
- A nomination form will be printed in the *Review* and online at www.oagc.com prior to the conference.
- All nominations and materials shall be kept confidential among committee members.
- All application materials must be submitted together. **Incomplete applications will not be considered.**
- The following categories shall be used in judging the nominations:

Personal Qualities

Pioneering in Field of Gifted Education

Professional Qualities

Exceptional Performance in the Field

Unusual Leadership in Gifted

Award Descriptions

State Awards

- Promising Practice School District:** The district demonstrates a commitment to providing a comprehensive, appropriate education for gifted students through policy and practice and/or demonstrates a creative approach to gifted education and issues.
- Civic Leadership:** The person has made a significant civic impact to promote the needs of gifted students through public policy or support.
- Distinguished Service:** The person has made a significant contribution to gifted education on a local, state, or national level.

Division Awards

The parent, teacher, coordinator, or person involved in higher education has made a significant contribution to gifted education on a local, state, or national level through innovative ideas, public support, advocacy efforts, or exemplary efforts in . . .

- Parent of the Year:** parent leadership, parent support, parent training, or gifted service.
- Teacher of the Year:** educational leadership, educational support, gifted best practices implementation, professional development, or gifted service.
- Coordinator of the Year:** educational policy development, leadership, professional development, gifted curriculum development, gifted program development, or gifted service.
- Higher Education:** higher education gifted policy development, leadership, professional development, publishing, research, data collection, data analysis, gifted coursework development, or gifted service.

COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP AWARD For Undergraduate Students



DUE APRIL 15

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

- Ohio students in grades K-12 who are identified as gifted or talented according to OAC 3301-51-15 in one or more areas: Cognitive Ability, Specific Academic Ability, Visual/Performing Arts, Creative Thinking
- Students who are about to enroll **fulltime** in his/her first year of college and/or a student currently enrolled **fulltime** in an undergraduate program of an accredited college or university
- Students who have received an ACT composite score of 27 or higher -OR- Students who have received an SAT composite score of 1200 or higher (1600 scale)

HOW DOES A STUDENT APPLY FOR A SCHOLARSHIP?

- An application is available online at www.oagc.com. All materials are available in a fillable PDF format.
- Applications must include ALL of the required materials. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed.
- Each applicant must submit **two letters of recommendation** from any of the following:
 - Educational Recommendation – teacher, principal, guidance counselor, or other who knows the student in an academic capacity
 - Civic Recommendation – Church leader, 4-H leader, leader of a group in which the student actively volunteers, or other community member who has directly worked with the student
 - Personal Recommendation – Anyone that has known the student for at least one year and is **not** a family member

APPLICATION SUBMISSION/POSTMARK DEADLINE: APRIL 15

| | |
|--|---|
| Submit materials electronically to: Alesha.Haybin.OAGC@gmail.com | *You will receive confirmation of materials received as a reply to the email address that submitted materials |
| Mail a paper copy of materials to: Ohio Association for Gifted Children - Scholarships PO Box 30801 Gahanna, Ohio 43230 | *You will NOT receive confirmation of receipt unless you include a self-addressed, stamped envelope *Do not send materials via registered or certified mail |

REQUIRED MATERIALS: Applications Must Include ALL of the Following at the Time of Submission

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Applicant Information Form | <input type="checkbox"/> Letter of Recommendation and Form #2 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OAGC Member Nominator Form | <input type="checkbox"/> Activities/Leadership/Awards Form |
| <input type="checkbox"/> District Contact & Eligibility Form | <input type="checkbox"/> Student Essay Form |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High School Transcript (& College if enrolled) | <input type="checkbox"/> Student Essay |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Letter of Recommendation and Form #1 | |

SCHOLARSHIP AWARD PROCEDURE

- Applications will be reviewed by a committee consisting of OAGC's Scholarship Chair, Parent Division Chair, two Governing Board Members, and a current Member of OAGC. One committee member must be the parent of a gifted child.
- This is a one-time award of \$500. Students may apply each year of fulltime undergraduate studies. However, recipients of the OAGC College Scholarship are not eligible to apply again.
- Applicants will be notified whether or not they were selected to receive a scholarship within 45 days of the submission deadline
- Scholarship awards will be made payable directly to the student

QUESTIONS?

Contact Alesha Haybin - OAGC Scholarship Committee Chair
Alesha.Haybin.OAGC@gmail.com

Updated: 7/23/20

All materials available in fillable PDF on our website!

www.oagc.com/scholarship.asp

DISTINGUISHED STUDENT Award Scholarship



DUE JUNE 1

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

- Ohio students who are finishing up the current school-year in grades 3, 4, 5, or 6 and have been identified as gifted or talented according to OAC 3301-51-15 in one or more areas: Cognitive Ability, Specific Academic Ability, Visual/Performing Arts, Creative Thinking
- Applicants must demonstrate excellence in one or more of the following areas: visual or performing arts, academic achievement, or leadership
- Furthermore, the distinguished student will show evidence of using their exceptional talent in order to **positively impact others** in the community or communities that surrounds them
- The OAGC will accept nominations from a parent, teacher, community/civic groups, or the student

HOW DOES A STUDENT APPLY FOR A SCHOLARSHIP?

- An application is available online at www.oagc.com. All materials are available in a fillable PDF format.
- Applications must include ALL of the required materials. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed.
- Each applicant must submit **two letters of recommendation** from any of the following:
 - Educational Recommendation – teacher, principal, guidance counselor, or other who knows the student in an academic capacity
 - Civic Recommendation – Church leader, 4-H leader, leader of a group in which the student actively volunteers, or other community member who has directly worked with the student
 - Personal Recommendation – Anyone that has known the student for at least one year and is **not** a family member

APPLICATION SUBMISSION/POSTMARK DEADLINE: JUNE 1

| | |
|--|---|
| Submit materials electronically to: Alesha.Haybin.OAGC@gmail.com | *You will receive confirmation of materials received as a reply to the email address that submitted materials |
| Mail a paper copy of materials to: Ohio Association for Gifted Children - Scholarships PO Box 30801 Gahanna, Ohio 43230 | *You will NOT receive confirmation of receipt unless you include a self-addressed, stamped envelope *Do not send materials via registered or certified mail |

REQUIRED MATERIALS: Applications Must Include ALL of the Following at the Time of Submission

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Applicant Information Form | <input type="checkbox"/> Letter of Recommendation and Form #2 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Current Photo of the Student | <input type="checkbox"/> Activities/Awards Form |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OAGC Member Nominator Form | <input type="checkbox"/> Student Essay Form |
| <input type="checkbox"/> District Contact & Eligibility Form | <input type="checkbox"/> Student Essay |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Letter of Recommendation and Form #1 | |

SCHOLARSHIP AWARD PROCEDURE

- Applications will be reviewed by a committee consisting of OAGC’s Scholarship Chair, Parent Division Chair, two Governing Board Members, and a current Member of OAGC. One committee member must be the parent of a gifted child.
- The award recipient will receive a \$1000 scholarship and Certificate of Excellence from the OAGC
- Applicants will be notified whether or not they were selected to receive a scholarship within 45 days of the submission deadline
- Scholarship awards will be made payable directly to the student

QUESTIONS?

Contact Alesha Haybin - OAGC Scholarship Committee Chair
Alesha.Haybin.OAGC@gmail.com

Updated: 7/23/20

All materials available in fillable PDF on our website!
www.oagc.com/scholarship.asp

OAGC Review Conversations

ASK DR. FORD

By Jennifer Groman

It is a truth universally acknowledged (in the gifted education world, at least) that children from most minority populations are vastly underidentified and underserved by gifted programs. Homage to Jane Austen aside, we also know that most minority populations are vastly overidentified in special education programs—especially children of poverty and children of color. The institutional biases in education are a symptom of larger systemic biases that our culture has sustained for generations. Fortunately for readers of the *OAGC Review*, we have an expert, Donna Ford, who will address our questions and concerns about discrepancies in identification and services for minority youth.

Throughout the past year, all of us have seen how these issues have made their way to mainstream notice. The truth is, this inequity has always been our past, and unless the “fears and apathy of the children of light” (Martin Luther King Jr.) keep us from speaking and acting in new ways, it will be our future, as well. Let’s look and act toward something better.

In an equitable world, the demographics of your general population should reflect your gifted population. If you have a general population of 35 percent Black, 40 percent White, 20 percent Asian, and 5 percent Native American students, the identified gifted population of those racial groups should mirror those percentages. This makes sense, right? Chances are though, especially if you work in a very diverse district, that this is not the case. But it should be, or at least should be within an acceptable percentage of underrepresentation. Experts in the field call this an “equity formula”: non-White students in gifted education should be present at a “percentage that is minimally acceptable to be nondiscriminatory” (Ford, 2013, p. 68). The equity formula acknowledges dual truths:

- a) culturally different groups are equally endowed in intelligence with White groups and b) the social, economic, and academic experiences of culturally different individuals and groups in homes, schools, and communities are unlike White students, and such inequities compromise and undermine their development, achievement, and performance.

Donna Ford, whom I cite above, will share her considerable expertise with us. Having vast research and writings (more than 300 articles, 14 books, and thousands of presentations) spanning more than 30 years in the field, she can provide special insight into understanding race issues in gifted identification and service. Among Ford’s many and varied areas of focus are recruiting and retaining culturally different students in gifted education, multicultural curriculum and instruction, African American identity and family involvement, and culturally competent teacher training and development.

What’s more, she is accessible and gracious. Ford has agreed to respond to your questions in the fall issue of the *OAGC Review*. If you have questions in the areas of gifted education access and equity for students of color and students of poverty, the Black-White achievement gap, or other areas of significance to your work or your district’s identification and service of underrepresented populations, please send them to me at sacred-la@hotmail.com before June 1. Write “OAGC Conversations” in the subject line and include your full name, your title, and where you work. I will take these questions to Ford and include her responses in the fall 2021 *Review*.

In the meantime, visit her website at <https://www.drdonnayford.com/> or the website for OSU’s Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Equity, of which Ford is a faculty affiliate.

REFERENCE

Ford, Donna Y. (2013). *Recruiting and Retaining Culturally Different Students in Gifted Education*. Prufrock Academic Press: Waco, TX.

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OAGC and GT Ignite have partnered together to bring you the Gifted Training bundle. We understand that meeting the new requirement of 15 hours of professional development in gifted education may seem like a daunting task... until now. Register online now for a 10% discount at gtignite.com/pricing.



ZANE'S TRACE

CONSORTIUM FOR THE GIFTED

2019–20 Poetry Contest Winners

3/4 GRADE DIVISION

First Place: I Love of Art!!!

Serenity Arens, Coshocton City

Art is a hobby that almost everybody does but they do not notice
Anything you do is technically an art
For example music is art
Almost all of the things you do is described as art
Art is a hobby you have to have a lot of creativity for
You have to have a lot of imagination for it
You have to have a lot of time if you want a perfect piece of art or a masterpiece
You are recommended by me to make your own ideas for art
You have to have really of taste in color and things for art
You have to have enough supplies for art
You don't always have to have art planned out to make it good
It can be very hard to plan art
Some people like to freestyle art
Most people like to have their art planned out
I like to do both
If you are in a hurry to make art
or you do not have enough time to make art
I suggest you to freestyle it
If you have time for art you should probably plan it out
When you freestyle it you are probably going to mess up alot
I'm not saying that if you don't plan it it will be bad
But if you plan it it could still go wrong anytime
A lot of people don't believe in themselves when doing art
But when I do art I know that I want to try to be as confident as possible
When you do art I want you to be as confident as possible
You should always be positive and believe in yourself
You should not always brag about your art or say yours is better than somebody else's
It can hurt the other person's feelings
When you do art I am not saying that is not good but you should never brag about it
You should keep your opinion to yourself unless you are saying something good about somebody else's
Do what you want with art but always be positive!!

The Zane's Trace Consortium for the Gifted (ZTCG) annually sponsors a poetry contest for elementary and middle school students identified as gifted and directly served by gifted intervention specialists, gifted coordinators, or a trained cluster teacher in a cluster class.

Judging Criteria:

- √ Creativity—fresh, unique approach or topic; “created” vocabulary
- √ Clarity—portrays a clear image to the reader
- √ Descriptiveness—paints a colorful picture through the use of words
- √ Neatness—easy to read; corrections, if any, are thorough

One first-place award (\$25), one second-place award (\$20), one third-place award (\$15), and one honorable mention award (\$10) will be made in each grade level group listed above.

These are the winners for this year's poetry contest. We had 11 entries in the 3/4 grade group, 21 entries in 5/6 grade, and 21 entries in 7/8 grade.

Second Place

My Immigration Story

Ayce Cosgrave, Maysville City

I am an immigrant

I am scared

But I am still happy for my family
I cannot imagine how hard it will be for me

I am an immigrant
I am now an American
But I am still French
I will catch up in a cinch

I am an immigrant I am hopeful
But I am still homesick
Still this is the country I would pick

Third Place

Flowers

Ryleigh Wegener, Coshocton City

Do you like flowers? Some are colorful.
Some are plain. Some live in cool weather.
Some live in hot weather. Some live long while others don't.
Some are hard.
Some are soft. Some live in different states.
Some are multi-colored.
Some smell good. Some don't smell at all.
Some are poisonous.
Some aren't. But there's one thing,
All flowers help earth in different ways.

Honorable Mention

My Stormy Night

Aubree Bantum, Coshocton City

Tonight was a stormy night.
I had a lot of fright about this night.
I looked through the window and saw lightning.
It looked very frightening.
I told my mom I was scared.
She told me about the stormy night she shared.
She said it's ok to be scared sometimes..
She said her sister used to be scared of mimes!
This was my stormy night!

5/6 grade division and 7/8 grade division on page 38

5/6 GRADE DIVISION

First place: Love

Victoria Davis, Coshocton City

Love is like that warm fuzzy feeling
when you drink hot chocolate in the middle of winter,
and there's a fresh coat of snow on the ground like
a white blanket has covered the land.
When the light reflects off the snow it's
unexplainable
but the first word that comes to mind when trying
to describe it
is ... beautiful
it's like millions and millions of tiny little crystals
glistening just wanting to be played in.
Then when you have your first steps in the snow
and you turn around and look at your footprints
and they just look amazing
that feeling in that moment is love.

Second Place: How Will the World End?

Jayda Pettress, Bellaire City
(did not give permission to publish poem)

Third Place: The Memory

Lydia Moore, Maysville City

The gentle breeze,
the crashing waves, nature.
But yet, all of that,
a memory.
The world holds
wars, battle, death.
Memories hold hope.
Your memories bring peace to you
no matter what the world
has
in store.

Honorable Mention: Life is Like

Caleb Camp, Maysville City

Life is like an elegant snowflake
floating through the wind until it comes to a stop.
Life is like a colossal house.
It is where many of your memories lie.
Life is like a ticking clock.
It is constantly moving, moving, and moving.
Life can be many things,
and you decide what it is going to be like.

7/8 GRADE DIVISION

First place: Sunrise

Madison Somerville, Edison Local
(did not give permission to publish poem)

Second Place: The Creature of Many

Alex Applegarth, Bellaire City
(did not give permission to publish poem)

Third Place: Tomorrow

Sophie Cover, Zanesville City
(did not give permission to publish poem)

Honorable Mention: Bottle of Problems

Jude Floyd, Toronto City

The flicker of my insecurities sparked my attention
I gazed down at the bottle
A bottle covered in the filth of low self-esteem
The lid is drilled too tight,
For one with powers of Hercules could not amount
One of the many bottles what weigh me down with each
passing day
A bottle to hold my depression lies knocked over on the
floor
That glimpse of light in my life no longer appears anymore
I am trapped in a prison filled with bottles of tears,
Bottles on insecurities after what has felt like millions of
years
A door appears as if there was a way to escape
I run down a road flooded with broken glass
Blood trails its way behind me as I progress
The sudden blinding light comes closer
Emotions burst out of me
Things that I've never felt before
Broken bottles of broken memories lie still without an
awakening moment
Freed from the chain of painful thoughts
I forced myself to laugh
New bottles of "Happier" moments commence
Yet the scars to wrap around my neck
Even acting happy will never be worth it
I was left as a hallowed shell filled with empty bottles
A ghost of my former self waves me goodbye
I hung there with a smile on my face for the very first time

GIFTED CHILDREN: Both Bullies and Victims

By Jennifer Groman

Gifted students are neither more nor less likely to be victimized by bullies than are other students, but their characteristics and ways of interacting with the world may make their experience more complex. Those interactions give us—teachers, counselors, and administrators—specific behaviors to look for. In addition, while we often consider gifted students to be victims—weak or socially awkward—they can be very effective bullies themselves.

Bullying in children is based on differences, so our exceptional populations of students may well be targeted by a bully. The literature suggests, however, that while gifted populations are about as likely to be victimized by a bully as are general education students, special education students are the most likely to be victimized. The literature also suggests that some types of gifted students are more often targeted. Students gifted in the arts, for example, tend to be victimized more often. Androgynous or LGBTQ students, whether gifted or nongifted, may also be bullied more by peers. Gifted individuals often have difficulty socializing with same-age peers for a number of reasons, and their isolation from peers makes them an easier and more vulnerable target for bullying.

Bullies also prey on students perceived as having social anxiety. Gifted students often experience something called *asynchronous development*, in which their social, intellectual, and physical development may progress unevenly. Their intellectual development may be greater than that of their age peers, while their physical and social abilities may be the same as or less developed than those of their age peers. Children like this will experience challenges in making friends. I had a student whose verbal development was so far above that of his peers that they did not understand him: his sentence structure and advanced vocabulary simply stymied them. Social anxiety arises from this inability to relate to peers, which also contributes to the isolation of some gifted students.

In addition, bullies love to attack students who are emotional or who get upset easily. One powerful aspect of highly gifted individuals is their extreme sensitivity to the world, so they may react to bullying in ways that further motivate the bully. This sensitivity may cause them to internalize the bullying that they have experienced, intensifying the experience and haunting them. This sensitivity adds a layer of complexity to the gifted child's victimization and his or her reaction to it.

Not a lot of research exists on the gifted student as bully, but in my experience with middle school gifted students, I have found that they can be very effective bullies for a number of reasons.

Gifted students may have a high degree of empathy, that is, an ability to step into the feelings of others. While most individuals use this gift of empathy for good, some use their understanding of the feelings of others to prey on those feelings, for example, teasing a classmate about weight, knowing that the student is especially vulnerable or emotional about the subject.

Another characteristic of giftedness is advanced verbal ability. Flexible and biting use of language can be a hallmark of gifted students. There is a great example of this in the comic strip *Calvin and Hobbes* with Moe, the schoolyard bully. Moe, a Cro-Magnon-looking boy standing well above Calvin's small frame, was a recurring character, pushing or punching Calvin on a regular basis but on some occasions showing a dull thick-headedness in their interactions. In one strip, Calvin says to Moe, "Moe, I was wondering something. Are your maladjusted social tendencies the product of your berserk pituitary gland?" In the next frame, Moe is seen looking blankly (which is easy, since his eyes are covered with thick, black hair) at the reader. The final frame shows Moe looking back at Calvin, with a dull, "What?" Calvin, looking at the audience, says, "Isn't he great folks? Let's give him a big hand!"

A gifted child can easily bully a peer by speaking over his or her head in this way, especially if the onlookers value or fear the gifted child over the weaker or victimized one. High empathy in gifted students can be used for positive purposes but also can be used for nefarious ones.

To teachers I would suggest that they be aware of the many and very subtle ways in which children can bully one another. Getting to know students on an individual basis, which is a foundational belief of all the teachers I know and have worked with, is probably the most powerful tool that teachers have to identify bullying and victimization in any population of students. Teachers need to recognize signs of bullying on the playground or during less-structured time in the school day. Body language, facial expression, an imbalance of leadership or power between students are all important when looking at how students interact. This is also why knowing students individually and personally can be enormously helpful.

Gifted students are not necessarily more likely to be bullies or victims, but their specific characteristics and ways of being in the world make their experiences complex. The encouraging part of this situation is that these characteristics also give us specific actions to look for in bullying by and victimization of gifted students.

Jennifer Groman is an assistant professor and director of the graduate program in talent development at Ashland University, as well as a visiting lecturer for the talent development program at McNeese State University. She lives in Wooster, Ohio.



Ohio Association for Gifted Children

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Principal | <input type="checkbox"/> Counseling Department | <input type="checkbox"/> Math Department |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Science Department | <input type="checkbox"/> Language Arts Department | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Studies Department |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Special Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Parent-Teacher Association | <input type="checkbox"/> Library/Media Center |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gifted Education | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |

Call for Articles – Fall 2021 Review

General Call

Please note that the deadline for articles for the OAGC fall *Review* is **June 15, 2021**. We encourage readers to submit any article they believe will be useful to OAGC membership.

In addition, we will be accepting the following articles from all regions: Teacher Features, Spotlight on Student Talent, and other regional articles of interest.

If you would like to submit an article relating to a gifted education topic or an article featuring a teacher, coordinator, program, or student in your region, please review the article submission guidelines on <http://oagc.com/publications.asp>. All student submissions must have a student permission form completed by a parent or guardian. The form is also available at the above link.

If you have questions, please contact Ann Sheldon at anngift@aol.com.