Unlocking Potential
OAGC Review
Ohio Association for Gifted Children

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inside this issue

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Suzanne Palmer

As I write this message, I am just returning from this year's National Association for Gifted Children conference in beautiful Albuquerque, New Mexico. What an amazing experience! The national conference comes just a few weeks after the OAGC's Annual Fall Conference each year, so fall is always an exciting time for me to grow professionally and to reconnect with former colleagues and acquaintances.

Each October, I look forward to attending our state conference, which is always so thoughtfully put together by OAGC executive director Ann Sheldon and the rest of the conference committee. Each year, I am amazed by the caliber of speakers that the conference committee lines up to educate, inform, and inspire those of us in the gifted field, including parents and other interested individuals.

Fast forward a few weeks to November, when my learning continued at the NAGC conference. I was hooked from the opening session. A young woman named Haley Taylor Shlitz, a 16-year-old Texas teen who is an SMU Dedman School of Law student, participated in a panel around the theme of "Giftedness Knows No Boundaries." While the adults on the panel had much to offer during the discussion, this young woman truly stole the show. She was articulate and provided a unique perspective through the lens of a gifted learner.

Just like the OAGC conference, the NAGC conference had so many learning opportunities that at times it was difficult to choose which session to attend. There were also many opportunities to network with educators and parents from all over the country.

As I made my way back home, I reflected on both the OAGC and NAGC conferences and thought about how lucky we are here in the state of Ohio to have such an amazing state conference available to us each October. As I browsed through the program for the NAGC conference to make my selections for the sessions to attend, I couldn't help but notice the many names of the experts presenting at the NAGC who had been a part of the OAGC Annual Fall Conference, Coordinator Workshop, and Teacher Academy at one time or another—and in some instances, multiple times.

If you have not taken the opportunity to attend one of the OAGC's professional learning opportunities, I encourage you to consider participating. The OAGC Teacher Academy is just around the corner, and I am confident that it will not disappoint. It's also not too early to put the OAGC Annual Fall Conference on your calendar for October 2020. It is your chance to meet some of the most knowledgeable experts in the field and to connect with educators and parents from the state of Ohio who are as committed as you are to advocating for and meeting the needs of our gifted learners.

ADVOCACY CORNER

WILL SCHOOL FUNDING AND REPORT CARD CHANGES BE CONSIDERED IN 2020?

By Ann Sheldon

New year, old issues. School funding has been debated for more than 20 years, and school report card changes have been discussed for at least the last few years. So, is 2020 the year that brings some resolution to these two hot-button and fundamental education issues in Ohio?

School Funding Legislation

This past fall, Representatives Bobb Cupp (R) and John Patterson (D) introduced a stand-alone bill, HB 305, which incorporates most, if not all, of the elements of the Fair School Funding plan, which was developed by a large, bipartisan stakeholder group over two years. The OAGC has concerns about the gifted funding formula incorporated into HB 305. However, the formula likely will provide more funding for districts across the state. The OAGC has just recently received the funding formula detailed by component. We will share our analysis when it is complete. The gifted formula was based on the gifted cost study completed by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) in summer 2018. The OAGC has several specific issues with the proposed gifted funding formula. Briefly, these include

- Lack of accountability for state gifted education funds at the district level;
- High gifted-student-to-gifted-intervention-specialist ratios as well as student-to-gifted-coordinator ratios, resulting in lower funding;
- Phase-out of gifted professional development funding after four years, which goes against best practice and common sense;
- Elimination of gifted funding at educational service centers (ESCs); and
- Insufficient support of rural districts.

All of these objections are outlined in the OAGC's "Response to the Gifted Cost Study," which can be accessed at http://www.oagc.com/files/OAGC%20Amendment%20Requests%20to%20HB305.9.16.19.pdf or at http://www.oagc.com/files/OAGC%20Response%20to%20the%20Gifted%20Cost%20Study7.25.18(1).pdf.

The Ohio Finance Committee has held several hearings on HB 305, including one on categorical funding. The bill cosponsors and the developers of the funding model have indicated that they are willing to make changes to the plan. Thus far, there has been no discussion of potential changes to the gifted funding formula. Presently, the time line to pass HB 305 is unclear. While the cosponsors would like to accelerate the process, Senate President Larry Obhof has indicated that he is in no hurry to pass this bill.

State Report Card Discussions

In addition to school funding, the General Assembly deliberated three other highly contentious education issues in the stage budget:

1. Academic distress commission reform,
2. Graduation requirements reform, and
3. State report card reform.

Academic Distress

It is possible that no issue has been more divisive in Ohio education circles than Academic Distress Commissions. To date, only a few districts have been taken over by these commissions, most notably Youngstown City Schools and Lorain City Schools. However, several other districts are on the cusp of falling into academic distress, including the largest Ohio school district, Columbus City Schools.

In a prior General Assembly, the House considered a bill—drafted with virtually no input from the education community—that allowed the state superintendent of public instruction to replace a local board of education in a district designated as chronically failing. As a result of intense pressure from local school districts across the state, the House eliminated the commissions in the state budget bill. The Senate, however, had a very different plan, which retained the commissions but slowed the takeover timeline to six years and allowed for interventions throughout the process. Most education organizations, including the education management groups and two teachers' unions, opposed the Senate plan. The Senate ultimately removed the language from the House bill that would have eliminated the academic distress commissions in favor of local solutions, but it also omitted its own alternative plan. Ultimately, the bill passed with a one-year moratorium on future state takeovers until the issue can be resolved in stand-alone legislation.

Graduation Requirements

Another hot-button issue is graduation requirements. The current requirements, which rely heavily on high school end-of-course examinations, have never been fully implemented for fear that too many students would fail to meet the requirements. The State Board of Education laid out a

plan establishing multiple pathways to graduation, including one based on completion a senior-year capstone project. Members of the business community and conservative education groups objected to this pathway as being too subjective. In response to the state board's plan, three entities—the new business education group Ohio Excels, the Fordham Foundation, and the Alliance for High Quality Education—developed an alternative plan that would reduce some test requirements and allow for alternative pathways that do not include a grade point average (GPA) or capstone project. The Ohio 8, an organization representing the state's largest urban school districts, also supported the Ohio Excels plan. The Ohio Senate included this plan in its version of the budget bill. For more details on the Ohio Excels plan, please go to https://ohioexcels.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Joint-Graduation-Requirements-Proposal-6-3-2019.pdf.

Report Card Revisions

A provision in the budget bill, HB 166, created a report card study committee charged with producing recommendations on how to change the report card by December 15, 2019. This committee includes Sen. Peggy Lehner (R-Kettering), Sen. Louis Blessing III (R-Cincinnati), Sen. Teresa Fedor (D-Toledo), Rep. Don Jones (R-Freeport), Rep. Tracy Richardson (R-Marysville), and Rep. Lisa Sobecki (D-Toledo). In addition, the committee includes three superintendents representing rural, suburban, and urban areas (Stephanie Starcher of Fort Frye, Cameron Ryba of Strongsville, and Marlon Styles of Middletown) and the state superintendent or his representative.

The committee held only three meetings: two in November and one in December. The first was an organizational meeting, and the other two were regular hearings during which many education groups provided testimony. While the groups expressed a wide range of views and ideas, a few common themes emerged, such as eliminating performance indicators, refining the value-added measure, providing more non-test-related information about districts, and eliminating the A–F grade system. A few organizations spoke of the need to focus more on equity issues. It is important to note that the elimination of performance indicators would remove the gifted performance indicator (GPI), one of the few accountability measures for gifted children on district report cards. And more than one organization indicated that the GPI should be moved to a new equity measure—minus the gifted input element. The OAGC objects to the elimination of performance indicators unless the gifted performance indicator with all three elements (the gifted performance index, gifted value-added measure, and gifted identification and input points) is retained and moved to another report card component, such as an equity measure. To view the OAGC's testimony to this committee, please go to http://www.oagc.com/files/OAGC.ReportCardComments.12.4.19.updated.pdf. Ohio Excels convened a meeting of stakeholder groups to try to come to consensus on the elements of a new report card. The OAGC has been part of those discussions. The group report can be viewed at oagc.com.advocacyupdates.asp under the "Gifted Performance Indicator and Other Report Card Documents," along with any reports released by the report card study committee.

Ultimately, the report issued from the report card committee is just that: a report. Any alterations would have to go through the legislative process, and it is unclear how much appetite the current General Assembly has for sweeping changes to the current report card.

2019 Gifted Report Card Update

While the OAGC is still processing data from the 2018–2019 report card (some of which had to be requested from the Ohio Department of Education), we can share a few numbers regarding the latest gifted performance indicator.

Gifted Performance Indicator Overall Results and Trends

In 2013–2014, 155 districts met the GPI. This dropped to 13 districts in 2014–2015 and then increased to 49 in 2015–2016. When the indicator standards were increased again in 2016–2017, the number of districts that met the indicator dropped to 12. In 2017–2018, the number increased to 38. With the exception of type 8 typology districts (large urban), districts in every typology met the indicator (type 1: 3, type 2: 3, type 3: 9, type 4: 2, type 5: 5, type 6: 15, type 7: 1).

Gifted Performance Indicator Element Comparison

	2017–18	2016–17	2015–16	2014–15	2013–14
Average value-added measure	1.58	1.30	1.09	.34	.31
Average gifted input points	54	52	47	43	36
Average performance index	114.2	113.4	112.5	110.5	115.8

In all, 140 districts met the gifted performance index, 406 met the gifted value-added measure, and 91 met the gifted input points element.

2017–2018 Gifted Performance Indicator
Breakdown by District Typology

	Gifted value-added measure	Gifted performance index	Gifted input points
Type 1	0.44	113.42	50.33
Type 2	1.11	114.21	47.58
Type 3	1.30	115.40	56.16
Type 4	0.54	113.78	52.03
Type 5	3.25	115.40	61.29
Type 6	7.87	117.59	69.80
Type 7	-0.88	110.48	49.26
Type 8	-4.95	106.93	53.81
State average	**1.58**	**114.24**	**53.81**

There were improvements in all three elements of the GPI, but these varied by typology, as can be seen in the chart below. For example, type 3 (small town, low-poverty) and type 6 (suburban, low-poverty) districts had the largest increase in gifted input points as well as high increases in the value-added measure and the gifted performance index. All district typologies showed gains in the value-added measure, except type 1 (rural, high-poverty) and type 4 (small town, high-poverty), which had minor drops. Type 6 (suburban, low-poverty) districts had the highest gain in value-added growth. The gifted performance index rose from 113.41 in 2016–2017 to 114.24, with increases in all typologies. Type 8 (urban, large) districts made the most gains. Gifted points increased in all district types, except type 1 (rural, high-poverty) and type 2 (rural, average-poverty), with an average increase of 2 points. Type 6 (suburban, low-poverty) districts made the largest point gains.

Gifted Performance Indicator
Changes Breakdown by District Typology

	Gifted value-added measure		Gifted performance index		Gifted input points	
	2017–2018	2016–2017	2017–2018	2016–2017	2017–2018	2016–2017
Type 1	0.44	0.52	113.42	112.64	50.33	51.07
Type 2	1.11	0.94	114.21	113.66	47.58	48.03
Type 3	1.30	1.02	115.40	113.82	56.16	52.59
Type 4	0.54	0.61	113.78	113.06	52.03	47.93
Type 5	3.25	2.95	115.40	114.95	61.29	58.46
Type 6	7.87	6.12	117.59	116.82	69.80	64.57
Type 7	-0.88	-0.99	110.48	109.92	49.26	46.21
Type 8	-4.95	-5.28	106.93	105.17	42.38	43.75
State average	1.58	1.30	114.24	113.41	53.81	51.81

When additional information is available, the OAGC will provide further analysis on gifted performance. For now, it appears that districts are making slow but steady gains. Districts increasing services appear to be making larger strides in performance, but without additional information it is difficult to draw any concrete conclusions about the tie between service opportunities and performance.

New ODE Director of the Office for Exceptional Children

Jo Hannah Ward has been named the director of the ODE Office for Exceptional Children. She replaces Kim Monachino. The ODE released this bio of Ward:

> Jo Hannah has 29 years of experience in education. Her background includes direct classroom experience, building level leadership and experience with mental health services in schools for students. Before being the executive director for the Center for Continuous Improvement, Jo Hannah has previously served as Director of the Office for Improvement and Innovation for three years, Assistant Director in the Office for Exceptional Children for twelve years, and she served as the Deputy Superintendent at the Ohio Department of Youth Services and the Franklin County Court Juvenile Detention Facility providing oversight of 10 different departments providing youth programming in areas such as; education, transition, and mental health services. Throughout her career, she has worked with education and community service agencies to help students with special needs succeed both academically and in their communities.

Gifted Assessment Update

The ODE released another update to the gifted assessment list in October. This list includes a new assessment that will assist identification of students in grades 9 through 12 in the area of dance. This list is updated on the OAGC Web site. Other issues with the assessment list remain, including the elimination of several assessments that are well-liked in the field due to the burdensome RFQ process. The OAGC posed a number of questions regarding assessments to the ODE this fall. Here are the questions (in bold) and the ODE responses:

Will the GATES-II's approval be extended to include art, music, and drama for grades 9–12 (ages 14 and up)? The GATES-II was approved through a focused Request for Qualifications (RFQ) specifically addressing checklists of artistic behaviors for dance at grades 9–12 and ages 14 and up. Posted October 9 to the Department Web site, approval for this assessment is as stated on the vendor information form. The Department is hopeful that future RFQ opportunities will continue to grow the number and variety of assessments approved for the identification of students who are gifted.

Are the cut scores for the CogAT and NNAT-3 accurate and if not, will they be revised? When cognitive ability (intelligence) tests are approved for inclusion on the list of approved assessments, publishers are asked to calculate qualifying scores following Ohio state law for gifted identification and the department's standard practice of rounding up the standard error of measure (SEM). Related to the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test, 3rd edition (NNAT-3), the publisher did not consistently apply the requested calculation method at certain grade levels. The vendor information form for this assessment was corrected with revised cut scores and reposted October 9 to the department Web site.

Related to the cut scores on the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT), the publisher clarified for the department that the standard error of measure on this assessment is dependent on the standard deviation, meaning the standard error of measure varies if the score is calculated at one or two standard deviations above the mean. The publisher refers to this as a Conditional Standard Error of Measure (CSEM). As an example, on Level 7 of the CogAT assessment, for the composite score for the Verbal, Quantitative, and Nonverbal batteries (VQN composite), the Conditional Standard Error of Measure is 5 at one standard deviation above the mean and 4 at two standard deviations above the mean. Cut scores for this assessment, available on the vendor information form, reflect the Conditional Standard Error of Measure as indicated by the publisher of this assessment.

Why is the CogAT Nonverbal Battery Approved for identification? The Cognitive Abilities Test's (CogAT) Nonverbal Battery meets the technical requirements of the RFQ. This battery includes multiple subtests and is only approved at grades 2–4, for particular test levels, and only for the identification of English learners and students with serious reading and mathematical learning disabilities. The publisher indicates that best practice for identifying students with the CogAT is to use all batteries together, then to look at particular battery combinations, and then to look at individual batteries, including the Nonverbal Battery. The publisher stated that while Dr. Lohman, an author of this assessment, does not believe stand-alone nonverbal assessments in general (to include those such as Raven's Progressive Matrices and the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test, etc.) are the most appropriate measure for the identification of students who are gifted, if a nonverbal ability test is desired, such as in the case of identifying English learners or students with specific learning disabilities, then the CogAT Nonverbal Battery is a technically sound measure for this purpose, meeting or exceeding the technical criteria of other stand-alone nonverbal assessments.

What is the Ohio Department of Education's guidance for using translators when evaluating English learners? Ohio Administrative Code 3301-51-15 (C)(2)(c) states that districts shall ensure that assessment instruments are administered by trained individuals in conformance with the instructions provided by the publisher. This section further clarifies that districts should allow for appropriate screening and identification of minority or disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and English learners to include providing and administering assessments in a student's native language or other mode of communication if English is a barrier to the student's performance or at the request of a parent. Guidance from the department is always anchored in administering assessments in conformity with the instructions provided by the publisher. Districts should not invalidate standardized assessments by administering tests in ways that deviate from the instructions and guidance provided by the publisher of the assessment.

What is the Ohio Department of Education's guidance for identifying students with assessments that were previously approved or when a student takes a test outside of the grade levels indicated on the vendor information form? Districts should recognize qualifying scores if an assessment was approved for use at the time the student took the assessment and the scores are no older than 24 months. Related to assessments taken out-of-grade level, if a student takes an assessment per the publisher's guidelines (such as a 1st-grade student taking the 2nd-grade level of MAP Growth 2–5) and the student achieves a qualifying score based on the appropriate norms as established by the publisher, then a student shall be identified. The same is true for a 9th- or 10th-grade student who takes the ACT. Students are identified as gifted if they achieve a qualifying score based on the standard norms as established by the publisher.

The ODE is still in the process of reviewing and determining the composition of the gifted assessment reviewers for future RFQ opportunities.

To keep abreast of all advocacy news, please sign up for the Ohiogift listserv. Please e-mail artsnyder44@cs.com for directions. You may also e-mail me directly at anngift@aol.com, and I will make sure that you are added to the listserv. Please check the OAGC Web site frequently for new policy and advocacy items. Also, if you are a member of an OAGC division and wish to be included on the division listserv, please go the division area after you log in to the OAGC Web site for directions. Don't know your user code/password to log in? Please contact me at anngift@aol.com or executive-director@oagc.com.

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Are you on Facebook? Please become a fan of the Ohio Association for Gifted Children by going to www.facebook.com/OhioAGC.

The Best PD Is *Not* 50 Miles Away

By Todd Stanley, OAGC Coordinator Division Chair

I remember sitting in a meeting with a consultant from a nearby ESC who was offering to teach project-based learning to our district for $300 per teacher. This struck me as sort of funny. Funny because I have written numerous books on project-based learning and have traveled all over Ohio as well as Texas and Australia to teach others how to use PBL. Funny also because I already work for the district, meaning I'm free. Yet here we were having a conversation about using this outside resource. After the consultant had left, I voiced my confusion and reminded my colleagues of my expertise. One of the executive directors said, "You can't be a prophet in your own land."

I understand this statement a little bit. There have been numerous occasions when I've told teachers something over and over again and they've just shaken their heads and ignored it. And yet if I bring in an outside speaker and he or she delivers the exact same message, teachers often react as though someone has just told them how to make wine from water. Sometimes we are so close to the people we work with that our message becomes like white noise, even when that message makes sense and benefits kids.

My problem with this statement, however, is that there are many voices saying great things that we simply are not listening to because the words do not come from an outside expert, or "educelebrity," who is hawking his or her latest book. You do not have to look very hard in your district to find people who have a lot to offer. Classroom teachers are doing great things all over the place, and we as educators should be learning from them.

Not only that, but as anyone who has attended either the OAGC Annual Fall Conference or its spring Teacher Academy has discovered, the best sessions are the ones run by participants, not by the big names that are brought in to keynote. That being the case, why don't we just skip the middleman and let the voices around us share their message?

This brings me to the December Coordinator Conference. We members of the Coordinator Division always wrestle with the question of whom to invite to provide the keynote. We have to consider how far away they live, the costs of having them speak, and how the message works into the theme of the conference.

This year, when we settled on the theme of professional development and service models—something on the plate of many coordinators across the state—we realized that we have a lot of talented folks who provide great professional development or who have really intriguing and effective service models right here in the great state of Ohio. Why not learn from these people who are in the trenches every day, fighting the good fight for the betterment of gifted children? So, this is what we did and why the conference was titled Best Practices in Gifted Coordination from around the State of Ohio.

We brought in experts from around our state to provide coordinators with practical strategies that have been tested on the front lines. Candace Sears, director of instructional services for the Montgomery County ESC, who develops meaningful PD for the 17 districts that her ESC serves, including Dayton Public, delivered a minikeynote on her journey in creating this HQPD. Colleen Boyle, director of gifted and talented for Columbus City Schools, who has 5,000 or so gifted identified students and who has forgotten more about gifted education than most of us will ever know, shared her journey of providing service through a gifted academy.

The breakout sessions covered the entire state of Ohio. From northern Ohio, Sheli Amato shared the survey results of best practices. Sally Kovar and Jenny Pennell talked about facilitating a book study, and Nyree Wilkerson discussed cluster grouping. From the east, Kim Mayer and Susan Larson demonstrated how to set up online learning. From the south, Kim Gordon and Becky Bowling presented the university perspective of online learning. Our western representative, Wendi Moorman, discussed how to present PD to the most difficult group of all—adults. Finally, central Ohio's own Stefanie Hall showed how to make presentations more interactive (and she actually practiced what she preached).

We also asked that attendees bring their best practices, ideas, and expertise to share with others. We did this through our colleague circles during lunch, where people from all over the state shared what they were doing in their neck of the woods. After all, it is often in these conversations that we grow the most and gain the most professional expertise.

So, the next time you are working on professional development with staff, remember that you have experts all around you. This is a collaborative profession in which we should be learning from those around us. You just have to look for them and provide them with a voice and a venue for sharing their expertise.

Teacher Division Article

Making the Case for Early Intervention and Service in Primary Grades

By Sarah Schleehauf, OAGC Teacher Division Chair and Gifted Supervisor, MCESC, and Katherine Pearson, Gifted Supervisor, MCESC

The Ohio Gifted Operating Standards have raised a few eyebrows in the education community, as to why we would want to identify students as gifted so early in their academic career. We know as educators that early intervention is crucial when students appear to be behind their peers or demonstrate a suspected delay or learning deficit. The early intervention may help the child catch up to his or her typical peers. Where does this leave our students who are identified as gifted or who are not yet identified? Does early intervention make a difference in primary grades?

The research fully supports early intervention and states that early intervention for gifted students leads to the following benefits:

- The most cognitive growth takes place when students are in appropriately challenging environments.
- Classrooms with an enriched curriculum are more likely to meet the affective needs of students and to support their mental health.
- Interest-based classrooms better develop students' strengths.
- Engaging students in a rigorous learning environment prevents future underachievement.
- For disadvantaged populations, it is the best initiative to close equity gaps.
- Gifted children can master learning material at a considerably faster pace when compared to their peers, which leads to waiting—waiting for peers to catch up, waiting for the teacher to move on, or waiting for instructions on what to do next.

Failing to provide an enriched classroom that is accelerated can lead to the following negative outcomes:

- Students may hide their advanced abilities to blend in with their peers.
- Cognitive growth is stifled, and students can slip into underachievement, develop a poor growth mindset, and even unhealthy perfectionism.
- Negative behaviors can manifest or increase without the proper knowledge and support of the social and emotional needs of gifted students.

Young children are like sponges; they soak up as much information as they can. However, if these children are not given opportunities to acquire new information or are not exposed to new experiences, they often shut down or give up. They can become resentful of this waiting period. This can quickly spiral out of control, as these children can become angry, depressed, or obsessed with a know-it-all attitude. By the time students enter upper elementary school, it is too late. If teachers don't intervene with young gifted students, these children may begin to slip into an unhealthy vision of themselves and their abilities.

Identification of young students can be difficult and easily misunderstood. Common characteristics include early reading and speech development. Highly gifted children have an extended vocabulary, are precocious, and often enjoy problem-solving activities, puzzles, word play, and riddles. The list of Ohio assessments for gifted children has changed, and many of the tests to identify younger students have been removed. As a result, it is all the more imperative that teachers advocate for their students by looking for those gifted characteristics in the early years, documenting, intervening, and making referrals for identification. When we intervene early, we can capitalize on successful talent development and set students up for more academic success.

Resources

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A PARENT'S GUIDE TO WRITTEN EDUCATION PLANS

Parent Division

By Monica Shaner, OAGC Parent Division Chair

What is a written education plan?

A written education plan (W.E.P. for short, and sometimes called a "wep"—rhymes with "pep") is a document used to guide gifted services. Each student who receives gifted service has a W.E.P., and a new one is written each year. The W.E.P. contains information about what services your child is receiving, describes how the curriculum will be differentiated, and outlines some educational goals based on your child's needs.

Who gets a W.E.P.?

When a district reports that a student is receiving gifted service, it must provide a W.E.P. for the student. Gifted students who are *not* receiving service cannot have a W.E.P. If your child has been identified as gifted but is not receiving service, you should receive a letter that informs you that your child is not receiving services. So, every year you will receive either a W.E.P. or a "no services" letter.

What should I look for in a W.E.P.?

In each district, the W.E.P. may look a little different, but they all contain a few important pieces of information.

Areas of Identification and Service

First, there is a place that shows in which areas your child has been identified as gifted and in which areas they are being served. Sometimes a student is not served in every area in which he or she has been identified. This section should make that clear.

Goals Page

The next important piece to look for on a W.E.P. is the goal page. There should be a separate goal page for each area or type of service that your child receives. The goal page(s) should list at least one academic goal that your child will meet in that area. These goals are usually fairly broad, so it is rare to find more than one academic goal in a particular subject area on a goal page.

While some districts choose to list only academic goals, others also include a social-emotional goal. Most often, if a district provides both academic and social goals, it develops one subject-specific academic goal per area of gifted identification and one social-emotional goal per student.

Academic goals on W.E.P.s tend to be general and to focus either on skills that the student will attain or on levels of achievement that the school is able to measure. Sometimes these goals are in teacher jargon and are hard to understand. If you are not sure what they mean, ask. The teacher who is providing the service will be able to give you more information.

Social and emotional goals tend to focus on managing anxiety and emotional intensity or on developing executive function skills like prioritization, time management, and persistence. While these goals may sound less important than the academic goals, students who are identified as gifted typically have social and emotional needs that reach into all areas of their lives and affect their ability to succeed academically as they move to higher education and workforce training. Gifted educators are focusing increasingly on these goals as they learn more about how important they are for student success.

Differentiation Strategies

After the goal page(s) comes a section that explains how the class will meet those goals. There are four strategies that teachers use to differentiate: pacing, depth, breadth, and complexity. This section will give some information about how these strategies will look within the gifted service. Some teachers create their own assignments to add challenge to the class, but some use programs designed for gifted students. In this section, teachers might list those programs or explain their strategies for changing assignments for gifted students.

Different Work, Not More Work

Either combined with the differentiation section or in a separate space, there should be a specific statement that explains how the students will do different work rather than additional work. In some cases, students will simply be in a different class, but sometimes they will have different assignments in the same class or will be excused from class one day per week. Students should not be required to make up work that is missed if they are pulled from class, nor should they receive service only when their other work is finished. In this section, you will see some explanation of how the district is handling this consideration.

Progress Reporting

After that, there should be a place on the W.E.P. that lets you know when and how progress toward the goal will be

monitored. Some districts send home a W.E.P. update mid-year, others include information with the report card, and still others have unique methods. The W.E.P. should tell you where to look for this information.

Signature Section

The last section to look for on the W.E.P. is the signature section. Districts are required to send you a copy of the W.E.P. and to request that you sign and return it. If you do not sign, that does *not* mean that your child will be removed from service. If you do not want your child to receive gifted services, you will need to contact the school and request that your child be removed. Often, districts will require that you make that request in writing by either sending an e-mail or filling out a form.

How do I know if there is a problem and what do I do about it?

W.E.P.s are usually written in the first quarter of the school year and come home around the end of October or in early November. They can be sent home with students, sent through the mail, or sent electronically. If you haven't received yours by Thanksgiving, first check on any district portal or Web site, and if you still don't see one, contact your child's teacher to find out what happened.

If you look through this guide and your W.E.P. doesn't seem to have all the parts, contact your child's teacher or the gifted coordinator in your district. Either the teacher or coordinator should be able to help you find all the information.

If the W.E.P. goal isn't clear to you, or if you can't see the way the differentiation is happening in the classroom, it's okay to ask. Teachers should be able to explain what is happening in their classroom and how their system works. If you ask in a friendly way, teachers are usually happy to talk about all the cool stuff they are doing to help your child learn.

If there is a bigger problem, or if the answers you get cause concern, contact the gifted coordinator in your district. They may be able to clear things up or help find solutions to issues as they come up. Gifted services are rapidly expanding in Ohio, and there are bound to be some growing pains along the way. Be patient, but don't be afraid to advocate for your child.

FOREST

The forest
What secrets does it hide
It is the treasure chest
Filled with wonder
A different world
In my dreams
Where will I go
In the forest
The forest
Discover
Become
The magic
How wonderful
How mysterious
Go inside
Feel the dewy leaves
One by one
Ants go into their home

running
Faster faster
Moving into adventure
Vines
Twisting turning
To a waterfall
A water lily
Floats towards you
Pick it up
Feel the petals
Know your safe
Go for a swim
See the beautiful fish
Ride the dolphin
Flop on the shore
An eagle stops to pick you up
Flying

A beautiful setting
Enjoy the sunset
With the mermaids

Creep up the tree
Lay on its leaves
Watch the moon
Sing its song
Then drift off to sleep
In the morning
Find 4 kittens
And they are the most soft
When they have gone
You blow away
On a giant dandelion
Then you hear
Music
Da da dee

Da da daa
Da da dee dot doe
It's the fairies doing jazz
Stop to listen
Then a lady bug comes
You make a wish
World of wonder
Flitter flitter
A butterfly lands on your shoulder
Lay in a soft bed of flowers
Your imagination forest

Ellie Weinkam, grade 3
Madeira Elementary

Closing America's High-Achievement Gap

A Wise Giver Guide to Helping Our Most Talented Students Reach Their Full Potential

By Andy Smarick

A BOOK REVIEW BY VICKIE BRIERCHECK

A headline guaranteed to strike fear, anger, and frustration in any gifted student, parent, or advocate recently appeared online at www.nbcnews.com: "A Fight over Gifted Education in New York Is Escalating a National Debate over Segregated Schools." The diversity task force in New York proposed the elimination of gifted and talented program claiming that they are elitist and do not reflect the diversity of the schools from which they draw students (Einhorn, 2019). Elitism is an old charge against gifted education, and it is not without some merit. Those who have no knowledge and training in the field of gifted education sometimes object that it creates students who see themselves as better than others. Students from high-income areas are more likely to be identified and served as gifted than are students from areas of poverty. However, eliminating special educational opportunities for gifted learners is, to use an old cliché, throwing the baby out with the bath water: it is a blatant denial that gifted students have any special learning needs. Perhaps fixing the problem of diversity in such programs would be a better plan. With this worry in the back of my mind, I came across the following article while trawling through Twitter: "The Contradiction at the Heart of Public Education" (Smarick, 2019). This well-written article from the *Atlantic* explains why eliminating programs for gifted and talented students is detrimental in the short term for students and in the long term for our country's competitive edge, while acknowledging the inequities in the field when identifying students for gifted education programs. The article motivated me to research Andy Smarick and led me to his book, *Closing America's High-Achievement Gap: A Wise Giver Guide to Helping Our Most Talented Students Reach Their Full Potential.*

Smarick's book is not written for parents, teachers, coordinators, professors, or legislators advocating for gifted education. Rather, it is a guide for philanthropists who are looking for a place where their donations can make a difference. In fact, the author appears to have given up on the concept of public money and legislation supporting gifted learners. He maintains that private money may be the only way to provide the needed research, data, and service to our most able learners. The author addresses the criticism of inequality. He maintains that poor identification results in the loss of student potential and that this loss is much higher than one might imagine. It does indeed make one wonder if the field of gifted education might benefit from canvassing for private money instead of public money and legislation, with the hope that success and results might then motivate the public sector.

In the second section of his book, Smarick outlines the variety of ways in which gifted students are served, specifically through enrichment programs, whole-school models, and school-based initiatives. Enrichment programs run parallel to but separate from the regular school systems. Students are served outside the school day and system. Smarick discovered that while enrichment programs are available for low-income, high-risk students in general, there are next to none for *gifted* students who are also low-income and high-risk. These programs, which can be wonderful, do little for gifted children on a day-to-day basis, nor would they meet the definition of "service" under Ohio law. Philanthropic money invested in such programs also may not be a catalyst for the type of broad educational changes that gifted students need.

The section on whole-school models embraces the idea that a budding genius (defined by an IQ of 145–60) may be rare in most districts, but there are many students who could work at a faster pace and deeper level than that offered by the regular curriculum. The schools would have broad entrance requirements and run similarly to Renzulli's school-based model. Interestingly, the model does not promote charter schools as a viable option, since most states will not allow charters to have entrance criteria. Ohio and North Carolina were the two places where charter schools can target gifted students. Ohio's Menlo Park was mentioned as an example. The following quote about Ohio was cause for some mirth:

> Districts are required to identify gifted students. Bewilderingly, though, they are not required to serve these students, once identified. It is thus estimated that of Ohio's 265,255 gifted-identified students,

only about 18 percent received any targeted services. (Smarick, 2012)

The final chapter in this section deals with school-based initiatives. The author acknowledges that these service options are preferred by district administrators, so that bright students and their test scores are kept in their home districts. In theory, these service options should provide better access across cultures and economic levels. The author recognizes acceleration as an inexpensive and easy school-based initiative. A concern here is that "A Nation Deceived" (Colangelo, 2004) made it clear that accelerated students need support from experts in the field of gifted education. Smarick goes on to address this and similar concerns in the teacher section.

A key issue in gifted advocacy arises from the way our colleagues in the field of education are taught—or not taught—about giftedness. Myths and inaccuracies abound regarding what constitutes giftedness and what gifted students need because future educators receive little or no preservice training on the topic. For years, the OAGC has tried to convince Ohio colleges and universities to institute meaningful preservice instruction in the field of gifted education. Under Smarick's theory, philanthropic donations to university endowments might remedy this situation, by providing education majors with real, comprehensive information in the field of gifted! However, I was concerned with a related message that Smarick, perhaps unconsciously, gives to potential donors. In section two, many of his examples of positive service models tout the importance of content-area experts over that of well-trained educators. Of course, content expertise is crucial. On the other hand, if fellow educators need instruction in the field of gifted education, would it not stand to reason that the content experts might need the same training? When addressing acceleration, Smarick endorses it almost as an economic panacea. Just move them on; it is easy and has no real expense. However, research on acceleration emphatically recommends that students and untrained teachers have support from experts in the field of gifted education (Colangelo, 2004). Donors need to know that there exists a body of knowledge regarding gifted students and how they learn. Successful teachers of gifted students, no matter their content expertise, nearly always have gifted education training or work in concert with those who do.

The last section of the book is perhaps the most important. Smarick calls for a "concentrated public campaign" that would emphasize four components: the abysmal current support for gifted students, the benefits for the students and our county if we changed this, the research that needs to be done so that access is equitable, and accountability for states based on data that actually measures progress of our most able learners. This campaign should target not government entities, but philanthropic donors. It is an exciting thing to imagine: the National Association for Gifted Children coordinating a national campaign in concert with every state affiliate. The field has always tried the public front door for support, but perhaps it is time to go in the private back door and find the money first. If the money to do the things listed above could be raised, perhaps then our leaders would finally listen. If we continue to do what we have always done, I fear that there may be more headlines like those in New York. Smarick's book certainly made me think.

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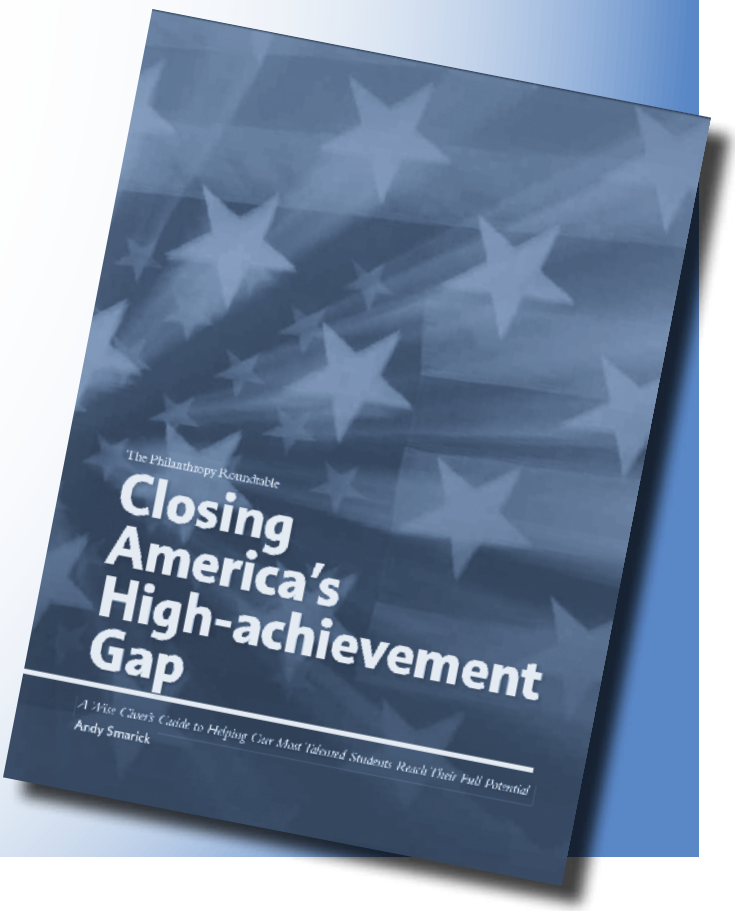
Smarick, A. (2013). *Closing America's High-Achievement Gap: A Wise Giver's Guide to Helping Our Most Talented Students Reach Their Full Potential*. Washington, D.C.: Philanthropy Round Table.

Smarick, A. (2019, October 10). "The Contradiction at the Heart of Public Education Gifted Education Puts in Tension Two Equally Treasured American Ideals: Egalitarianism and Individualism." *Atlantic*.



2019 OAGC Distinguished Scholar Award Winner

KRISTINA MA

Submitted by Karen Rumley, Annual Fall Conference Awards Chair

Kristina Ma, a 7th-grade student at McCord Middle School in the Worthington City School District, was recognized as the 2019 OAGC Distinguished Scholar at the Annual Fall Conference in October for her exceptional work to better the lives of children across the globe.

As one of Kristina's nominators wrote, "Kristina has an insightful nature that allows her to assess the world around her and identify areas of need. Her curiosity about a friend at a birthday party led to her creative and innovative solution and a remarkable attempt at solving a problem so prevalent in our society."

Kristina is developing a game app that teaches social, emotional, and communication skills to elementary and middle-school students with autism to help them make more friends. The app is called SociEmoti: Autism Skills. The game shows scenes based on everyday life situations that have been approved by autism focus groups. In one scene, for example, if the player doesn't choose the better of three multiple-choice communication answers, the game will show people with sad, blue, crying faces walking away and will suggest what the player should have done. If the player picks the better answer, the player will be rewarded with yellow, smiling faces.

Kristina conducted a significant amount of research in developing this app. She learned that there are 3.4 million children with autism in the United States and that many of them have trouble developing social and emotional skills. She learned that autism is the developmental disability with the fastest-growing rate of diagnosis and that it can present a significant cost to families. She wanted to make a difference, and her surveys of students, educators, and others helped her decide to create the electronic learning format. She tested her product with speech pathologists, special education teachers, and students with autism, and she intends to undertake additional prototype testing. Kristina plans to file a provisional patent and to launch SociEmoti in the App Store next year. She intends to donate her profits to organizations that support autism research, such as the National Autism Society, and already has received recognition from several associations, such as the Young Entrepreneurship Academy.

Kristina's project is not yet complete. She has the longer-term goals of competing for funding to develop more sophisticated gaming elements and of making the app available in multiple languages across the world. As one of her nominators pointed out, Kristina's "concern for children with autism while building this company [is] inspirational." Thus, the OAGC was pleased to name her this year's Distinguished Scholar.

Kristina Ma, 2019 OAGC Distinguished Scholar Award winner, accepts her award at the Annual Fall Conference

Kristina Ma, 2019 OAGC Distinguished Scholar Award winner, with her mother, Margie Toy Ma (*left*), and OAGC scholarship chair, Aleysha Haybin (*right*)

THANK YOU TO THE 2019 OAGC FALL CONFERENCE VENDORS!

Ashland University

Camp Invention

Cleveland State University

Curriculum Associates

Data Recognition corp

Discovery Toys

Engine-Uity Ltd

Great Books Foundation

GT Ignite

Kent State University

MOEMS-Math Olympiads

Mount St. Joseph University

Muggins Math

Northwestern University CTD

NWEA

Ohio History Connection

Otterbein University

Pieces of Learning

Riverside Insights

Royal Fireworks Press

The Silver Lady II, Inc.

Trades of Hope

University of Cincinnati

Usborne Books & More

Parent Day participants listen intently to keynoter Del Siegle.

OAGC governing board president, Suzanne Palmer, addresses conference attendees.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM

Gifted consultant Maria Lohr provides an update from the Ohio Department of Education.

Two of our Fall Conference vendors are all smiles.

OAG
feren

One of many wonderful OAGC Fall Conference small sessions.

Tuesday keynote speaker Rachel McAnallen addresses conference attendees.

FALL 2019 CONFERENCE

GC Board members are busy stuffing conce packets.

A full room of conference attendees listen intently to the keynote speech.

CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR SMALL SESSIONS

Ohio Association for Gifted Children Annual Fall Conference

October 18–20, 2020 Hilton Hotel Easton in Columbus

This proposal must include (1) your name(s); (2) the title of the presentation; (3) a brief description of the session (**limit 50 words**); and (4) a detailed description of what the presentation includes, not to exceed three pages. Send one copy of the cover sheet and proposal to the address at the bottom of the page. Do not send vitae, articles, or other materials. *Please read the additional proposal guidelines.*
PLEASE PRINT or TYPE.

Lead presenter name: _____ Phone: (h) _____ (w) _____

Work Contact Information

Title: _____ School/Business: _____

E-mail address: _____

TITLE OF PRESENTATION: _____

ODE gifted competencies met (if applicable): _____

_____

OAGC gifted professional development strand met (if applicable): _____

_____

PRESENTATION TYPE: _____ dialogue _____ hands-on demonstration _____ lecture _____ panel discussion

DATE PREFERENCE: _____ Monday, October 19 _____ Tuesday, October 20 _____ both _____ either

AV NEEDS: _____ no AV needs _____ overhead projector _____ LCD projector (presenters must supply their own)

STRAND (Select the two most appropriate.)

___ parents
___ gifted intervention specialists
___ classroom teachers
___ counselors/psychologists
___ gifted coordinators/administrators
___ higher education professionals

TARGETED GRADE

___ early childhood
___ primary
___ intermediate
___ middle school
___ high school
___ other (please specify) _____

Will products be marketed in the session? _____ yes _____ no

PROPOSAL DESCRIPTION

Please staple this cover sheet to the upper left-hand corner of the proposal. Each proposal must meet the following criteria:

(1) title of presentation, top/center of page, must not exceed **10** words
(2) description of session must not exceed **50** words
(3) detailed description of what the actual presentation includes must not exceed three pages

Name(s), title/affiliations(s), mailing addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses of copresenters should be listed at the bottom of the proposal description.

AUDIOVISUAL EQUIPMENT INFORMATION: Each room will be equipped with a screen.
Presenters are responsible for making arrangements for any other equipment needs directly with the hotel and will be personally charged.

DEADLINE FOR PROPOSALS: Postmarked by April 1, 2020.
Submit one copy to Small Sessions Chair, OAGC, P.O. Box 30801, Gahanna, OH 43230 or e-mail to anngift@aol.com.

SEE ADDITIONAL PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Please send one copy of the cover sheet and proposal to Small Sessions Chair, OAGC, P.O. Box 30801, Gahanna, OH 43230 postmarked no later than April 1, 2019. Please keep a copy of your proposal. Materials submitted to the OAGC cannot be returned.

- **Proposals postmarked after April 1, 2020, may be considered for the 2020 OAGC Annual Fall Conference but will not get first priority review.**
- Proposals will be reviewed by the OAGC Conference Program Subcommittee. Final decisions regarding proposals will be communicated to you by May 15, 2020, by e-mail.
- All sessions will last 50 minutes. Presentations should be structured to allow for audience questions, participation, and discussion as appropriate within this time frame. Requests for double sessions will be considered.
- Presenters are advised to bring the number of handouts indicated for each session once the room site is confirmed. Presenters may elect to have handouts placed on the OAGC Web site after the conference.
- On the date preference line, mark only the day(s) on which you are willing to present. This will prevent scheduling conflicts and enable the Conference Program Subcommittee to maintain topic diversity.
- Proposal descriptions must be **50 words or less.** The description must be appropriate for inclusion in the conference program. Descriptions that exceed 50 words will not be reviewed.
- The detailed description of the presentation must not exceed three double-spaced typed pages and should give the Conference Program Subcommittee an accurate and detailed understanding of what the actual presentation will involve.
- Expenses for travel, handouts, and attendance at the OAGC Annual Fall Conference are the responsibility of each presenter. All presenters are required to register for the conference. The OAGC will offer a $50 discount to be shared by all the presenters of each session. No presenter will receive more than a $50 discount for the conference regardless of the number of sessions presented.
- Information regarding selection of proposals and other information will be sent only to the lead presenter. The lead presenter is responsible for informing copresenters of the date and time of the presentation.

If you have any questions regarding the proposal form, please contact Ann Sheldon at anngift@aol.com.

PROPOSAL SELECTION CRITERIA

Proposals will be evaluated on the following criteria:

* significance of the ideas presented
* alignment to ODE and OAGC professional development standards
* relevance to gifted education in Ohio
* clarity and organization of the proposal
* appeal to indicated audiences
* innovativeness of the topic and/or the approach to the topic

TEACHER ACADEMY ACTION PLAN

OAGC Teacher Academy, Ashland University Gifted Education Action Plan or Project at East Guernsey Local School District

By Toni Gallow

Note: OAGC Annual Fall Conference and Teacher Academy participants who opt for Ashland University credit are required to submit an action plan for their district as part of their course work. The following action plan provides an example of how some participants use OAGC professional development to effect change in their district.

The OAGC Teacher Academy for 2019 proved to be my "Hotel California." In my younger years, the velvet tones of the Eagles washed over me, and they still can bring a smile to my face. I can close my eyes and hear the Don Henley lyrics, "Welcome to the Hotel California . . . We are programmed to receive. You can check out any time you like, but you can never leave!"

Having had the opportunity during the OAGC Annual Fall Conference to attend sessions by Ian Byrd, I jumped at the chance to hear another of his troupe, Lisa Van Gemert. In the opening minutes, I knew I was going to be there for the duration, as you can see from my record of sessions attended. Leave? Never!

Van Gemert even commented on the fact that I stayed for the final triple session related to ELA. (This was because my areas of certification do not include language arts.) However, I would have been remiss had I not included these sessions in particular. Please consider that I have been moved from the high school to the 6th grade and that neither of the subjects I teach, science and social studies, is a state-tested area at that grade level. Therefore, my performance will be judged based on the scores for language arts. Even without this aspect of my professional evaluation, I am a believer in reading and writing across the curriculum. It is clear that Van Gemert sees reading and writing as the responsibility of all teachers, and she provided us with an abundance of material that could be implemented or used immediately.

Part I. Instructional Techniques

The instructional techniques included preassessment, depth and complexity icons, disciplinarianism, frames, and grouping. I have been preassessing since I began teaching, with the intent to narrow my focus for whatever audience I happen to be addressing. Van Gemert, however, provided a list of options from A to Z that can easily be added to any mix of preassessment practices. Van Gemert provided examples of how to use depth and complexity icons in different content areas through a variety of assignment types. This was augmented by the concept of disciplinarianism, or simply taking the point of view or perspective of an expert in a particular field or content area. The examples of frames, such as sociograms or thinking maps, were graphic organizers on steroids, providing layers of understanding and extension of learning styles. The session about group techniques reinforced and expanded what I was already doing in my classroom.

Part II. Instructional Techniques Incorporated

The single instructional technique that I believe will do the most to elevate learning within the classroom to a new level is adding depth and complexity with the accompanying icons. However, mental agility exercises or activities dovetail perfectly with depth and complexity in the natural promotion of focus, pace, and attention to detail outside of oneself.

On Wednesday, February 27, the first day after I returned from the OAGC Teacher Academy, I introduced not only the depth and complexity details icon but also the mental agility exercises. To clarify my approach, it is important to understand that the 6th grade at East Guernsey Local School District is loosely grouped by ability. The first group contains a mix of the talented and gifted students and others who received higher test scores. The third group contains a mix of students with individualized education plans and others who need more support than the average student; hence, there are three aides during that class period. The second group is a catchall for anyone not in the other two groups.

For the second, catchall group, I begin the day with the cheer-like ditty, "I'm alert, alive, awake, enthusiastic . . ." It is for them alone. No other group does it. We do it after announcements. In the event that I forget, they remind me. It is an opportunity for them to feel that they are special and that there is something different and specific for them.

I introduced the first group to a mental agility activity identified as "the duck." They were unable to complete it successfully the first day. When they returned on the sec-

ond day, they clearly had worked as a group and developed a plan to be successful, and they were! This past week, we introduced a second exercise to hone their focus and give them a better understanding of individuals with abilities different from their own. It was inevitable that the question was asked, "How did the other classes do?" Their surprise was apparent when they realized that this was an exercise differentiated for them.

This action plan and project has uncovered the fact that members of the high-ability group have been comparing themselves to the lowest performers in the class and subsequently considering their performance to be exceptional not of its own merit but in relation to the other group. These mental agility exercises coupled with depth and complexity are changing this perception. The focus is moving toward individual performance and the quality of the deliverable produced.

The introduction of the depth and complexity icons is my greatest takeaway from the academy. I did not post or attempt to introduce all eleven icons on the first day or even in the first week. I introduced the details icon in a variety of ways across the three different groups. In addition to details (flower), the icons for ethics (black and white diamond) and multiple perspectives (eyeglasses) were introduced and utilized over the next three weeks. The initial use of details was to assist in finding evidence to support answers in our review for our social studies nine-week exam on the continent of Africa, including the ancient Egyptian river civilization. The result was a positive one; however, that use paled in comparison to the use of multiple perspectives when using real-world examples to introduce our next science units involving energy and the underlying chemistry.

We read two articles. One was a link across curriculum between the unit about Africa and the one about energy use, especially fossil fuels. The first article, "Tropical Cyclone Kills over 140 People in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Malawi," opened the door to a rich discussion of the devastating conditions in southern Africa that we had just finished studying. We are continuing to follow this natural disaster as it unfolds halfway around the world. The floor is now open for debate about climate change. Additional thought-provoking fuel has been added by Bethany Brookshire's article "Shell Shocked: Emerging Impacts of our Acidifying Seas," which discusses the absorption of carbon dioxide to levels that prevent the formation of shells in oysters. There is an abundance of information in the article that we will reference as we move through our energy unit, including multiple perspectives from the point of view of different disciplines as well as the introduction of the trends icon.

The use of the multiple perspectives icon for a wrap-up exercise was to write a paragraph from the perspective of the oyster. The results were stunning, and I was able to share the writing with the language arts teacher they will have next year. She has asked that I provide her a list of the writing activities that I use for the remainder of the year so that she may reference them when she is teaching the group next year.

Finally, as an extension and close to the life science unit we finished, I provided the higher-ability group with a frame containing the word "tamarin." They were to provide details (which necessitated research and learning about endangered species), to address an ethics issue (which involved answering the question of whether or not they believed it was fair to hold wild animals in captivity), and finally to use multiple perspectives (by being prepared to debate both sides of the issue of animal captivity with real-world examples supporting both). Consequently, the class has adopted a lion tamarin, emperor tamarin, and cotton-top tamarin through the World Wildlife Fund. The students asked to do additional research and want to adopt a new animal each month. They have posted a display to showcase this conservation effort.

Part III. Instruction Techniques and High-Ability Student Performance

In the classroom of high-ability students, the introduction and use of the icons has resulted in a request to do an assignment over again with a focus on depth and complexity. In addition, they have asked to expand other assignments. The result was far more than I could have anticipated. This solid first-hand experience and evidence support the proposition that greater student-focused instructional techniques lead to stronger student performance for high-ability students.

The initial discussion prompt was "The French built the Suez Canal between 1859 and 1869. It was officially opened on November 17, 1869. Why might this have been important? What can it be compared to in the Western Hemisphere?" The intent was simply to prepare them to participate in a discussion after I returned from the academy.

After introducing three of the icons—details, ethics, and multiple perspectives—I opened the floor for discussion of our prompt. One of the students asked, "Is this for a grade?" When I assured them that it was, he asked if they could have a "do-over." As a class, they decided to expand the discussion and to add details (including names and dates) as well as different perspectives related to trade and economics. This eventually led to a discussion of ship captains as what we affectionately call daredevils or "adrenaline junkies" in the classroom. The change in the assignment, made entirely by them, was enlightening. The students also worked to prepare

a written piece, understanding that the expectation was a well-formed answer with appropriately crafted sentences and paragraphs.

This week, this same class asked to expand what I believed to be a simple perspective exercise to one across disciplines. For an assignment, students were to use a graphic from their science text to create a fictional story incorporating the concepts of the life science unit. First, they decided they wanted to increase the length of the exercise to better address the language arts discipline. For the presentation, they asked to use props and perform a play of at least one chapter of the creative writing exercise. I was simply flabbergasted. What could I say other than, "Have a Nike moment . . . Just Do It!" These are the moments I will treasure from this year, when they traveled the road of education without me driving. I like giving up the reins.

To receive the most from the educational arena, students must put themselves in the driver's seat more and more. There is research to support that. Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, and Gamoran conducted a study in 2003, and "the results suggest that students whose classroom literacy experiences emphasize discussion-based approaches in the context of high academic demands internalize the knowledge and skills necessary to engage in challenging literacy tasks on their own."

In conclusion, I am seeing a greater focus, deeper thought, extended effort, and better understanding. This is after only three weeks since beginning to incorporate depth and complexity with habits of the mind. These are desired outcomes; however, the most significant change is the joy I see in the students. Admittedly, a tiny bit of this may be the joy I feel being reflected back at me as we open a window of opportunity and potential especially for them.

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Coordinator of the Year 2019

TARA TOFT

Submitted by Karen Rumley, Fall Conference Awards Cochair

The 2019 Ohio Association for Gifted Children coordinator of the year is Tara Toft of the Regional Center for Advanced Academic Studies (RCAAS) for the Sandusky City Schools. The award was presented on Monday, October 21, at the OAGC Annual Fall Conference in Columbus, Ohio. The Distinguished Service Award is presented in acknowledgement of a significant contribution to gifted education on a local, state, or national level.

Tara Toft's many nominators were consistent in their observation that during her tenure as district gifted coordinator and principal at RCAAS, she has strived to bring accountability, academic elevation, social-emotional learning, mental health awareness and support, and community involvement to the gifted program. RCAAS opened in fall 2013 and is the only all-day, every-day school for gifted students in the region. Toft has been its leader since its inception, creating an optimal learning environment from an outdated facility, and has secured grant funding and innovative community partnerships to ensure the strength of the program to benefit children.

She plays a pivotal role in planning and delivering training for gifted educators in her district, in her county, and across the state; she also teaches classes through Ashland University. She has secured grant funding to engage college professors in developing and delivering innovative, rigorous curriculum in her district, including summer experiences affording, as one of her nominators noted, "advanced learning exposure [for] our gifted students [through] this relationship with the college (Bowling Green State University Firelands)." Toft continually seeks learning experiences for RCAAS students, including through traveling opportunities, summer interdisciplinary camps, and participation in competitive clubs such as Ohio Model United Nations.

In the words of one nominator, "I believe that Tara Toft's potential as a gifted coordinator is limitless. Tara truly cares for her students, has the respect of her staff as well as respects her staff, and has the support of her administrators and community." The OAGC extends its congratulations and appreciation to Tara Toft as the 2019 coordinator of the year.

The Ohio Association for Gifted Children is unique among education associations in the state in that its focus is on children rather than educators. The organization reflects the many voices that make up the gifted community in Ohio: coordinators, teachers, parents, students, and members of the higher education community. The underlying mission for the OAGC is support of and advocacy on behalf of gifted children in the state of Ohio, regardless of the educational setting. Founded in 1952, the OAGC has a rich history of leadership in the area of gifted education. For more information about the OAGC, visit the Web site, www.OAGC.com.

For more information, contact Ann Sheldon, OAGC executive director at Anngift@aol.com.

Tara Toft receives the OAGC Coordinator of the Year Award.

Tara Toft celebrates receiving the OAGC Coordinator of the Year Award with her family.

Implications of Local Norms in Gifted Education within Ohio

October 2019 • Ohio Association for Gifted Children

By Colleen Boyle and Leanna Ferreira, Local Norms Ad Hoc Committee

Overview of the Local Norms Movement

Rationale

The concept of using local rather than national norms of assessments to identify students to participate in gifted programming is becoming more widely recommended as a means of addressing issues of inequity and underrepresentation in gifted education. Plucker and Peters (2018) suggested that using local norms to determine whether students are eligible for gifted services is on the increase as a means to identify students from diverse economic and cultural backgrounds. Recognizing that there may be inequities even within a single school district, Plucker and Peters further recommended using building-specific norms to identify students for participation in building-based gifted services.

The practice is based on research indicating that a student's opportunity to learn has a significant effect on his or her school achievement (Peters & Engerrand, 2016; Peters & Gentry, 2012; Plucker & Peters, 2018). Factors outside a child's control, particularly poverty, can influence a student's ability to take advantage of this opportunity. English proficiency and race also correlate with underrepresentation of students in gifted programs and may be tied to a student's previous opportunities to learn (Peters & Engerrand, 2016). Some have even proposed using local subgroup norms to identify students with particularly restricted opportunities to learn. Proponents of this approach have suggested that formal identification and service are less important than providing opportunities beyond the normal curriculum for students when their needs are not being met by activities in the typical classroom (Peters & Engerrand, 2016; Peters & Gentry, 2012; Renzulli & Brandon, 2017).

Limitations of Local Norms

The use of local norms has its limitations. First, it can be difficult to understand fully the nuances of the idea of "opportunity to learn" and to accurately recognize its influence among diverse groups within a district or school (Peters & Engerrand, 2016). Just how does one determine when a student's test scores reflect true ability, opportunity to learn, or motivation to demonstrate learning?

Second, although the use of local norms for identification is being touted as a means of building equity in gifted programming, it also has the potential to sustain or even create inequity. In districts with extreme ranges of socioeconomic attainment, the local distribution of student performance may closely match the national distribution, thus rendering local norms ineffective at creating a more inclusive approach to gifted education. If such districts relied on building norms, as suggested in some literature (Plucker & Peters, 2018), districts would have to contend with varying definitions of giftedness for identification and service purposes from building to building. This could be particularly challenging in large districts that concentrate services in a magnet-school format, drawing students from many home schools into a single gifted classroom. At best, families might question why "gifted" in one building is not the same as "gifted" in another. Escalating the impact, more-affluent families may use school choice programming or relocate in order to have their child attend a school with lower local norms, thereby increasing his or her chance of being labeled as gifted. At worst, districts could face legal accusations of discrimination based on race or income (Peters & Engerrand, 2016).

Other challenges remain. Students who move from a district with lower local norms into a district with higher local norms could suddenly lose their gifted status and with it the support needed to continue to develop their potential into achievement. The practice could create further achievement gaps in higher-performing districts that have small pockets of underrepresented groups that may still get lost within those local norms. In lower-performing districts where the range of student performance is much broader than that represented by a national norm, the unique social-emotional or academic needs of students who perform at the very highest levels may not be addressed; different subgroups may require different services (Peters & Gentry, 2012). Differentiation by subgroup can be costly and difficult to staff. Finally, local norms on their own are ineffective unless coupled with universal screening practices to get a baseline ability or achievement profile for all students in a district (Plucker & Peters, 2018; Renzulli & Landon, 2017).

Ohio Law and Local Norms

At the heart of this discussion is the need for a single, common understanding of the purpose of gifted identification and service in today's schools. Is the goal to find the most exceptional students in need of unique social-emotional

or academic supports? Is the goal to cultivate talent among those with the most potential? In a highly diverse society, how does one identify who has such potential? For researchers, it is an unsettled philosophical debate rooted in the fields of psychology, education, and social justice. Their take was, "'Gifted' is a need for a service not already provided in a school program" (Peters & Engerrand, 2016, p. 169). In Ohio, however, the topic is far less open to debate due to the parameters of state statutes and regulations, which define giftedness as being relative to the general population rather than to the local population (OAC § 3301-51-15, 2018; ORC § 3324, 1999).

Gifted Identification

Ohio is one of the few states with a very clear, very specific law regarding criteria for gifted identification (OAC § 3301-51-15, 2018; ORC § 3324, 1999). Two components of the law proscribe the use of local norms for gifted identification. First, the law specifies that identification is based on scores from a nationally normed assessment. This immediately eliminates local norms for identification purposes. Second, the law establishes specific cut scores based on those national norms. For superior cognitive ability, the scores are based on the psychometric properties of the test, namely standard deviation and standard error of measure. For specific academic areas, identification occurs at the 95th percentile. Districts cannot adjust these identification thresholds lower or higher on the basis of local performance.

With regard to local norms, Peters and Engerrand (2016, p. 165) stated, "Such an approach is far from perfect and would constitute only a small correction to the much larger problem of educational inequality, but it would still offer an improvement over the status quo." One must wonder whether the small gain from use of local norms is worth the drastic change and potential consequences of losing the structure of an identification system, such as that in Ohio. Yes, Ohio's law prohibits districts from adjusting their norms for identification of students as gifted to better reflect their district's or building's population, and it can be difficult to identify potential talent among students from diverse socioeconomic or cultural backgrounds if they lack some life or educational experiences that enhance test performance. But there are also benefits to specifying the identification criteria in law. No student who meets the criteria can be denied gifted identification for any other reason, such as behavior, parental involvement, or teacher recognition of ability. The law also creates consistency across districts so that gifted identification is not dependent on address or district, and students who move between districts within the state maintain their identification. In the end, the law creates a stable baseline for identifying students of high potential and high achievement.

Gifted Service

Whereas the standard for identification in the state of Ohio is set in law and is based on criteria used by all districts in the state, service is a district-level choice. Despite that, state rules (OAC § 3301-51-15, 2018) establish some parameters for service. One such parameter is that gifted services, as documented by a Written Education Plan, are for students identified as gifted based on legally defined criteria. Since identification cannot be based on local norms, service cannot be based on local norms. For example, a high-performing district might attempt to limit access to service to those students scoring in the top percentiles locally, but the rules state that a district cannot "unduly restrict" access to service by the criteria that it adopts (OAC § 3301-51-15, 2018, p. 8). Such extreme restrictions may include a specific score on a specific test or during a specific administration, repeated attainment of a qualifying score, or a score higher than the threshold for identification (Ohio Department of Education, 2018). Additionally, all students eligible for a service must have equal access to that service, effectively eliminating the potential to use building norms as suggested in the research summarized above. Taken together, these legal strictures prevent the use of local norms when setting criteria for inclusion in gifted services within Ohio.

Potential Applications of Local Norms in Ohio

Despite these legal limitations on the use of local norms, Ohio school districts still can apply the concept to help achieve the broader goal of closing the achievement gaps and recognizing talent among underrepresented populations.

Talent Development

Talent development programs are one way of applying local norms. "Talent development" is a term often used to describe programs that provide extension and enrichment to students who demonstrate high potential but who may not be demonstrating high achievement (Stoeger, Olszewski-Kubilius, Subotnik, Assouline, & Ziegler, 2017). These are not considered official gifted services in the state of Ohio because they typically do not include students who are formally identified as gifted. Instead, such programs are designed to find students who show the potential to be identified as gifted and then to develop skills, either general cognitive or domain-specific, that allow them eventually to meet identification criteria. Essentially, talent development programs are designed to fill learning opportunity gaps and to frontload skills needed for later success in formal gifted programming—i.e., the goal of using local norms as described above (Plucker & Peters, 2018; Plucker, Peters, & Schmalensee, 2017).

The professional literature documents numerous examples of such programs. The Young Scholars Program in the Fairfax County Public Schools in Virginia was specifically designed to provide opportunities for students from low socioeconomic or limited English proficient backgrounds (Horn, 2015). This multitiered service model begins with standards-based lessons incorporating specific critical and creative thinking skills, which are then taught to all students from kindergarten through grade 6 by classroom teachers and gifted specialists. Students who demonstrate acumen with these skills, essentially the top performers locally, participate in extension lessons developed by the specialist and taught by the classroom teacher. From these groups, students are screened for gifted identification and then may move into more formal levels of gifted services. Commercial curricula, such as *Primary Education Thinking Skills*, are also readily available for creating similar programs locally.

Talent development programs require certain factors to align in order to be successful (Horn, 2015). First, the building leadership must be on board, as the program will require classroom teachers to provide lessons that are less traditional than the typical standards-based lessons. However, administrators should understand the short-term deviation from "typical" will lead to long-term gains for all. Second, classroom teachers need proper training in how to teach the specific thinking skills embedded in the program and how to recognize behaviors and traits displayed by potentially gifted learners from diverse backgrounds (Plucker et al., 2017). Instruction must get to the root of the higher-order skills being taught, or else it will be ineffective. And if the teacher cannot recognize potential giftedness once it is displayed, the very students whom the district is attempting to identify as gifted will continue to go unnoticed. The program also must include a means of documenting the performance of those exposed to the lessons so that the top tier of students can be found and included in extensions to develop further skills. Students who are included in the program through use of local norms that may be lower than national norms may also require additional supports to be successful (Peters & Engerrand, 2016). Finally, the program must include ample time and staffing to provide the extensions in order to realize the greatest gains.

Service Planning

As explained earlier, districts may decide which students to service formally, in terms of area(s) of identification and grade level(s) (OAC § 3301-51-15, 2018). While a district may not use local norms to serve only a subset of students within a particular grade and area combination, a review of local norms could help a district determine specific areas of focus for services.

In some high-performing districts, resources may be too limited to serve all identified students through a gifted specialist when the identified group is particularly large. Such districts might opt for services within general education settings, properly developed in line with the Ohio Administrative Code, for the majority of identification areas, while focusing support from licensed gifted specialists to those groups where local norms mirror national norms. For example, if students identified in superior cognitive ability make up the top 10 percent locally and students identified in mathematics make up the top 30 percent locally, the service provided by a gifted specialist may extend to students identified in both areas; the district may decide to use an honors or cluster class to meet the needs of the students identified in only one of the two areas.

Districts with smaller groups of identified students may choose to serve students identified in certain areas and grade levels that, combined, encompass much of the top 5 to 10 percent locally in order to maximize the impact of formal gifted services. For example, if students identified in superior cognitive ability make up the top 1 percent locally and students identified in creative thinking ability make up the top 6 percent locally, the service may include both groups of students rather than only one or the other.

Ideally, all students identified as gifted would be served by licensed gifted specialists. Realistically, however, the resources available are insufficient to fulfill that goal. So, using local norms strategically to select the grade levels and areas to receive such services may be a way to make the best use of available staff and funds.

Cluster Grouping

Another application for local norms is in developing cluster groups. Research has shown that cluster grouping, the practice of deliberately placing a small group of identified gifted students within the same class, can have positive effects for all students when combined with teacher training and curricula aligned to student readiness (Gentry, 1999). In districts or buildings with lower-than-average identification rates, it can be difficult to create a meaningful cluster of identified students (typically five to eight). Building leaders can use local norms to find additional students who may benefit from being part of the cluster group. Such inclusion serves two purposes. First, it provides formally identified students with opportunities to interact with classmates who are close to them in ability or achievement, even if some of those students have not been formally identified as gifted. Second, it creates a talent development opportunity for students who are not yet formally identified as gifted to access the differentiated instruction being provided to meet the needs of the gifted student(s) in the class. A district using cluster grouping as a formal service model could report serving

those children in the group who are officially identified, as long as other provisions in Ohio Administrative Code are met; but even if cluster grouping is not an official service in the district, the approach could provide informal support to identified and unidentified students alike (Plucker & Peters, 2018).

Flexible Grouping

In an approach similar to that described above for cluster grouping, local norms could be a meaningful tool for creating flexible instructional small groups (Plucker & Peters, 2018). While some advocates have suggested using local norms as a basis for formal academic acceleration, such a practice puts students at long-term risk because the standard by which they were accelerated was not one of proficiency or high academic performance according to state or national standards. Flexible instructional groups, however, are small, short-term arrangements used as settings to provide targeted instruction based on student skill levels and readiness for that particular standard or domain (Brulles, 2018). The groups may change from lesson to lesson, unit to unit, or subject to subject. This allows students to receive instruction at their own levels, even if they are not ready for formal acceleration. While such groups should not ignore the need for advanced content by students who are extreme outliers, local norms can be a useful tool to help educators form these flexible groups. As a result, small group instruction can be more tailored to each group's needs.

Conclusion

The use of local norms to identify students as gifted has become a popular approach in professional literature as a means of addressing underrepresentation of particular groups in gifted programming. Ohio statutes and regulations prohibit the use of local norms formal identification of gifted children and in the provision of service to those identified as gifted. However, aspects of the local norm movement can be applied in districts as a means of cultivating talent and focusing support for those who need it most.

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THE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL EFFECTS OF BEING A GIFTED CHILD

By Clare Ashcraft

Giftedness is both a blessing and a curse, and many of the negative effects of being a gifted student may go unnoticed. As a gifted student myself, I would like to point out some of the unintended effects that gifted education programs can have, so that others can be aware of and work to minimize them.

From the moment children are identified as gifted, they are told that they are special. While this may make children feel more understood, it can quickly become overpowering. In elementary school, classmates see that gifted kids are at the top of the class: so starts the "smart kid" narrative. When they are still very young, they get used to being called smart and being told that their intelligence is a gift or talent. At an early age, being the smart kid becomes central to their identity. Few realize the degree to which giftedness has become ingrained in their identity until they start to struggle in school and feel like failures. These children were told for so long that their intelligence, and therefore grades, were what made them special. So when their grades start to drop, they no longer feel special. Although each kid is unique, getting older and beginning to struggle academically illustrate the dangers of building an identity around academic ability. It can lead to a fear of being average, and kids may even overwork themselves because they don't want to appear "normal." Average is not negative—by definition, most people are average—but it may seem that way to children who have heard all their lives that being special equates to being academically talented.

Many gifted students also expect to be good at new things immediately, and if they don't see potential, they quit. This expectation is linked to the natural ease with which schoolwork comes to them. When something difficult does come along, however, gifted students are usually easy quitters. No one can be good at everything, but gifted students are so used to being praised for their academic standing that it feels like weakness to have to practice to be good at something. One of the side effects is underachievement. The same trait manifests itself when gifted students have bad study habits. When gifted students are unused to having to practice or study, they never learn how to do it properly, making it harder for gifted students to succeed when they inevitably do need to study. Asking for help is difficult for many gifted students.

Similarly, these students seldom have to ask questions in the regular classroom, and some view it as a sign of weakness. They become embarrassed that others will see that they don't understand something. One solution to these problems is to ensure that young students are challenged regularly and that they have tasks that require them to learn how to study and to ask questions, so that they don't fall into a habit of thinking that these are negative things. Let them learn that these are skills that should be practiced. Unfortunately, this is easier said than done, because gifted kids can also become perfectionists. There is nothing wrong with wanting to do your best work, but the gifted often push perfectionism to the point of toxicity because they hold themselves to such a high standard. An A is not good enough. They strive to get 100 percent, more if there is extra credit. They leave themselves such little margin for error that sometimes the goal is impossible to reach due to pressure from parents, teachers, mentors, and most of all themselves.

Many of the aforementioned traits of gifted students can be ameliorated with the challenges provided by gifted pull-out programs or honors classes. While these programs are great at pushing the students intellectually, they may come with social stigmas attached. Many students make lifelong friends through these programs—when separated from other students in their grade level and placed with a set of peers who think like them, it is natural to make friends within that group. The downside is that by the time they move up to high school, the social divide between honors/AP/CCP students, grade-level students, and students who require remedial courses runs deep. When students who have been in the "honors crowd" for their entire student career begin to struggle, they get burned out. It is entirely okay to have to or want to take regular courses, but if all of the student's friends are in the high-achieving crowd, it is extremely difficult to leave, even if that would be the better option.

The final emotional strain on gifted students is the pressure put on them to stay in an academic field forever. There is already something of a stigma against the arts, but even more so for gifted students. If a student is passionate about STEM and wants to go into that field, then that is great; but many gifted children are not passionate

OAGC Higher Education Division Update

For the Love of Our Students

By Jennifer Groman

My mother was a teacher of the deaf in the early 1970s, after a rubella epidemic had swept through the area leaving an entire generation of children with hearing impairment. She loved it, too, finishing her master's degree at Kent State by correspondence in the volatile spring of 1970.

Years later, in a heated meeting with her administrator and some parents, she used the phrase "my students." You know the phrase: "My students keep me on my toes." "My students are doing so well!" Teachers use it to show our love for these little (and sometimes big) ones that walk in and out of our lives each day. Mom's administrator called her out of the room, berating her for calling them "her students." "They are not YOUR students," she said. "They do not belong to you." Even today, Mom shakes her head when she tells that story. That administrator just didn't get it.

It's interesting. Almost fifty years later, walking through the aisles at the OAGC Annual Fall Conference, I saw many of "my students"—new and veteran teachers, administrators, and parents. I also saw colleagues from other institutions of higher learning; we caught up and shared stories of what we had done since we saw one another last. But what touched me was that each one of them also used the words "my students" and "my program." They revealed in this short phrase how very much they cared about those who walk through their virtual hallways, toil on projects and lessons, and prepare to work with this vibrant and little understood population of students. They—or should I say, we—care about the growth of teachers because helping one teacher means helping hundreds of young people. We in higher education live and work vicariously through you to make Ohio better for gifted students.

Teachers in Ohio have a choice of a great many institutions of higher learning that offer a wide range of options: professional development for teachers who need contact hours to satisfy the state minimum requirements for working with gifted students; graduate-level coursework for teachers who want a gifted intervention specialist endorsement; and rigorous curricula for those who want to work toward a degree. But finding this information so that you can compare and decide on a program is a challenge.

The OAGC Higher Education Division would like to update its "Gifted Training Programs in Ohio" document. This document, housed on the OAGC Web site, contains information about college and university programs offering gifted professional development and coursework—and it needs to be brought up to date. If you are a program director or instructor, or if you have an affiliation with a college or university that provides gifted professional development and/or is an ODE/ODHE approved program for endorsement or degree granting, please e-mail me at sacred-la@hotmail.com so I can include your program information for all OAGC members and visitors.

Stay tuned to the OAGC *Review* for information on where you can find this document.

Jennifer Groman has been an educator for 32 years, 23 of them in gifted education, including K–8, consulting with the ODE, and higher education. Her special interests are in creativity theory, transpersonal psychology, and teacher growth. She directs the talent development program at Ashland University, is a singer/songwriter, and lives in Wooster.

about it and feel pressured to go into one of those areas because they excel at it. It is seen as a waste of potential if they go into a liberal arts field or become a painter, just because they would make an excellent doctor. Many gifted students are expected to go into high-paying, academically stimulating jobs because they are high achievers. But not all gifted students want to follow that path, and if a student's passion lies elsewhere, the adults in their life should nurture that instead of trying to fit them into a box based on their previous achievements.

Not all of these effects are felt equally by every student, and not all of them can be eliminated. It is difficult to minimize the effects of not being challenged in the classroom without having the social effects from being in gifted pull-out or advanced courses. However, by being more aware of the effects of giftedness on a student's social and emotional health, we can make a more conscious effort to avoid stigmatizing where we can and help them be more successful and happier.

Clare Ashcraft is a junior at the Dayton Regional STEM School. She enjoys reading, writing, and exploring human morality. She participates in Key Club and Debate Club, and she is a student ambassador and a youth cochair on the TedxYouthDayton committee. After high school, Clare plans to go to college to study English or psychology.

TEST PREP FOR

As a gifted coordinator, I get this phone call all the time:

Parent: "My child is scheduled to take a cognitive test. What can they do to prepare for it?"

Me: "You can't really do anything to prepare for it. It's a cognitive instrument that measures ability."

Parent: "No, I mean is there anything they can study?"

Me: "It's not a test you can study for. A student either has the ability or they do not."

Parent: "So there's nothing my child can do to improve his chances of being identified?"

Me: "Not really."

And yet, when you look at the top-selling books for gifted education on Amazon, four of the top ten sellers and 15 of the top 50 are books designed to help students score better on a cognitive gifted test.

I understand the concept of a test prep book. How many students increase their ACT or SAT score by reading through a study guide? My major concern about test prep for a cognitive test is about allocation of resources. In other words, ability is distributed evenly among people on the planet, but resources are not. Some children, for better or worse, have parents who go out of their way to provide any and every advantage they can, while others have parents who do not or who are not even aware of these resources. Could child A, whose parents are college educated and use a vocabulary commensurate with that level, who read to her every night, and who watch vocabulary-building shows on YouTube, score as gifted, while child B, who was not exposed to the opportunities that child A had, but who has a higher ability, is not identified? It does not seem fair.

I decided to run a little experiment. I chose my daughter, who is 11 years old, for a couple of reasons. First, she has been tested for cognitive ability a couple of times before, consistently scoring around the 115 mark. She is that almost-gifted child who with a slight push might get over the hump and score the 130 required for identification. Second, as her parent, I can subject her to such an experiment without permission and without concern over a lawsuit, unless my wife sues me, which would be a wash.

My daughter was scheduled to take the Naglieri test, so I went onto Amazon and ordered a NNAT3 Practice Test. It was $25 for the book, so I was a bit surprised when it arrived and was fairly thin. I mean, I spent $20 for an ACT prep book for my older daughter, and it was nearly 900 pages. This slim tome was 44 pages. In its defense, it had an additional six pages for notes, putting the total at 50, but that was not what I expected. The book was divided into four sections, each focusing on a different skill. There was pattern completion, reasoning by analogy, serial reasoning, and spatial visualization.

I figured this would be good for my daughter, because the Naglieri is not as traditional-looking as most national standardized tests. Sometimes, just knowing what they are looking for can be a big advantage to students. It is a nonverbal test, so if you had never

COGNITIVE TESTING

By Todd Stanley

been exposed to it before, the series of patterns and shapes might be confusing. This might give her a better chance on the test because she would be familiar with this setup.

We took it slow at first; I didn't want to overwhelm my daughter. Over the course of a week, we did one section per sitting. She put down her answers, we checked them with the answer key, and then talked about why she might have missed any. The next round, I had her take two of the tests at a time, building up her endurance. Eventually, she took the entire practice test in one sitting. She definitely did better each time she took the test, but I was uncertain whether this was because she was getting better at this type of test or because she was seeing the same problems again and again.

About a week later, she took her Naglieri test. She scored a 117. She had improved by a whopping two points. A little bit of me was disappointed that the experiment hadn't worked, but actually there was a much larger sense of relief. There were three reasons for this relief.

First, it lets me know that the testing is fairly consistent. My daughter has taken three different cognitive tests, the In View, the OLSAT, and the Naglieri, and yet only four points separated all of her scores: 113, 115, and 117. Given that all these scores fall within a close range of one another, the scores are likely reliable. It would have been more alarming if she had scored 95, 115, and 135. I know it is a very small sample size, but this is a pattern I have seen throughout my 20-some years in gifted education. This gives me confidence in the instruments we are using.

Second, my daughter is very bright. She is a hard worker and is nice to other students, and her teachers always describe her as being sweet. But does she need to be challenged? What I mean is that my daughter has always been an above-average student, but I would not describe her as top of her class. I know through years of experience that many gifted students need that challenge because otherwise they will be bored or might even shut down. My daughter is very compliant and never seems bored with school. I don't think she needs the challenge or the stress that sometimes accompanies it. First and foremost, I want my daughter to be a happy human being.

Third, I would have felt bad if this additional practice, a resource that not all are privy to, had resulted in her being identified when she hadn't before. It is sort of like the college admission scandal that has been in the news for the past few months. Those parents were giving their children an advantage that others didn't have. Equity in the identification of minority or economically disadvantaged students has long been a goal of mine, and yet here I would have been exploiting an advantage that others might be unable to afford or might not even be aware of. I'd like to think that if she had reached the score required to receive gifted services that I would not have accepted it because I wouldn't have felt right about it. Of course, we'll never know what I really would have done.

The one thing that I do know is that the next time I get that phone call and a parent is asking me whether there is anything their child can do to prepare for the cognitive test, my response will be a more confident no.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
Student Scholarships

Unlocking Potential
OAGC
OHIO ASSOCIATION for GIFTED CHILDREN

AVAILABLE SCHOLARSHIPS & DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSION

All applications are available online at www.oagc.com

February 15 **Student Scholarship Award for Summer Programs (will vary, up to $500)**
April 15 **College Scholarship Award ($500)**
June 1 **Distinguished Student Scholarship Award ($1,000)**
November 15 **Susan Faulkner Student Arts Scholarship Award (grade-level tiers: K–4 $150, 5–8 $250, 9–12 $350)**

TIMELINE

- Applicants will be notified within 45 days of the scholarship deadline whether or not they were selected to receive a scholarship
- School districts will be notified within 45 days of the scholarship application deadline

SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

- Scholarship committee decisions are final.
- Not all applicants for OAGC scholarship awards will be selected.
- Uncashed scholarship checks will be considered null and void 180 days after the date of issue.

Student Scholarship & Susan Faulkner Student Arts Scholarship Award

- Award checks will be made out directly to the program or activity, not to the student or their family.
- Checks issued to one program are not transferable to a different program.
- Notification of awards may fall AFTER a deadline for registration and/or payment required by a particular program or activity. The OAGC will not adjust award notification to meet individual submission deadlines. It is our recommendation that you contact those in charge of registration ahead of their deadline to get further instructions. Most programs will reimburse you for the amount of the awarded scholarship, but you will typically have to submit the required payment first to guarantee placement in the program your child wishes to attend.
- The OAGC is not responsible for any registration fees submitted and does not guarantee that your child will receive a scholarship.
- A scholarship award may not be used to provide ongoing lessons.

College Scholarship & Distinguished Student Award Scholarship

- This is a one-time award, so once a student has received the OAGC College Scholarship or Distinguished Student Award Scholarship, they are not eligible to apply again for the same scholarship.
- Scholarship awards will be made payable directly to the student.

SUBMISSION

- Submit materials to the OAGC scholarship chair: Alesha.Haybin.OAGC@gmail.com.
- Applications must include ALL required materials at the time of submission—incomplete applications will not be reviewed.
- Late applications will not be reviewed.
- Materials submitted electronically will receive a confirmation of receipt sent to the e-mail address that submitted materials. Materials submitted by mail will not receive confirmation. If mailing, make a copy of materials to keep for your records. We are not responsible for mail that does not reach the OAGC office.
- Submitted materials will not be returned (including submitted photos, photos of art work, and/or videos of performance pieces).
- Applications will be reviewed by a committee consisting of the scholarship chair, an OAGC Parent, an OAGC governing board member, and a current member of the OAGC.

STUDENT ESSAY

- Essays **must be the original work of the student**. Age-appropriate expectations will be considered during essay review. Those reviewing applications are educators or have extensive experience in working with student writing samples.
- Essays should be typed and edited so that they **do not exceed** the maximum word count.
- Recommended formatting: single spaced, 12-point font (Calibri, Times New Roman, Ariel).

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

- Each applicant must submit **two letters of recommendation**. Specific applications give additional guidance.
- Letters of recommendation should **connect** to the individual student's interests and strengths that have been observed by the person of influence. The student's overall score will reflect whether a common thread expressing individual passion, curiosity, and/or artistic ability has been woven throughout their application materials

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

Updated: 11/15/19
All materials available in fillable PDF on our website!
www.oagc.com/scholarship.asp

COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP AWARD
For Undergraduate Students

DUE APRIL 15, 2020

Unlocking Potential
OAGC
OHIO ASSOCIATION for GIFTED CHILDREN

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

- Ohio students in grades K through 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 **full time** in their first year of college and/or students currently enrolled **full time** in an undergraduate program of an accredited college or university
- Students who have received an ACT composite score of 27 or higher or 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 who has known the student for at least one year and is **not** a family member

APPLICATION SUBMISSION/POSTMARK DEADLINE: APRIL 15, 2020

Submit materials electronically to	Mail a paper copy of materials to
Alesha.Haybin.OAGC@gmail.com	Ohio Association for Gifted Children Scholarship Committee PO Box 30801 Gahanna, Ohio 43230
*You will receive confirmation of materials received as a reply to the e-mail address that submitted the materials	*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

- ☐ Applicant information form
- ☐ OAGC member nominator form
- ☐ District contact & eligibility form
- ☐ High school transcript (& college if enrolled)
- ☐ Letter of recommendation and form #1
- ☐ Letter of recommendation and form #2
- ☐ Activities/leadership/awards form
- ☐ Student essay form
- ☐ Student essay

SCHOLARSHIP AWARD PROCEDURE

- Applications will be reviewed by a committee consisting of the scholarship chair, an OAGC parent, an OAGC board member, and a current member of the OAGC.
- This is a one-time award of $500. Students may apply each year of full-time undergraduate studies. However, recipients of the OAGC College Scholarship are not eligible to apply again.
- Applicants will be notified within 45 days of the scholarship application deadline whether or not they were selected to receive a scholarship.
- Scholarship awards will be made payable directly to the student.

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

Updated: 11/15/19
All materials available in fillable PDF on our website!
www.oagc.com/scholarship.asp

What Is a Colleague?

By Jennifer Groman

In this article, the author discusses the challenges of advocating for gifted students from a deep place of passion, especially if that passion blinds us to the humanity of our colleagues. The author shares two stories from her practice that illustrate how passion can become a weakness and how she came to understand that being a colleague does not involve aggression or railroading, but working alongside others and meeting them where they are. The vulnerability inherent in the teaching profession and the alienation often felt in teaching the gifted make it vital that we use our strengths to communicate respectfully with our colleagues.

Working in education is challenging enough, but working in gifted education can be downright alienating. I have researched teacher growth and identity, and in doing so, I began to realize that while the culture of education—the institution—is a large part of why teachers burn out, one of the main components of identity loss in teachers is how we treat one another: teacher to teacher. I studied three teachers in depth, all of whom were formerly or currently in gifted education. I asked them to share their challenging experiences. Alongside them, I also searched my stories of identity loss and growth. I gained many insights, but the one I want to write about here is a lesson I learned about being a colleague. I have two stories from my practice to illustrate. I call this first one "Tigress Caged."

I was ten years into the profession, and I just wanted to be a good teacher. I worked hard at it, with long hours of planning and paperwork. I organized my new little rural gifted program around changing requirements and local committees, while working nights on my master's degree. I was dedicated to my students. Those of us who were considered "specials" teachers were not equal to regular ed, special ed, and Title I teachers. That was understood the day I entered my classroom, tucked behind the gymnasium in a padded-walled (how fitting) equipment storage room. This was my school's new room for the gifted and talented. It smelled like old gym socks.

Jack's mother came to me one day with tears in her eyes: Her son was not eating and was stressed and disengaged in the 2nd-grade class that she felt was not challenging him. I sighed. I had worked with that teacher before. She was a gentle soul, but she felt no need to differentiate for her gifted students. "He needs to work more slowly, take time with his work," she would say. Meanwhile he waited for others to finish, as his quickly scrawled but perfectly answered math papers piled up on her desk.

I went into tigress mode. I spoke to the principal about allowing Jack to change teachers midyear and placing him with a teacher who would make the accommodations he needed. The principal, a weak and insecure retiree who had been hired quickly as an interim leader, put me off. I was tireless, always working on ways to challenge Jordan, relieve his stress, and keep his mother from removing him to a private school.

One day after school, four elementary teachers paid me a visit. They had never entered my room before. I remember thinking how surprised I was that they even knew where my classroom was! (Probably followed the smell.) They filed in and told me they needed to talk to me. We all sat down, and I waited, unnerved. As the conversation started, each in turn told me how unprofessional I was for choosing to put the needs of this one student before the reputation of a tenured teacher. They reminded me that I was an inexperienced teacher, new to gifted education, and that this was a veteran teacher with dozens of years of good service. I was unprofessional, disloyal, and unprincipled. I felt surrounded and attacked from every angle. How could I dare to question her ability to work with this student when she had taught hundreds of happy little 2nd-graders over her two-decade career? I sat in stunned silence, holding back angry tears until they finally released me and left my room.

Then I fell apart.

For me, this was an existential crisis. I faced a complete shift in how I viewed myself as a champion for my students. I wore my advocacy for students like a suffragette banner across my chest, and after I stopped sobbing, I began to realize that perhaps that was not the best way to work alongside colleagues to make things better for gifted students.

My strength, passion, and drive became my weakness. I came in like a mad, defensive boxer, anticipating challenges at every turn and ready for them in fighting stance. Ten years later, I left teaching, exhausted and in deep mourning, to work in arts administration. (Side note: One thing I learned there is that if there is anything that is *less stable and less well-funded* than gifted education, it is the arts.) I call this story "Strengths, Weaknesses: My Return to Teaching."

Upon my return to the profession, I accepted a job at the state level. I'd been working three years with a team of terrific educators, creating a series of online instructional modules to teach school staff and parents how to accommodate gifted students. We had done some great work, and I was beginning to see my way ahead to teaching again.

At one training workshop, I wanted to connect with the gifted teachers and coordinators who were there. Not many years previously, I had attended these kinds of meetings, listening to some nerdy no-load tell me how to teach. They were now looking at me with that same tired look. "Really? I spent two hours preparing sub plans for this?"

I was trying to talk to this group about how, when working with adults and colleagues, our greatest strength can sometimes be our biggest weakness. I had made this speech a dozen times before. The PowerPoint slide glared, and they just stared glassy-eyed at me. I knew exactly what they were thinking. Suddenly something opened up in me. I sighed and leaned slowly on a nearby table. I said softly, "I know something about this. I come across as all Miss Enthusiasm and Passion, but there is a weakness to that, and I learned it the hard way."

I began to tell them the story of my dealings with Jack's teacher. I had long since apologized to her for not going to her with my concerns about his accommodations, but lately it had been on my mind again. I told them that my enthusiasm and passion for teaching and protecting my students had given me an inflated sense of power and self-righteousness that seemed to give me permission to totally run roughshod over a respected colleague.

"I was young and 'enthusiastically' gifted," I reasoned aloud, laughing at my own pun. My audience—suddenly attentive—was listening in silence. "And youth has its way of blinding us, doesn't it? It was a very painful realization at the time, but it taught me a lot about being human with others. It also taught me a lot about my own strengths and weaknesses."

My workshop partner was staring, transfixed, from the back of the room. I had strayed from our usual formula. I asked teachers to pair and share about their own perceived strengths and how they could be weaknesses and about their own perceived weaknesses and how they could be strengths. During the sharing-out period, a number of participants talked frankly about their personal and teaching lives. One teacher shyly said, "I tend to be very quiet and I have always viewed that as a weakness. How could it be considered a strength?" Another woman raised her hand and said, "Teachers are more comfortable working with someone who works with them, rather than trying to tell them what to do. Maybe being quiet would be an asset to them." Click. Connection. For them—and for me.

After the workshop, my partner and I sat together reading the evaluations. He glanced over at me and smiled. "That went well," he said.

What are your strengths? How do they become weaknesses? And what are your perceived weaknesses? Can they be considered as or channeled into strengths?

Teaching is a profession in which we are vulnerable every day. But walking around in the shoes of our colleagues and leading from alongside rather than from high above gives us perspective that is part of our strength. That is being a colleague.

Jennifer Groman has been in gifted education for 23 years, with special interests in creativity theory, transpersonal psychology, and teacher growth. She directs the talent development program at Ashland University, where her office does not smell like gym socks.

SPRING TEACHER ACADEMY 2020

February 24 and 25, 2020

The Ohio Association for Gifted Children is proud to present the 18th annual OAGC Teacher Academy. The Teacher Academy offers a good blend of practical and research-based sessions for gifted intervention specialists and regular classroom teachers. This year, the OAGC Teacher Academy will be held on February 24 and 25, 2020. The academy will feature a number of sessions addressing current needs, such as gifted student growth strategies, differentiation, the revised Ohio gifted operating standards, and more. The academy will offer a wide variety of sessions over the two days. We are very pleased to have national expert Dr. Richard Cash with us for both days of the conference. In addition, there will be many sessions taught by national, state, and local experts. A full list of session speakers and descriptions, along with this registration form, will be available at www.oagc.com/teacheracademy.asp in January 2020.

LOCATION: Doubletree Hotel in Columbus/Worthington (see next page for directions)

TIME: Registration from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.; program will start promptly at 9:00 a.m. and end at 4:00 p.m., though extra afternoon and early-bird sessions will be held for those seeking 15 hours.

Please complete and return this registration and a check or purchase order for each person attending the academy to

OAGC, P.O. BOX 30801, GAHANNA, OHIO 43230 BY FEBRUARY 10, 2020.

Or e-mail oagcregistrar@gmail.com

Faxed registrations will be accepted at 614-337-9286 after February 10 with a $25 late fee, provided that space is available. No walk-in registrations without prior arrangement. Cancellation fee is $50 before February 10, 2020. **No refunds after February 10.**

Treasurer's offices do not always forward registration paperwork to the OAGC. Please mail or fax a copy directly to the OAGC.

Last name / First name / M.I. _____

District / Organization (if applicable) _____ Send mail to: _____ Home _____ Work

Home address _____ Work address _____

City / State / Zip _____ City / State / Zip _____

Home phone ( ) _____ Daytime phone ( ) _____ County of work _____

Please PRINT e-mail clearly. Early registration confirmation will come to e-mail address.

Home e-mail _____ Work e-mail _____

Cost includes materials and continental breakfast and lunch each day

Events	*OAGC Member Rate*	*OAGC & Teacher Division Member Rate*	*Nonmember Rate*	*Totals*
A. Two days	_____$210.00	_____$205.00	_____$250.00	A.
B. Monday only	_____$155.00	_____$150.00	_____$195.00	B.
C. Tuesday only	_____$155.00	_____$150.00	_____$195.00	C.
D. Late registration if received after February 11, 2019			_____$ 25.00	D.
E. Not a member? Join now for reduced registration! Please attach separate membership form. available at http://www.oagc.com/join.asp	_____$40 (Basic)	...optional dues in addition to Basic _____$15 (Coordinator Division) _____$10 (Teacher Division) _____$10 (Higher Ed. Division) _____$ 5 (Parent Division)		E.
If you require a vegetarian meal, please indicate here: _____			TOTAL	

The OAGC may provide mailing labels to organizations with like interests. Check here if you do NOT wish to have your mailing address included. __

Registration check # _____ *OAGC membership check # _____ $ _____

PO issuer _____ PO # _____ $ _____

OAGC TEACHER ACADEMY 2019

The OAGC Teacher Academy will be held at the Doubletree Hotel in Columbus/Worthington. The hotel is located at the intersection of I-270 and Rt. 23 in the Crosswoods area. The phone number for making overnight reservations is 614-885-3334. The OAGC has a guaranteed room rate of $114 plus applicable taxes *until February 3, 2020*. Rates and space after that date will be determined by availability of the hotel. To make a reservation online, go to https://doubletree.hilton.com/en/dt/groups/personalized/C/CMHWNDT-OAG-20200223/index.jhtml and enter code OAG.

COLLEGE CREDIT / CEU CREDIT

One hour of semester credit will be available from Ashland University at a cost of $280. Course registration will be coordinated on the first day of the academy. Ashland University will accept checks or credit card payment for semester hour credit. In addition to the 15 hours of contact work in the academy, a project will be required of each student for credit. Project information will be distributed on the first day of the academy. Only two-day participants may receive Ashland credit.

*CEU credit certificates for 12 contact hours (two-day participants) or 6 hours (one-day participants) will be issued by the OAGC. Certificates can be transferred to your local LPDC for proper CEU credit.

*Additional three extra hour CEUs will be provided for those attending both late afternoon and early sessions.

REGISTER BY FAX

It's easy . . . Just fax your registration to the OAGC at 614-337-9286 or e-mail to oagcregistrar@gmail.com. Fax a copy of your check or purchase order, then put the check or purchase order in the mail to OAGC, P.O. Box 30801, Gahanna, Ohio 43230. After February 10, please contact the registrar at 614-337-0386 for registration instructions.

ADVERTISE IN THE OAGC *REVIEW*

For more than 50 years, the OAGC has assisted parents, teachers, coordinators, and administrators of high-ability children. The *Review* reaches thousands of members and affiliates and is posted on our Web site for customers just waiting to learn about your products or services. Ad rates are reasonable, so view other issues of the *Review* at www.oagc.com/publications.asp and advertise today.

Ad Size/Orientation	*Size*	*Cost per Issue*
Full page	7¼ x 9¾	$425
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½ page horizontal	7¼ x 4¾	$225
⅓ page	2¼ x 9¾	$175
¼ page	3½ x 4¾	$150

Advertising requests must be received by the advertising due dates stated in the *Review*. Rates are as listed, but please see complete advertising guidelines at www.oagc.com/publications.asp. Acceptance of advertising does not in any way indicate agreement with or endorsement of opinions, products, or services offered.

Unlocking Potential
OAGC Review
Ohio Association for Gifted Children

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- ❑ _____
- ❑ Math Department
- ❑ Social Studies Department
- ❑ Library/Media Center
- ❑ _____

Call for Articles–Spring 2020 *Review*

General Call

Please note that the deadline for articles for the OAGC spring *Review* is **February 15, 2020**. 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 from their areas.

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.