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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Sarah Lee

Welcome to a new school year! A new school year always brings excitement and time for reflection. As educators, we are trained to reflect constantly and subsequently to determine what we can do to improve ourselves, our teaching, and our experiences for students. I am certain that we all started this school year by reflecting on the spring shutdown. We celebrated our triumphs, evaluated our mistakes, and remembered what we learned from that uncharted voyage. As this school year began, I not only reflected on the previous year, but I also had the chance to reflect on my journey to this presidency. I remember attending my first OAGC Annual Fall Conference in 2008 as a first-year teacher, and I vividly recall Sally Roberts taking the stage as president. I knew then that one day, I wanted to be on that stage, that this was an organization that I wanted to be part of, and that it felt like a place I finally belonged. With the encouragement of my coordinator, I wrote my first proposal to present a session about technology at the Teacher Academy the next year. She also encouraged me to get involved in the Teacher Division. Those small steps proved to be monumental in giving me confidence and providing me the opportunity to take on a leadership role today.

Within a few years, I was asked to step into a more involved role in the Teacher Division and later served as chair-elect. That position quickly changed when the then current chair had to resign unexpectedly. Serving as chair of the OAGC Governing Board not only helped me learn more about the organization but also opened doors to building meaningful relationships with other individuals who share the same passion for gifted education. As the end of my term on the board drew near, I decided to accept the nomination for the first vice president position in 2018. I remember asking, "I have four years to prepare to take over, right? I don't know if I am ready." I knew I wanted my moment on the stage, but I questioned whether I was truly ready. With some unexpected twists in 2020, I had just four short months to prepare for my moment. I may not have felt ready;

I knew, however, that I could always count on the dedicated and supportive individuals who encouraged me and helped me see my potential and achieve my goals.



I still question whether I can fill the shoes of some of the amazing individuals who have served before me, but I remind myself that moments like this are what we all have prepared for as educators. We have learned to adapt—to be flexible! That flexibility is what has helped propel us forward through this pandemic. We all are faced with something new this school year, but the one constant is our students. Our students need us now more than ever; they need our encouragement, our dedication, and our flexibility.

Much like my OAGC journey, the journey through 2020 has been unpredictable and has forced people to change quickly in order to do what is best for everyone. It is during times like this that we must remember to lean on those supportive individuals around us and to be present for both our students and our colleagues who may need us.

In closing, I want to thank Kim Allen for encouraging me to take those first steps in the OAGC and for pushing me always to reach my full potential. I would be remiss if I did not thank Ann Sheldon, Colleen Boyle, Suzanne Palmer, and so many others who keep me inspired. As I mentioned before, taking the stage at the OAGC as the new president has been a goal of mine. But one thing I have learned this past year is that you do not need a stage to have your message heard. We can work together to achieve our goals, without actually *being* together. I am honored to be a part of this amazing organization, and to serve as your OAGC president. Thank you all for your support and confidence in me. I look forward to the collaboration and sharing of innovative ideas that lies ahead for us and for our students.

# ADVOCACY CORNER

WILL SCHOOL FUNDING AND REPORT CARD CHANGES BE CONSIDERED IN 2021?



*By Ann Sheldon*

Exactly one year ago, I wrote the following:

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?

Fast-forward one year, and the above paragraph still applies. Given the upset in both education and education policy making in 2020 due to COVID-19, Ohio is just now going back to the issues that were burning to be resolved last year. So, here we are going into 2021. Let's take a brief look at what did occur in 2020 and where the focus will be moving forward.

## SCHOOL FUNDING LEGISLATION AND OTHER LAME DUCK EDUCATION ISSUES

In fall 2019, Representatives Bob 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 a span of two years. The bill was put on hold both because of the state shutdown and because of the need to recalibrate the funding formula in the bill to provide more support to lower-wealth districts. In the meantime, political scandal in the Ohio House resulted in the accession of Rep. Cupp to the position of Speaker. Accordingly, Rep. Gary Scherer (who is term-limited) took the lead on the bill alongside Rep. Patterson (who is also term-limited). In November, a substitute bill was introduced in the Ohio House and a companion bill (SB 376) in the Ohio Senate. The sponsors had hoped for the bill to pass before the end of the lame-duck session, a highly aggressive timeline. Although HB 305 passed the House on a vote of 84–8, the Senate Finance Committee voiced concerns about the funding estimates and determined that the bill should be discussed as part of budget deliberations in the 134th General Assembly.

A flurry of education issues were addressed in the lame-duck session, most dealing with Covid-19 policy relief extensions and a fix to EdChoice scholarships.

An amendment to HB 409 allows the state superintendent to extend or waive the deadline for school districts to identify gifted students.

This is a continuation of a provision in previous legislation to address Covid-19 education issues. To date, the state superintendent has not waived any deadlines for gifted identification, but we will watch this issue carefully. This provision is limited to this school year only. The EdChoice scholarship fix was needed because previous criteria in the law would have expanded the eligible school list from more than 500 school buildings to 1,200. Under the new criteria, buildings are eligible if they rank in the bottom fifth according to the state report card performance index and if the district had an average of 20 percent or more students eligible for federal Title I funding in the past three years. The list for next year includes 469 schools. Lawmakers, voting largely along party lines, also changed student eligibility for income-based EdChoice scholarships, raising family income requirements from 200 percent of the federal poverty level to 250 percent.

The other education issue resolved in the lame-duck session was an extension of COVID-19–related policy relief, including the prohibition of use of student growth data on teacher, principal, and counselor evaluations; the removal of penalties to school districts that chose not to administer fall testing; an extension of time for school districts to conduct virtual public meetings into July 2021; and flexibility in administering school food programs.

So, what happens to HB 305/SB 376 now, since it did not pass in the 133rd General Assembly? Because Rep. Cupp was elected Speaker for the 134th General Assembly, the bill likely will be reintroduced in the new session. Whether there will be hearings on a new school funding bill in January or whether the funding formula will be incorporated in the budget bill remains to be seen. The new Senate president, Matt Huffman, may have other thoughts about school funding.

The OAGC has concerns about the gifted education funding formula incorporated in HB 305/SB 376. Briefly, these include

- Lack of accountability for state gifted education funds at the district level, though the House did add an amendment requiring districts to spend gifted education funds on gifted education and related services;
- High gifted student to gifted intervention specialist ratios as well as student to gifted coordinator ratios, resulting in lower funding;
- Phaseout of gifted professional development funding after four years, which goes against both best practice and common sense;
- Elimination of gifted funding at educational service centers (ESCs);
- Insufficient support of rural districts and underrepresented student populations; and,
- Lack of gifted representation on multiple funding committees.

These objections are outlined in a draft of the OAGC's testimony on HB 305/SB 376 which can be found under the topic heading *HB305/HB376 (School Funding) and Gifted Cost Study* at [www.oagc.com/advocacyupdates.asp](http://www.oagc.com/advocacyupdates.asp) along with other documents regarding the school funding bill.

#### NEW GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND NEW STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS

The 134th General Assembly will welcome some new leadership in 2021, including new chairs for both the Senate and House education committees. The House Republican caucus selected Bob Cupp to continue as Speaker of the House. Other members of the House leadership include Rep. Tim Ginter, who will serve as speaker pro tempore; Rep. Bill Seitz, majority floor leader; Rep. Rick Carfagna, assistant majority floor leader; Rep. Don Jones, majority whip; and finally, Rep. Cindy Abrams, assistant majority whip. House Minority Leader Emilia Sykes was reelected to her position for the 134th General Assembly, as were Assistant Minority Leader Kristin Boggs, Minority Whip Paula Hicks-Hudson, and Assistant Minority Whip Richard Brown. Joining the leadership team as caucus chair is Rep. Phil Robinson.

Sen. Matt Huffman will replace term-limited Sen. Larry Obhof as Senate president. Sen. Jay Hottinger will serve as president pro tempore; Sen. Kirk Schuring will serve as majority floor leader; and Sen. Rob McColley will serve as majority whip. Sen. Kenny Yuko

will continue to serve as minority leader along with Sen. Cecil Thomas as assistant minority leader. Sen. Nickie Antonio will become minority whip, and Sen. Tina Maharath will be assistant minority whip.

Longtime Senate Education Committee chair, Peggy Lehner, was term-limited, leaving that post vacant. In the House, Rep. Don Jones took a leadership position, so a new chair will be needed for the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee. Look for Sarah Fowler Arthur, previously a State Board of Education member, to join the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee. As the 134th General Assembly committees are formed, the OAGC will provide information about the new chairs and committee members.

The Ohio State Board of Education will see several new faces in January as well. Christina Collins (District 5) beat incumbent Lisa Woods. Michelle Newman (District 9) replaces Stephanie Dodd, who was term-limited. Brendan Shea (District 10) replaces Nick Owens, who chose not to run for a second term. Former Rep. Diana Fessler (District 1) replaces Linda Haycock, who also chose not to run for a second term. Fessler served on the state board previously. Her views are considered very conservative. Two incumbents won their races: Antoinette Miranda (District 6) and Meryl Johnson (District 11). Sarah Fowler Arthur (District 7) won her bid for the Ohio House, and so will be replaced by Governor Mike DeWine. The new members will join Paul LaRue, a former social studies teacher, who was appointed to the board in late 2020. The governor also extended appointments of several current members and appointed John Timothy Miller to the vacated District 7 seat.

#### STATE BUDGET DELIBERATIONS

Along with a new General Assembly session, Ohio will also shepherd in a new biennial budget. The budget hearings likely will focus on how Ohio's economy will rebound from the pandemic. Restoration of education funding that was cut in spring 2020 will depend largely on funding estimates for the next two years, potential aid from the federal government, and possible use of Ohio's rainy day fund.

Gifted advocates should follow the OAGC's advocacy alerts closely during budget deliberations, as school funding will be hotly debated as part of the budget bill or as part of a stand-alone bill. The OAGC will modify its

legislative platform for the new General Assembly. Members of the OAGC are welcome to provide input on the platform by e-mailing [anngift@aol.com](mailto:anngift@aol.com) with suggestions.

#### STATE REPORT CARD DISCUSSIONS

Of the education issues of 2019, reform of the state report cards for school districts seemed among the less pressing. Because most report card-related penalties were removed due to the complications of providing education during the pandemic, the urgency of reform took a back seat. As Ohio moves beyond the pandemic, the General Assembly likely will focus again on state report card reform because it is the key to so many other education issues. There has been no shortage of ideas on report card reform over the last few years. From education management associations to the State Board of education to the House of Representatives, everyone has an opinion on how to change the report card. But no comprehensive reform ideas have been acceptable to all interested parties. Report card reform must please traditional education stakeholders, school choice advocates, conservative education think tanks, the governor, business groups, and parents.

Look for another stab at report card reform in 2021, as the COVID-19 protections for districts run out. It will be likely be as complicated and messy as education funding reform has been.

#### NEW ODE ASSISTANT GIFTED DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

In a somewhat surprising development, the Ohio Department of Education opened up a new gifted position. Maria Lohr is the new assistant director for gifted in the Office for Exceptional Children at the Ohio Department of Education. She has been with the department since 2015. In this new role, Lohr provides technical assistance and support to school administrators, educators, and parents from across Ohio regarding state laws, rules, policies, and best practices for gifted education. Prior to joining the Ohio Department of Education, Lohr worked in the North Carolina public school system, where she provided gifted services to identified students in general education settings at the elementary level in urban, rural, and suburban school districts. Currently, she serves on the board of the Council of State Directors of Programs for Gifted, an organization of state education agency personnel who are responsible for developing public school programs for the gifted and talented in

the 50 states and the trust territories of the United States. The ODE is expected to fill her old position as a program specialist in the coming months.

#### GIFTED ADVISORY COUNCIL RECONVENES

After a pause due to COVID-19 shutdowns, the Gifted Advisory Council held its first meeting in October 2020. The meeting, which was held virtually, largely dealt with educating new members on the past work of the council. The council's focus for 2021 will be equity issues, a continuing and worsening problem for Ohio. COVID-19 restrictions on schools mean that fewer students are receiving high-quality gifted services and that gifted identification is spotty across the state. Underrepresented student groups are less and less likely to be properly identified as gifted, much less provided appropriate services. As the council meets more frequently, the OAGC will provide updates.

#### FEDERAL NEWS

President Joe Biden is expected to take an approach to education that differs significantly from that of the previous administration. The new secretary of education will not likely waste much time in changing federal policy. The OAGC will update members of the changes.

#### GIFTED STATE OF THE STATES REPORT

The National Association for Gifted Children recently released a new State of the States report on gifted education, the first update since the 2014–2015 revision. The OAGC will provide more information about the State of the States report in upcoming editions of the *Review*.

To keep abreast of all advocacy news, please sign up for the Ohiogift listserv. Please e-mail [artsnyder44@cs.com](mailto:artsnyder44@cs.com) for directions. You may also e-mail me directly at [anngift@aol.com](mailto: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](mailto:anngift@aol.com) or [executivedirector@oagc.com](mailto:executivedirector@oagc.com).

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# COVID Positive(s)

*By Leanne Ross*

If you ask any educator, they will tell you that teaching in the world of COVID-19 is challenging, exhausting, and demanding. However, despite the difficulties of life in the virtual or hybrid classroom over the past nine months, there are positive aspects of our unconventional educational experiences. By keeping an optimistic perspective and focusing on the big picture, we can carry forward lessons learned from the pandemic and continue to make education even more student-centered and growth-oriented.

One of the remarkable changes in education has been the increase in collaboration, planning, and cohesiveness of teachers as they have come together to create the most effective possible lessons for all students. Whether faced with creating five days of online learning or with balancing hybrid lessons, individual teachers quickly realized that the task was too enormous for singular completion. This has led educators to join together virtually and in teacher-based teams to share their best practices, divide up work, and share their new knowledge about technology and online learning. Historically, a tradition of autonomy and individual accountability led teachers to work in isolation, and the shift to shared work has come about out of necessity. Schools and districts have provided time for this collaborative planning, and teachers have maximized the opportunity to increase the strength of their professional relationships. In a relatively short time, the long-term barriers to shared planning and collaboration have come down, thanks to the new world of teaching in the wake of quarantines and face masks.

Another unexpected benefit from the year without a regular classroom has been increased communication and improved relationships between teachers and parents. Whereas traditional roles dictated that parents and teachers spoke only at annual conferences or if a major problem arose, the new world of education has required these adults to work as a unified team to support student learning. Teachers have moved from outdated e-mails or newsletters to modern methods of communication such as ClassDojo, Remind, Google Classroom, Talking Points, SeeSaw, Twitter, and class Web sites to keep parents in the loop regarding their students' progress, assignments, and achievement. Google Meets and Zoom video conferencing have given teachers and parents easy means by which to communicate. Traditional parent-teacher conferences can be held without disrupting schedules, as both parties can log in from work, home, or even while sitting at a child's soccer game. Both guardians are often able to log in and talk with the teacher from different locations, since they don't have to travel physically to the school. As parents have taken a more active role in their students' education by monitoring or supporting their at-home work, the conversations between the guardian and teacher have become more meaningful and based in shared understanding. This has led to wraparound support for students, as all the adults involved in their education can work together in their best interest.

Another noticeable difference in the hybrid and virtual classrooms this year is the focus of the work. Administrators and teachers have set aside many of

the distractions that get in the way of true learning and have emphasized the bigger picture of helping students gain mastery of the content. Curriculums have become more streamlined, and busywork has been cast aside. Time is of the essence, so the selection of assignments has become more meaningful, and the question “Does this move the learning forward?” is applied to each and every lesson. Seasoned teachers have reexamined content that they have been teaching for years in an effort to maximize the instructional time spent on the most essential material. Rather than nag about late or missing assignments or make the grade the most critical objective in a course, teachers can spend the precious time that they have with students to support student growth and learning. Evidence of learning is not limited to traditional pen-and-paper assessments but has become creative, as students use video tools, discussion boards, slide decks, and other innovative means to show what they know. Rather than enforcing rules for rules’ sake, the education community has discovered that a process by which students are given formative opportunities and the grace to keep improving may bring about higher levels of engagement and ultimately deeper understanding and knowledge acquisition.

Of course, none of these changes would be possible without the revolution in recognizing the importance of social and emotional development of students and their individual situations and struggles. Although attention to social and emotional learning had some traction prior to the COVID-19 crisis, the quarantine and the resulting extreme stress and anxiety for both teachers and students propelled mental health issues into the foreground of every educational conversation. In the past, schools had tried to address the social-emotional needs of students with programs that taught self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision making; today every teacher is charged with reaching out to check on the individual state of mental and physical health of their students. The relationship between teacher and students is crucial.

Schools encourage teachers to spend classroom time allowing students to share their thoughts and feelings, to connect with their peers, to talk about hardships, to try to find solutions together, and to build a community of learners who can turn to each other for encouragement. Smaller class sizes have made this possible, whether via Zoom or as part of a hybrid model. There is more time to work one on one or in small groups, which allows for greater personal interaction. The free breakfast and lunch programs, along with a variety of new no-cost social service supports, have helped children survive the changes related to this new educational setting.

Perhaps most impressive, students have adapted and learned a new way to learn. From our youngest kindergarteners to college students at the end of their academic careers, there are countless stories of students overcoming adversity and persevering through the COVID-19 crisis. This generation is learning grit in a very real-world situation. They have to figure out how to get through lessons at home, how to work around technology glitches, how to manage their time, how to communicate their needs, and how to ask for help. These skills, more than the ability to solve an algebra function or explain the causes of a war, will help them become more successful in life. Content knowledge is important, but students are learning life skills for our new reality. Teachers, too, have learned new tricks and how to address difficulties they never imagined with technology, lesson planning, communication, student engagement, and time management. Each of these new competencies will prove invaluable as society moves forward in the new normal of life after COVID-19.

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# ANXIETY and DEPRESSION

By Susan Rakow

I'm not sure that anyone these days is without some level of anxiety, frustration, disorganization, and sadness—or maybe even depression—at what has been changed or lost in the seemingly endless months of this pandemic. But it's important to consider and to be concerned about, whether now or in our normal (whatever that means) daily lives, the rising rate of anxiety and depression in gifted youngsters. My experiences as a school and clinical counselor echo and support the research that I found and reported in the third edition of my book, *Educating Gifted Students in Middle School: A Practical Guide*. Much of this article is taken from this recent publication.

## STRESS AND ANXIETY

Part of the work of growing up is learning to deal with stress and anxiety; in fact, healthy stress is a part of normal everyday life. It's the unease or frustration that occurs when the supermarket is out of avocados, when our sibling knocks over our Lego tower, when our alarm doesn't go off, or even when we have to go to school when we just don't feel like it (or can't go to school when we *do* feel like it!). We feel stressed when our heart pounds and we have butterflies in our stomach because we're stepping on stage to give a speech, choosing to confront a friend we're angry with, or approaching a big test. We don't necessarily enjoy these feelings . . . but in fact, "common sense and scientific research tell us that the stress of operating beyond our comfort zones helps us grow. Healthy stress happens when we take on new challenges . . . [Pushing ourselves past familiar limits builds our capacities." (Damour, p. 4). An adrenaline rush in a stressful situation can sometimes even enhance performance and move us into "flow." It's the wellness industry that has somehow convinced many of us that everyone, including kids and teens, should feel calm all the time. So anxiety is compounded by the sense that something is wrong with us if we feel anxious.

Unhealthy stress occurs when it's more than a person can "absorb or benefit from . . . Whether stress becomes unhealthy depends on two variables: the nature of the problem and the person upon whom the problem lands." (Damour, p. 5). Sustained external variables like poverty, illness, discrimination, and family trauma create unhealthy and unmanageable stress, often because youngsters (and their families or schools) don't have the resources necessary to address them. Stressors also can come from within, such as worries about family, fear of one's own anger, or unreasonable self-expectations. Teachers, parents, and counselors can

help kids identify the stressors in their lives, which ones they have control over (such as managing homework or friend groups) and which over they don't (like parents' divorce or an ill sibling), and explore strategies for dealing with them.

But there's a difference between stress and anxiety. Anxiety is more related to feelings of panic, fear, and dread. While healthy anxiety is designed to keep us safe, warning us when there is a *real* danger so that we can fight, flee, or freeze, unhealthy anxiety is disproportionate to a particular situation and can lead to poor choices. Mild and short-lived anxiety can improve performance, and a certain amount of arousal and anticipation comes with most types of competition. Reports of out-of-control anxiety have increased, and many children now feel more stressed than their parents. We see fatigue and irritability as well as increasing emotional problems, and more and more kids are described by their parents and teachers as highly anxious in ways that interfere with healthy functioning at home and at school. A fixed mindset can create anxiety, as can the black-and-white thinking that is common in gifted kids, especially during adolescence. Anxiety interferes with sound judgments and problem solving and causes far too many kids to avoid and withdraw (which actually increases anxiety) rather than to develop coping mechanisms.

The most widely studied of the anxieties is test anxiety. This is a learned behavior, and overall, chronic test anxiety does not motivate or stimulate a student into action . . . like better time management or studying would. Gifted students who are especially perfectionistic or opinionated can become anxious or frustrated when even tiny parts of multiple-choice answers don't seem correct, and this may impede their ability to choose one. They may read too much into short-answer or fill-in-the-blank questions because they see greater complexity, ambiguity, or nuance or because they see a more creative option. This divergent thinking and the ability to see multiple aspects of situations can be great assets in problem solving but also may contribute to anxiety. Tasks like tests, which require working memory, are more successful when performed under pleasant emotional situations.

Because of gifted students' sensitivities and strong needs for social justice and fairness, active shooter drills and news stories about school and other mass shootings can raise their anxiety and feelings that the world is just not a safe place. The current pandemic and political divisions are certainly impacting our gifted kids' sense of safety. Clinically signifi-

cant diagnoses of General Anxiety Disorder and panic attacks may be the result of trauma and may require outside intervention. But in more common situations, we can help our kids notice when their reactions are not in keeping with reality and instead are exaggerated to a perceived or imagined level of danger.

Unnecessary stress or anxiety, exhaustion, and even burnout can occur when perfectionism contributes to a workaholic mentality, in which a student will do so much more than what is required or even imagined. Students who fear humiliation and shame are often anxious, and this reaction may occur for gifted students when they first meet academic and intellectual challenges. The change in learning environment (all virtual, hybrid, and so on) may create anxiety for kids as they are no longer sure of what's required for success in this new kind of school, where the usual cues of body language, teacher's voice and emphases, other students' responses, and so on aren't as readily perceived.

Many gifted kids have strong reactions, both emotional and physiological, to outcomes that otherwise would be considered outstanding. While standards of excellence are important, maladaptive perfectionism that creates unhealthy anxiety can be the result of unreasonable expectations, harsh self-criticism affecting self-worth, cultural values, or excessive competition. Parents may contribute to this when they expect straight As just because a child is gifted or because a child got As in 4th grade but isn't getting them in 9th grade when challenges are significantly greater and kids' lives and interests have changed considerably, as well. No one dies if a student fails a test, and their entire life trajectory will not be ruined if they don't win the spelling bee. There is really no such thing as a "permanent record" that includes every single thing a kid has done since they were five . . . and colleges don't look at K–8 grades. When unchecked, unhealthy perfectionism can contribute to depression, obsessive-compulsive personality disorders, alcohol or drug abuse, cutting, and even suicide.

Contributors to anxiety for gifted students vary by age but include bullying, fears related to sexual orientation, and overinvolvement or overscheduling related to both in- and out-of-school activities (Petersen, 2018, p. 518). In the current environment, anxiety seems to be created by underscheduling, having little or no contact with peers, and lack of non-screen-based activities. Performance and achievement concerns as well as asynchronous development and rapid advancement or acceleration can also contribute to anxiety in this population. Fear of not being enough is a concern of many students identified with anxiety, one that seems particularly relevant for gifted students. While gifted girls often report more anxiety and depression than boys, sadly, it is boys who more often hide their feelings and serious concerns. It isn't until there is significant underachievement,

suicidal ideation, eating disorders and other forms of self-harm, trauma, bullying, or substance abuse that they come to the attention of adults who can help.

Black and Latino students may experience disruptive anxiety and psychosocial stress if the environment is in some way associated with stereotype threat. Students may worry about confirming a negative stereotype or having to live up to unrealistic expectations to combat it. Conflicting or mixed messages from peer groups can also contribute to anxiety in gifted minority students. Twice-exceptional students may experience some of the same struggles. A welcoming and supportive environment in which students feel accepted and connected can assist these underrepresented gifted students and encourage them to remain and succeed in honors or advanced classes. Studies show that providing either adult or peer mentors for these gifted children may help reduce their anxiety. This is harder to do, but no less necessary, with altered school formats. Many schools are setting up online lunch bunches and counseling groups to help all children develop new strategies and express their feelings openly.

For mild anxiety, Galbraith and Delisle (2011) suggest starting with the H.A.L.T. strategy: Are you Hungry? Angry? Lonely? Or Tired? We know that good sleep habits (minimum of 6 to 8 hours a night), a healthy diet, hydrating, and socializing (which is exceptionally difficult during a pandemic!), especially when combined with exercise (a minimum of 20 minutes a day, ideally outdoors in nature) are key. Meditation, prayer, or mindfulness practices can be extremely helpful, both in the short term (calming down right now) and in the longer term. These practices help students of all ages learn to relax and to build habits that assist in dealing with the typical stresses of daily life. Grouping students with other gifted kids can help alleviate anxieties that may come with social isolation, boredom, or low self-esteem, and when together, they can share their anxieties and fears and normalize them. In these groups, students can also be taught problem-solving skills for the real world, not just for math or science. Exposing students to different philosophies of life and ways of achieving success or using quotes from famous people can help students find their way to increased understanding of life (and death). Networking with other gifted students around the nation and world (see [www.davidsongifted.org](http://www.davidsongifted.org) and [www.hoagiesgifted.org](http://www.hoagiesgifted.org)) can help too.

Praise and encouragement and the ways in which we deliver it can increase or decrease students' feelings of anxiety. We don't want to play into the fixed mindset that "smart" is a fixed quantity or quality; we instead want to praise effort, growth, and learning processes as well as risk taking . . . and that sometimes includes helping our students (and their parents!) cope with failure and disappointment. We want

to support them in improving their abilities and to praise their effort, helping them persist with difficult assignments or difficult classes. When praise and feedback are specific, it helps students feel valuable as people and helps them grow. Encouragement, especially in the face of mistakes, can foster a growth mindset, increase motivation, and thus decrease anxiety as students learn to see failure as part of growth and learning. Many students doing virtual or hybrid school may freak out when there are tech glitches or failures, and we need to help them, and help ourselves, accept that this is our current reality, frustrating as it might be.

Avoidance feeds anxiety, as does a fixed mindset that says when faced with potential or actual setbacks, run away or hide your mistakes. So we need to help our kids start with, as Woody Allen said, “just showing up.” We also find that excessive attention to anxious feelings can increase them and build learned helplessness. Parents, teachers, and counselors can overdo it by trying to be *too* supportive. Instead, we need to use firm, confidence-inspiring responses that both validate students’ feelings and give them coping strategies. We also need to express our confidence that they can handle the situation and that they’ll get through it (for example, “I know it’s really frustrating that you submitted your assignment, but it’s not showing up as completed. Let’s go get a drink of water or take a short walk; then we can come back and see how we can fix it.”).

Since many anxious students feel more comfortable when structures and expectations are clear and schedules are consistent, we can help by preparing them for any upcoming changes. Unfortunately, the current school and community situations are constantly changing, and rolling with the punches is not a particular strength for many gifted kids. We can help them see shades of gray and determine what conditions are within or outside their control and learn to accept those things that can’t be changed. Youngsters can become empowered as they learn how to find something pleasurable to do that the stressor can’t interfere with, such as going for a walk when one’s siblings or parents are fighting or choosing additional friends who create less drama.

Sylvia Rimm uses the acronym REASON to help gifted kids overcome anxiety:

- R: Realistic. Determine appropriate moderate and realistic goals and expectations.
- E: Effort. Set small effort steps and praise effort and progress, not just achievement.
- A: Assist. Devise tools and techniques so that the child can move forward.
- S: Smile. Positive reinforcement that encourages without pressure helps children move forward.
- O: Overhear. Children who overhear referential talk of their

progress know that parents and teachers are noticing and appreciating their efforts.

- N: Nice. Small rewards selected by students can be motivating but are especially effective for younger children. Whole-class rewards for incremental growth and achievement can create an encouraging environment. Small individual recognition may work, too, especially if it’s given one-on-one so that it doesn’t unnecessarily increase negative competition.

When students are in a growth mindset, they also can reach a state of flow more easily. When people are in flow, they feel focused and challenged by the complexity of what they’re doing; they have clear goals and feel a sense of ecstasy and inner clarity about what needs to be done and how well they’re doing it; they feel a sense of control, that the task is doable; they have a sense of serenity and growing beyond the limits of themselves; they feel timelessness, and hours seem to pass by in minutes; and they are intrinsically motivated as they believe that whatever is making them happy is its own reward. Csikszentmihalyi (1993) suggests that teachers can contribute to this feeling by nurturing interest in their subjects and emphasizing the inherent satisfaction of learning as well as paying careful attention to individual students’ interests and abilities, since flow is an individual experience.

#### DEPRESSION

Depression is common in both the typical and gifted adolescent populations as well as in much younger children. Depression is different from grief, in that with grief, someone or something has been lost—sometimes permanently, as with a death. But right now, we’re seeing evidence of grieving for what has been lost due to the pandemic, and this is true in adults as well as kids. Depression includes feelings of sadness or worthlessness and often manifests in low energy, inability to concentrate, excessive sleeping, decreased appetite, loss of enjoyment in previously pleasurable activities, and in the extreme, self-harm and suicidal thoughts or attempts. In adolescents, what we most commonly see is a loss of interest in previously pleasurable activities, an increase in irritability, and perhaps even opposition and acting out. Sometimes the pleasurable activities have been eliminated by the pandemic: school sports, drama club, music lessons, and so on. And without these, online or hybrid school feels empty. With younger children, there are outbursts, meltdowns, irritability, and other behaviors that we thought they had outgrown. There are certainly genetic predispositions and chemical imbalances that can contribute to depression. When depression reaches clinical significance, it may require professional intervention, including medication.

Gifted students often become aware of their emotional and inner lives and complex moral and relationship issues very early in comparison to their age peers. According to

Piechowski (2006), this is at least partially because of the sensitivities and overexcitabilities that are common in gifted people. Sometimes kids experience depression when they feel lonely, left out, or angry with themselves for having failed. Others have also made connections between anger and depression; anger is a kind of energy, and if it's unexpressed or ignored, it can be experienced as depression ("depression is anger turned inward"). Piechowski's research suggests that "physical exertion, taking time to be alone, and looking for a solution through deep introspection" can serve as countermeasures. But some kids actually found that feeling low was a spur to problem solving or to taking a necessary break to rest and relax. As they ponder existential questions and look deeply into the purpose of life, it is important to help older gifted children and teens to distinguish between depression and in-depth intellectual and emotional inquiry that can sometimes feel uncomfortable.

For many gifted students, climate anxiety or divisive and scary political dramas can precipitate depression (including existential depression where students are unsure about whether their lives have any meaning or purpose). Webb (2013) views this as a struggle of idealists to find meaning after realizing that the world is not as trustworthy and predictable as they thought. Galbraith and Delisle (2018) look further into the existential crises that many gifted kids experience when they "try to wrap their minds around the infinite and unknowable." They recommend that kids try some of the following:

- Connecting with a trusted adult or another teen
- Educating oneself about the actual issue
- Seeking physical touch (like a hug from a person or snuggling with a pet)
- Communing with nature
- Meditating or practicing mindfulness strategies and
- Exploring how others have created meaningful lives.

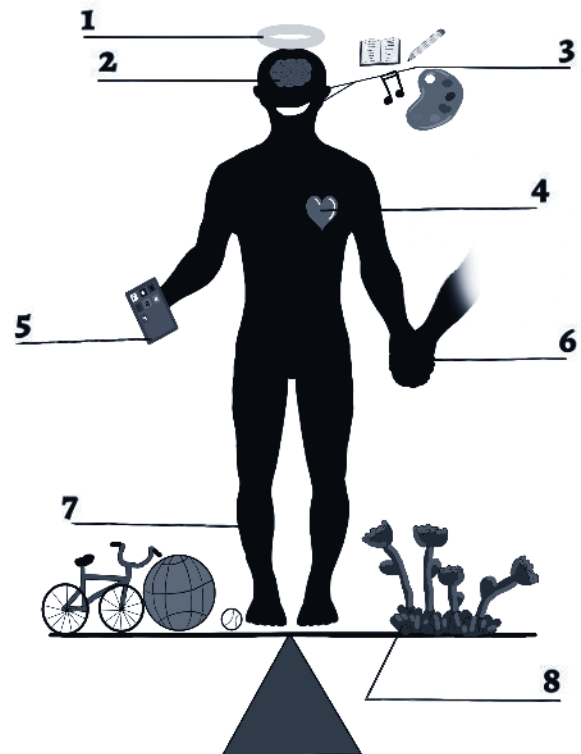
When combined with their powerful, questioning minds and the support of caring teachers and counselors, gifted individuals' richer awareness and sensitivities can help them uncover possibilities for extraordinary achievement, self-actualization, and eminence. Since depression is often a disordered way of thinking, counselors can help students use their cognitive abilities to change the focus of their thoughts.

Because many gifted youths reveal a reluctance to ask for help, it's up to parents and school personnel to be sensitive to the signs of depression: sudden weight loss or gain, withdrawal from friends and activities, unusual irritability and defiance or anger over little things, or fixation on failures or frustrations. If a child reveals a sense of despair and depression to us, and especially if they express desires to die or "not be here anymore" or "just want this all to be over," we

need to involve professionals immediately to appropriately address underlying causes and access whatever help they need.

### A BALANCED LIFE

What all of us and all of our children need is to have a life that is balanced. Below is a diagram I created to illustrate the eight components of a balanced life. Each one needs to be present, though it will be in different proportions for each individual. For adults and older teens, there is a ninth component, which is intimacy/sexuality.



1. Spiritual/religious activities
2. Academic/intellectual activities
3. Creative/artistic activities
4. Internal awareness/emotional awareness
5. Relationship to technology
6. Interpersonal relationships and connections to other people
7. Physical activities/connection to our bodies (eating, sleep, and so on)
8. Relationship to and time spent in nature/outdoors

This diagram can be used for discussion with our kids or students and for self-reflection to identify what needs to be rebalanced in order to keep us grounded and emotionally healthy. How are we using our time? Are those choices serving us well? When these eight or nine elements are in an appropriate balance for individuals, they feel less anxious, less depressed, more confident, and more energetic in pursuit of meaning and value in their lives.

Some additional resources and references that can help as we work with our gifted children and teens in school or at home are listed below.

#### APPS AND WEB RESOURCES:

[www.mindfulschools.org](http://www.mindfulschools.org)

Smiling Mind (a relaxation/mindfulness app)

Super Stretch (a yoga-type app for young kids)

#### BOOKS (SOME FOR PARENTS, SOME FOR COUNSELORS, SOME FOR TEACHERS)

Belknap, M. (2006). *Stress relief for kids: Taming your dragons*. Duluth, MN: Whole Person Associates.

Biegel, G. M. (2017). *The stress reduction workbook for teens: Mindfulness skills to help you deal with stress* (2nd ed.). Oakland, CA: Instant Help Books.

Broderick, P. C. (2019). *Mindfulness in the secondary classroom: A guide for teaching adolescents*. New York: Norton.

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Culbert, T., & Kajander, R. (2007). *Be the boss of your stress: Self-care for kids*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

Damour, L. (2019). *Under pressure: Confronting the epidemic of stress and anxiety in girls*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Fonseca, C. (2015). *I'm not just gifted: Social-emotional curriculum for guiding gifted children*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

Galbraith, J., & Delisle, J. (2011, 2015). *The gifted teen survival guide* and/or *When gifted kids don't*

*have all the answers*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

Garth, M. (1991, 1992). *Starbright and/or Moonbeam: Meditations and visualizations for parents to help children*. New York: Harper Collins.

Hankin, V., et. al. (2012). *Talking treasure: Stories to help build emotional intelligence and resilience in young children*. Champaign, IL: Research Press.

Hipp, E. (2019). *Fighting invisible tigers: Stress management for teens* (4th ed.). Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

Huebner, D., & Matthews B. (2006). *What to do when you worry too much: A kid's guide to overcoming anxiety*. Washington, DC: Magination Press

Mofield, E., & Peters, M. P. (2018). *Teaching tenacity, resilience, and a drive for excellence: Lessons for social-emotional learning for grades 4–8*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

Petersen, K. S. (2012). *Activities for building character and social-emotional learning grades 6–8*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

Piechowski, M. (2006). *"Mellow out," they say. If only I could: Intensities and sensitivities of the young and bright*. Madison, WI: Yunasa Books.

Rakow, S. (2021). *Educating gifted students in middle school: A practical guide*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

Snel, E. (2013). *Sitting still like a frog: Mindfulness exercises for kids (and their parents)*. Boulder, CO: Shambhala Press.

Willard, C., & Saltzman, A. (Eds.). (2015). *Teaching mindfulness skills to kids and teens*. New York: Guilford Press.

Webb, J. T. (2013). *Searching for meaning: Idealism, bright minds, disillusionment, and hope*. Goshen, KY: Great Potential Press.

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*A second part of this article in a future OAGC Review will connect lack of executive function skills to anxiety and depression and to the underachievement that can often be the result.*

# OAGC VIRTUAL SPRING TEACHER ACADEMY

February 22 and 23, 2021



The Ohio Association for Gifted Children is proud to present the 19th 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 22 and 23, 2021. We are pleased to announce that the OAGC is teaming up with J. Taylor Education to offer several sessions focusing on depth and complexity.

Along with session presentations provided from several of the J. Taylor Education experts, attendees will have access to discounted materials. The academy will offer a wide variety of live and recorded sessions over the two days. In addition, there will be other sessions taught by 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](http://www.oagc.com/teacheracademy.asp) in January 2021.

The conference will begin at 9:00 a.m. and end at 4:00 p.m. each day. CEU credit certificates for up to 15 contact hours will be issued by the OAGC, based on the participation of attendees. Certificates can be transferred to your local LPDC for proper CEU credit.

**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 12, 2021.**

Or e-mail [oagcregistrar@gmail.com](mailto:oagcregistrar@gmail.com)

Faxed registrations will be accepted at 614-337-9286 after February 12 with a \$25 late fee, provided that space is available.

No walk-in registrations without prior arrangement. Cancellation fee is \$50 before February 12, 2021. No refunds after February 12.

**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	_____ \$200.00	_____ \$195.00	_____ \$250.00	A.
B. Late registration if received after February 12, 2021			_____ \$ 25.00	B.
C. Not a member? Join now for reduced registration! Please attach separate membership form. available at <a href="http://www.oagc.com/join.asp">http://www.oagc.com/join.asp</a>	_____ \$40 (Basic)	...optional dues in addition to Basic _____ \$15 (Coordinator Division) _____ \$10 (Teacher Division) _____ \$10 (Higher Ed. Division) _____ \$ 5 (Parent Division)		C.
			<b>TOTAL</b>	

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 # \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

# TAKE CARE

By Becky Renegar, OAGC Teacher Division Chair

It's fine. I'm fine. Everything is fine. I've seen it on a T-shirt or ten recently, sentiments echoed among teacher friends everywhere. We are doing the challenging job of trying to keep normalcy in an abnormal time. With a smile on our faces. But at what cost? We love our students, our schools, our coworkers. We struggle sometimes with aligning what should be and what is, and giving ourselves grace and permission to acknowledge the dissonance between the two. It is because of our love for others that we give of our time, our energy, and our thoughts on sleepless nights. We give of ourselves, sometimes to the point where we feel we have nothing left to give, and then we dig deeper and give some more.

One of my favorite phrases is "If you're not flexible, you will break." But inflexibility is not the only thing that can break us. We focus on social-emotional strategies for our students, and we talk about mindfulness and self-care. Do we practice what we preach? Are we replenishing ourselves so that we have the physical and emotional bandwidth to show up for those we love—our students, our families? Even on an airplane we are told to take care of our own oxygen mask before assisting others. So, maybe it is time to put on our own mask and breathe slowly and deeply.

I've recently attended professional development sessions offered by both my school district and by the Martha Holden Jennings Educator Institute. The message is the same: we cannot care for our students if we do not care for ourselves and for one another. Self-care looks different for everyone. We all need it, and we must not feel guilty for meeting our own basic needs. According to Viktor Frankl, "Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and future." We do not have to be victims of our current situation; our responses are within our control. The following are some strategies that I have learned from

"Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare."  
—Audre Lorde

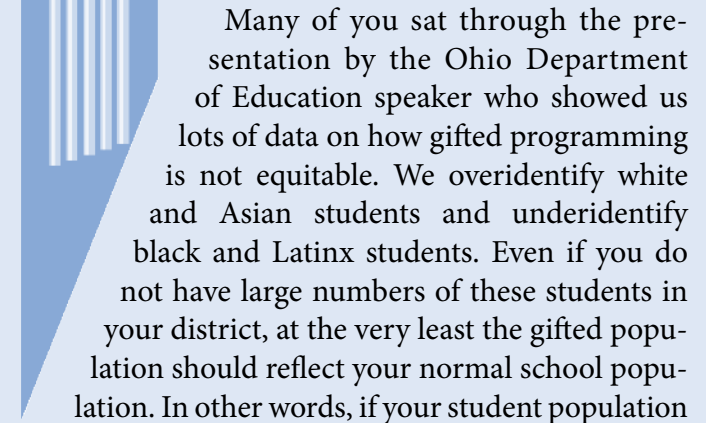
my recent professional development sessions, strategies that we can choose to help navigate through the turmoil and unpredictability that we may be encountering at this time. I hope that you can find something that brings you peace, joy, and a little less stress.

1. Practice self-awareness. Awareness of our feelings is a starting point for being able to care for ourselves. If you have not looked into them, Zones of Regulation are one way of helping us to categorize our feelings. Couple this with the Junto Emotion and Feeling Wheel and you have two excellent tools for putting a name to the feelings that you are experiencing. Once you have learned to name how you are feeling, consider how you might be able to flip some of those more negative emotions—anxiety to anticipation, dread to awe, boredom to capability. The goal is to move from one zone into another. Make use of a self-fulfilling prophecy: set positive intentions for your day. If you are having difficulty, you can check out affirmations on Spotify to find one that resonates with you.
2. Cultivate moments of mindfulness. We need to set time aside for mindfulness. Be it guided meditations from resources like Calm.org, prayer, exercise, or creativity, we need to make time in our lives to check in. Consider the first moments of your morning, your commute into work, time spent cooking, or the quiet moments before bed.
3. Find and bring positivity into your day. Positive emotions signal safety to your brain. Keep a thankfulness list and show gratefulness to others. Find joy in various activities of your day. Refrain from deteriorating engagements. Identify three good things about your day and tell someone about them. Consider reconnecting with a mentor and thanking them for the impact they have had on you. Keep a portfolio of your accomplishments.

Update your networking connections and make new personal connections with others who will inspire you with new ideas. Schedule happiness on your calendar—consider big things to look forward to, small things to remind you to take time for you, and good things that you can do for others. Speaking of your calendar, consider adding a learning or trying bucket list to yours.

4. Re-center. If you are feeling stressed in the moment, you can re-anchor yourself through your five senses by finding five things that you can see, four things that you can feel, three things that you can hear, two things that you can smell, and one thing that you can taste. Other strategies include coloring mandalas, conscious breathing, and laughter. (I found a great *Far Side* group on Facebook!) If you're stuck on an anxious thought, take a look at [www.pixelthoughts.co](http://www.pixelthoughts.co) to help you gain perspective. And don't forget that we are all in this and that some of us are struggling more than others, so Q-TIP (quit taking it personally) when you encounter conflict.
5. Alter your environment. Surround yourself with an environment that can help encourage and relax you. Fresh flowers and live plants have been shown to reduce anxiety. Leave yourself love notes and encouraging messages. Listen to music that calms and inspires you. Identify what things are within your scope of control and direct your focus and energy to those. Consider creating a calming corner in your physical classroom or a virtual peace room online for your students when they need a space to reregulate.
6. Engage in healthy habits. Eat good foods. Drink plenty of water (drinking water has been shown to reduce anxiety). Exercise and make sure to get plenty of sleep. You might also consider trying a yoga pose or singing or humming to relax and calm your nervous system. These things will help you to take care of your mind and body and enable you to have the physical resources you need to keep going.

In the words of Aibileen in *The Help*, “You is kind; you is smart; you is important.” Hang in there, and do not forget about taking care of yourself. We have got this, and we can be better than fine. We can do more than survive. We can thrive and help our students do the same.



Many of you sat through the presentation by the Ohio Department of Education speaker who showed us lots of data on how gifted programming is not equitable. We overidentify white and Asian students and underidentify black and Latinx students. Even if you do not have large numbers of these students in your district, at the very least the gifted population should reflect your normal school population. In other words, if your student population is 12 percent minority, your gifted programming should comprise 12 percent minority students. This is oftentimes not the case, though, which leads to inequity in gifted services.

This is not an Ohio problem; it is a national one. I think we all agree that it is not equitable, but what can we do about it? What can we do when many of the constraints preventing a student from being properly identified are out of our control, such as economic disadvantages or parents who may not highly value an education, who do know how to encourage it, who may speak a different language, or who have little exposure or knowledge of gifted rules?

As a state, we already do many things to level the playing field, such as whole-grade screening (many states still test only on referral) and the accountability of our gifted report card. This forces districts to support the learning of subgroups of minorities and economically disadvantaged students in order to score well on the gifted input. And yet the data show that while there might be slight improvements, we are not moving the proverbial needle. On the flipside, we cannot do some things that other states are doing, such as local norms, where you take the top 5 percent of a building or district population to determine identification in that district. Ohio requires the use of nationally normed tests.

In my district, I have tried some things, such as conducting whole-grade screening multiple times in a grade band in order to cast a larger net, offering the Naglieri test so that vocabulary or lack thereof



# The Need for Talent Development

*By Todd Stanley, OAGC Coordinator Division Chair*

does not prevent a student from showing his or her true abilities, and having conversations with teachers on what to look for from a gifted student. Many teachers still think that gifted students are the ones that turn in their work on time, are hard workers, care about grades, and volunteer in class to answer questions. In other words, they are the compliant ones. We all know many gifted students who are not the most compliant, and so dispelling this myth is important (especially when I am working to identify creative thinkers). And while I have seen the number of minority students in our program increase over the years, it is still not commensurate with the school population.

The problem is not the gifted programming, though. It is the door to which students must obtain the pass key (appropriate score) in order to access that programming. We use nationally vetted assessments on which students must score in the top 5 percent of the nationally normed number established by the testing company. In my district, we use these numbers not only to identify gifted students but to determine their placement in our available slate of gifted services. The only way that the student will receive service is if he or she meets the requirements. This is where the Catch-22 comes into play. If the student cannot get into the top 5 percent, he or she is not considered for service. But we have already established that these nationally normed tests have a bias that overidentifies one group and underidentifies the other. They say that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and yet expecting a different result. If we keep testing students and offering services as we currently are, nothing is going to change.

That is why we need to reconsider the way we identify children. After all, we are in the game of teaching students to think outside of the box. Why should we not expect this of ourselves? We need another layer to the identification of gifted students. We need to identify and develop the talent that we have at our schools so that those who just need that extra encouragement, those who will respond to the challenge, those who are being left out but who, if they were exposed to such

programming, would thrive and grow, get such an opportunity.

Just as there are extra interventions for RTI students that we focus on and work hard to keep out of special education services, there are students near the cutoff mark for gifted identification that we could provide with extra interventions, resources, and teaching strategies to get them into a gifted program.

What does this look like? My district is one with seven elementary schools, where there are have and have-not buildings. What I would like to do in my district is identification at our elementary buildings with the lowest numbers of gifted students—which, surprise surprise, happen to be our Title I schools—where we look at students who nearly qualified and put them in with a GIS. This GIS would then use the same strategies and rigor that she uses with her gifted identified students, and we will see how these students respond to the challenge. My suspicions are that many of these students will rise up to this specialized instruction and that the next time they are tested, they might get the necessary score for identification and thus qualify for the programming that is available at our middle and junior high schools.

This is a win-win for us because the GISs at those have-not buildings have only two to three students, while the GISs at our more affluent buildings have upward of 15 students per class. If we identify an additional 10 students who are near the cutoff but not quite there and put them in these classrooms, the teacher is working with more students, and more students are receiving a challenge.

However you decide to do it, consider the prospect of talent development. How do we identify those students who, with just a little push, would excel? We know that talent is distributed evenly but resources are not. What if we just distribute these resources a little more evenly? Wouldn't that lead to more equity in gifted education?

# Engagement during a Global Pandemic

By Sara Watson, OAGC Parent Division Chair

We're all exhausted. Parenting gifted children is tough, even under the best of circumstances. In a typical year, parents of gifted children face what sometimes feels like an endless struggle to ensure that their academic needs are being properly met. This year, that same challenge continues, but parents also must navigate an unfamiliar (and quickly changing) educational landscape involving shifts from in-person to blended to remote learning and back again. Many gifted students are also experiencing anxiety and stress, necessitating extra attention to connect our kids' learning to their social-emotional needs. Add to this the fact that many families are struggling economically, and you have a perfect recipe for burnout.

In this extraordinary moment, it is important to acknowledge our collective exhaustion and to grant ourselves some grace. Now is a good time to let go of perfectionism and to give ourselves—and our children—permission to lean out and let be.

At the same time, I encourage parents to stay tuned to developments in gifted education, both statewide and locally. It may be tempting to step back from public engagement for a year or two, but a lot can change in a short time. If we fail to plan for the return of normal (whenever that may be), we risk losing a lot when the postpandemic era finally rolls around.

In the coming months, for example, the Ohio General Assembly will be debating a major reform to K–12 school funding. The proposed bill (HB 305/SB 376) represents a potentially dramatic change to how gifted education is funded, a model based on the actual cost of educating gifted students. Sounds good, right? As is often the case with legislation, the devil is in the details. Updating the funding formula is a good start. But absent other key provisions—such as gifted service mandates, appropriate student-teacher ratios, and funding accountability—we could end up with a new model that *undermines* incentives for districts to provide the high-quality gifted services that our kids deserve. Lawmakers need to hear from parents on how the state can best support the specific academic needs of gifted kids.

Local advocacy matters too. Many local administrators see gifted education as a frill, not a necessity. Because the pandemic has forced many districts to cut budgets, gifted education may fall even further down the priority list. Although parents of gifted students need to be flexible and understand the constraints facing districts, it is also important to keep open the lines of communi-

cation with local leadership. Are districts using limited resources wisely? If gifted education needs to be reorganized in response to budget austerity, how can it be done without exacerbating existing socioeconomic and racial inequities? Cuts made in a time of crisis may continue even postpandemic after we have returned to normal, so it is crucial for parents to stay informed and to advocate inclusively within their districts for the needs of gifted learners.

How can you stay informed and involved without overtaxing your already low reserves? Here are a few ideas, organized from the local on up.

1. Connect with other parents in your district or school. Join a local gifted support or advocacy group.
2. If your area doesn't have a parent group, consider forming one. It's okay to start small. The important thing is to find a group of parents who are committed to building a network of support and to improving gifted education in your area.
3. Educate your school administrators and school board about the needs of gifted learners. Help make them aware of important gifted service and quality gaps in your district. Remember to be polite—and to advocate in an inclusive way!
4. To keep up with developments at the state level, follow the OAGC Advocacy Alerts or join the Ohiogift listerv. When relevant, reach out to your legislators and spread the word to those in your local network so that they, too, can advocate.
5. Join the OAGC Parent Division—and contact me if you have some time and energy to give. The OAGC needs your help to ensure that the future of gifted education in Ohio remains bright.

Becoming an OAGC affiliate is easy! Ready to start a parent group? Contact the OAGC Parent Division chair, Sara Watson, at [watson.sara@gmail.com](mailto:watson.sara@gmail.com).

To learn more about becoming an affiliate, visit <http://www.oagc.com/affiliates.asp>.

## OAGC Higher Education Division Update

*By Jennifer Groman, OAGC Higher Education Division Chair*

The Higher Education Division is working on two projects.

- 1) University Program Information: We are gathering information from universities with talent development MED/PhD programs and gifted intervention specialist endorsements throughout Ohio to update the OAGC Higher Education Division Web page (<http://www.oagc.com/higherEducation.asp>). This project will provide Ohio teachers with the information they need to make choices about professional development, endorsement, and degree programs in gifted education and will provide coordinators with materials to advocate for PD, endorsement, and degrees in gifted education with their district administrators and teachers. This project is ongoing. If you have information for any programs not listed on the OAGC Web page, please contact me.
- 2) We are collecting tips, tools, and suggestions for individuals taking the Ohio Assessments for Educators gifted education exam. I know that university programs have been doing this and doing it well, but a helpful site and archive of ideas from those who have taken the exam (without revealing specific questions, of course) and from those of us who teach and work with individuals as they are preparing for the exam might be a welcome addition and something that we can work on as a division. If you have ideas or want to be part of the team putting this together, contact me.

I have created a Padlet page where division members can add ideas to either or both of these directives, as well as a place for suggestions as to other directives to work on in 2021. See [https://padlet.com/jgroman/OAGC\\_HigherEd\\_Initiatives](https://padlet.com/jgroman/OAGC_HigherEd_Initiatives) or QR Code



My contact information is [sacred-la@hotmail.com](mailto:sacred-la@hotmail.com). Please put OAGC in the subject line.

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*Jennifer Groman, a creative dabbler, is an assistant professor and directs the graduate program in talent development at Ashland University, and she is a visiting lecturer for the talent development program at McNeese State University. She does a creative Brief Daily Session (BDS), as often as possible She lives in Wooster, Ohio.*

# Thank You to the OAGC Annual Fall Conference Exhibitors and Sponsors

*Center for Talent Development at Northwestern University*

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# ESSEX SCHOOL @ ASHLAND UNIVERSITY

*By Patricia Farrenkopf and Jennifer Groman*

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

The Essex School @ Ashland University is for rising sophomores, juniors, and seniors who are identified as gifted in the state of Ohio. It is a virtual summer camp learning experience, from Sunday, June 20, 4:00 p.m., through Saturday, June 26, at noon. Weekday sessions will be from 9:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Each morning, a keynote will set the stage for leadership experiences through the lens of change: connecting to identity development, leading with the head and the heart, leadership in literature, leadership in mathematics, and leadership styles. These small-group sessions will be led by gifted specialists and university faculty and staff.

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

Monday through Friday afternoons will be devoted to in-depth small-group instruction in a topic of passion of the Essexers by an expert in the field. We are currently recruiting university faculty for these sessions. We anticipate offerings in the physical, biological, and social sciences, as well as mathematics, the arts, and literature. While we cannot yet be specific about individual topics and instructors, rest assured that students will have the opportunity to decide which fields to pursue while at the camp.

Dinner breaks also can be taken independently or in brown-bag social sessions.

Evening hours will be spent in small-group activities with gifted specialists in storytelling, sharing, and investigating personal growth and identity.

The dates for the 2021 school are June 20–26, 2021. The tentative cost for Essex @ Ashland will be \$150, with scholarships available. Contact Jennifer Groman or Pat Farrenkopf at [essex@ashland.edu](mailto:essex@ashland.edu) for more information and to be put on the e-mail list for the release of the application and Web site.

# CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR SMALL SESSIONS

## Ohio Association for Gifted Children Annual Fall Conference

October 17–19, 2021 Hilton Hotel Easton in Columbus\*

(\*Depending on health and safety considerations due to COVID-19. If we cannot hold the conference physically, the OAGC will hold a virtual conference during the same dates.)

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):** \_\_\_\_\_

**PRESENTATION TYPE:** \_\_\_\_\_ dialogue \_\_\_\_\_ hands-on demonstration \_\_\_\_\_ lecture \_\_\_\_\_ panel discussion

**DATE PREFERENCE:** \_\_\_\_\_ Monday, October 18 \_\_\_\_\_ Tuesday, October 19 \_\_\_\_\_ both \_\_\_\_\_ either

**AV NEEDS:** \_\_\_\_\_ no AV needs \_\_\_\_\_ overhead projector \_\_\_\_\_ LCD projector (presenters must supply their own)

**STRAND** (Select the two most appropriate.)

**TARGETED GRADE**

\_\_\_ parents

\_\_\_ early childhood

\_\_\_ gifted intervention specialists

\_\_\_ primary

\_\_\_ classroom teachers

\_\_\_ intermediate

\_\_\_ counselors/psychologists

\_\_\_ middle school

\_\_\_ gifted coordinators/administrators

\_\_\_ high school

\_\_\_ higher education professionals

\_\_\_ 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, 2021.

Submit one copy to Small Sessions Chair, OAGC, P.O. Box 30801, Gahanna, OH 43230 or e-mail to [anngift@aol.com](mailto: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, 2021. Please keep a copy of your proposal.  
 Materials submitted to the OAGC cannot be returned.

- Proposals postmarked after April 1, 2021, may be considered for the 2021 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 14, 2021, 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](mailto: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

# Want to Improve Student

Creative thinking ability: Identification in the state of Ohio requires a score of one standard deviation above the mean (minus the standard error of measurement) on a nationally normed cognitive test in addition to a qualifying score on an approved checklist of creative behaviors.

The perfect way to suck the life force out of anything? Quantify it.

Don't get me wrong. I understand the need for these definitions and identification protocols. But I also know that creativity is mysterious, playful, and an inalienable core of our humanity. Inalienable—like an inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This is our right.

Those of us in gifted education are concerned with this kind of creativity and how to improve and support it in our students, but we run into a wall when we try to figure out *how*. But I have a secret, an inside look at one good way to see and support creativity in students. Ready for it?

Look in the mirror. Start with you.

I have been reading an interesting book edited by Maciej Karwowski and James C. Kaufman (2017) called *The Creative Self: Effect of Beliefs, Self-Efficacy, Mindset, and Identity*, and I am learning something wonderful. Our beliefs about our own creativity may affect not only our creative identity but also our creative perseverance and how we view and interact with the creativity in those around us. What this means is that our beliefs about our own creative self may positively affect our ability to see and support creativity in our students. How about that for a mindset theory? Creative beliefs are built on three concepts, namely

creative self-efficacy (CSE, i.e., including creative self-efficacy, perceived confidence

to creatively perform a particular task), creative metacognition (CMC, i.e., beliefs based on a combination of creative self-knowledge and contextual self-knowledge), and creative self-concept (CSC, i.e., general beliefs about one's creative abilities) (p. 3).

It is the creative self-concept that I want to address in this little article, because I have seen how teachers who experience and support their own creativity are better equipped to see and support creativity in their students. They also appear happier and more energized. Creativity is built out of experiences, motivation, and visceral responses that come from work within what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls *flow*—periods when all sense of time disappears. And I'm sorry to say this, but binge-watching *The Crown* isn't the same as flow (even though time disappears—just one more episode). Flow is not passive: It is full mental engagement and heightened awareness. In addition, it is not just in the creativity that you give away through creative lesson planning, creative teaching, and creative structures in your classroom. Sharing this type of creativity is wonderful and central to what we do as teachers. However, here I am encouraging you to keep a little creativity for yourself as a life preserver.

Also, by creativity, I do not mean just the arts. Creativity is more than painting, music, dance, or theater. Inventions are creative. Mathematical patterns are creative. Scientific exploration, building, entrepreneurship, athletics, and design—all domains can be creative. It is in building our creative self-concept that we allow ourselves to see the possibilities of where we fit and where we are creative.

Sure, Jen, that's all great, but I'm exhausted. When do I find the time?

I get that. My answer: Brief Daily Sessions (BDS).



# Creativity? Start Here.

By Jennifer Groman, OAGC Higher Education Chair

This is an example of what Jane Piirto notes as one of the hallmarks of creative individuals: self-discipline. Daily practice. Try this: For one week, sit with a journal (hard copy, computer document, or even a video application) for 15 minutes alone and consider your creative self. When were you at your most creative? What do you do now—for yourself—that is creative? What creative work do you enjoy watching, listening to, or interacting with? What creative work would you like to explore? Carl Jung asks, “What did you do as a child that made the hours pass like minutes? Herein lies the key to your earthly pursuits.”

At the end of the week, what stands out to you as creative work you want to try or revisit? Then set up a 15-minute BDS for yourself at least five times a week to explore this work. Try a doodle a day, a mathematical pattern a day, a top ten list a day, a mandala a day (my particular favorite at the moment), or a problem a day that you find in your world and plan out solutions (crazy, practical, impossible, or funny). Hand-lettering, poetry, writing. Artist Keith Allen woke at 5:00 a.m. to create a pop-up paper engineering project every morning to prepare for his first fantastic pop-up book, *What a Mess!* I also saw an art exhibit where the artist displayed 30 baby food jars full of things she found on her daily walk through her city. You may not be working toward a major opus like these creatives, but the process is the same. Find a niche and begin a personal, consistent exploration of it.

The beauty of the creative BDS (besides the fact that it sounds mysterious and a bit racy) is that by taking a little time for your own creative work, you are also engaging in self-care, which is vital in this strange and stressful time. Creative work has the added bonus of integrating mindfulness, lowering stress, and being just plain fun.

Here is one more concept that Piirto has shown to be pivotal to creative work, and it is what I have observed to be the most challenging. Risk taking. Trying something new and risking being bad at it is one of the hardest things for adults to do (psst—it’s something we ask children to do on a daily basis). We want to be Monet, Mozart, or Mendeleev on our first try. It just can’t happen. It takes 10 years to become an expert in a domain. That means 10 years of mistakes, ruined canvases (which can be painted over, by the way), wrong notes, and misplaced elements on the periodic table. So go into this exploration of creative work with a sense of adventure and an eye toward taking a risk. Be willing to let go of the need to be perfect.

I would usually end a short article like this one by providing practical suggestions for your classroom. Maybe I’ll do that in the summer 2021 OAGC Review, but for now, take on the challenge that Karwowski and Kaufman imagine to develop your creative self. Explore your own creativity and push yourself beyond your comfort zone. Take time to deepen the creative self-concept of that awesome person in the mirror.

## REFERENCES

Karwowski, M., & Kaufman, J. C. (Eds.). (2017). *The creative self: Effect of beliefs, self-efficacy, mindset, and identity*. Cambridge, MA: Academic Press.

Jennifer Groman, a creative dabbler, is an assistant professor and directs the graduate program in talent development at Ashland University. She is also a visiting lecturer for the talent development program at McNeese State University. She does a creative BDS, as often as possible (See? Mysterious. Racy.) She lives in Wooster, Ohio.

# Curriculum Approaches That Build Learning

One of the most important considerations in teaching gifted students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) is to hold high expectations for their learning and progress. Students can be supported in attaining these high expectations when teachers view student abilities through a strengths-based lens, seeing new language skills and different knowledge as *assets* rather than deficits when planning instruction. Teachers can be empowered to make necessary changes in curriculum to develop the strengths of diverse students, viewing themselves as “capable of bringing about change” (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). One way of building this sense of empowerment for change is to increase awareness of how culture plays a role in day-to-day teaching. Teachers should ask themselves what they know about diverse gifted students in relation to the content area being studied. How do their own beliefs, values, assumptions, and culture influence their thinking about diverse students? How do they collaborate with professional peers and advocate for gifted students? In this article, we provide a number of ideas for providing a rigorous curriculum for diverse students through collaborating, utilizing high-quality instructional materials, and differentiating instruction through higher order thinking processes. Overall, these components are supported by teachers who have high expectations and who are aware of the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Shifting from a deficit mindset that focuses on areas of remediation to a strengths-based mindset often includes retooling for teachers. Learning how to effectively communicate, self-reflect, and collaborate with other educators and parents is critical to providing a rigorous curriculum to students who have different backgrounds. The knowledge base of teachers should include cultural characteristics, linguistic differences, socioeconomic differences, and family/environmental considerations. Also, professional learning regarding modifications, motivation, strategies, services, technology, and outside resources should be considered as a means to implement best practices.

## COLLABORATIVE PLANNING MODELS

Collaborative planning is a key component in developing appropriate supports for CLD gifted students. Siegle et al. (2016) identify Response to Intervention (RTI) as an effective model for CLD students because it provides scaffolded support through increasing levels of difficulty that allow for enrichment or acceleration. Collectively, the school RTI team is able to provide bridges to new learning, along with suggestions for modifications and supports for CLD students. Although RTI is typically considered for students who are performing poorly, the use of an RTI process called “Uppervention” for gifted students can challenge and provide opportunities for gifted students to explore their talents (Work, 2014).

Another approach to providing support for CLD students is the use of the integrated classroom model. Mun and others (2016) suggested this approach because it includes differentiation and cluster grouping that can be used to build on student background knowledge and allow for student engagement. This model is best implemented using a team approach and student preassessment. Effective differentiation, however, can be complex. General education teachers may need support to appropriately modify their curriculum or use grouping to differentiate. Therefore, the support of a gifted educational specialist or ELL specialist via professional development, coplanning, coteaching, or direct collaboration is critical.

## DIFFERENTIATION AND INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORTS

Differentiation is important for gifted students who are culturally and linguistically diverse. Adapting the general curriculum to meet the unique needs of gifted CLD students begins with building on students’ background knowledge (VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2006). This may include providing high-quality materials in a student’s native language and/or literature

# Bridges for Diverse Gifted Students

By Beth Hahn, Karen Qualls, Tracy Alley, Aimee Fletcher, Kim Gordon,  
& Todd Stanley, University of Cincinnati

*The authors are faculty and adjunct faculty members for the University of Cincinnati Gifted Endorsement Program.*

about diverse cultures. It is important that interventions are matched to the student's area of strength, whether it is verbal or quantitative, or in critical thinking and reasoning. Honoring students' authentic work is a vital part of engaging CLD students in the learning process. Using illustrations, graphics, drama, manipulatives, and written expression in a student's primary language are excellent ways of encouraging and gauging student learning. Also, differentiating through questioning, open-ended activities or problem-based learning, as well as choosing appropriate challenging materials, allows for meaningful learning to occur for CLD students.

To attune instruction to student strengths, teachers can administer an interest inventory or survey in the beginning of the school year. The inventory/survey can target interests that will help the teacher plan lessons and

understand the needs of each student. If a teacher discovers that a student enjoys playing the guitar at home, the teacher could incorporate a sharing time in class or incorporate a performing arts assignment on a choice board. Voice and choice are key elements in a differentiated classroom. Also, adapting learning tools so that they are reflective of CLD students is often a necessity to achieve appropriate differentiation. Many gifted teachers use choice boards as a way to challenge their students and give them academic choices, but choice boards need to be examined to make sure that they are culturally appropriate. If they are not, they need to be modified so that they are. Figure 1 displays an example of a typical choice board for *A Christmas Carol*.

These are seemingly creative activities that give students several choices. However, many of them are insensitive to CLD students, using choices that are

**Figure 1.** Typical Example of Choice Board for *A Christmas Carol*

Change the setting of the story to that of the beach. Describe how the setting would change the story and why.	What role does tradition play in the story? Prepare a traditional holiday meal for the class and include the history of why this is an important food to your family.	Choose a passage and define 10 words you do not know, making a glossary with related illustrations so that it can be referenced by others.
Write a diary entry from the perspective of one of the minor characters. How might the minor character see what is going on in the book differently than others?	Student choice	Write a Christmas "carol" for the 21st century where you spread peace and good will.
Answer the following questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does Scrooge change in the story?</li> <li>What is the main problem and how is it resolved?</li> <li>What is the theme?</li> </ol>	Present a monologue from the perspective of one of the characters and how they view Ebenezer Scrooge.	Replace characters in the story with members of your family.  How would your family members act in the story and would it change the story line?

reflective of settings with which they are not familiar. Additionally, these choices do not necessarily allow students opportunities to create products that are reflective of their culture or hold them to high expectations

with sufficient rigor. There are ways to use *A Christmas Carol* even with its focus on Christmas without being culturally insensitive. A better choice board might look like the board in Figure 2.

**Figure 2.** Choice Board with Culturally Responsive Considerations

<p>Change the setting of the story. Describe how this setting would change the story and why.</p> <p><i>This does not limit students to writing inauthentically about a beach for this story. Students can change the setting to a familiar setting.</i></p>	<p>What do you think about the traditions that are used in the story? What role do they play in the development of the story? Why do you think traditions are important, and what traditions are important to you? Share your ideas with the class in a creative way (food, collage, piece of art).</p> <p><i>Students can consider other familiar traditions. This is also more culturally sensitive since some cultures do not celebrate holidays or a student may not be residing with their biological family.</i></p>	<p>Choose a passage and define 10 words you think are important to the story. Also, provide a symbol for its meaning and importance in the story.</p> <p><i>This provides an additional layer of abstract thinking, holding students to higher expectations of rigorous instruction, beyond defining words.</i></p>
<p>Write a diary entry or draw a picture of a scene from the perspective of one of the minor characters. How might the minor character see what is going on in the book differently than others?</p> <p><i>The additional choice provides an option for students to demonstrate their knowledge in other ways.</i></p>	<p>Student choice</p>	<p>Reflect on the development of the theme of peace and good will within the story. Write a song for the 21st century where you spread peace and good will. You are not required to perform the song.</p> <p><i>By the task not being limited to writing a Christmas “carol,” students are given the opportunity to write a song using a music genre of their choice.</i></p>
<p>With a partner, answer the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What motivates Scrooge? How does this change throughout the story?</li> <li>2. How does the Scrooge’s internal conflict help us understand the theme?</li> <li>3. How does the author use symbolism?</li> </ol> <p><i>This allows students to collaboratively discuss their responses, enhancing oral fluency and academic language, while also receiving peer support if needed. Questions are also more challenging, holding students to higher expectations.</i></p>	<p>Present a monologue to the class or make a WeVideo of the monologue from the perspective of one of the characters and how they view Ebenezer Scrooge.</p> <p><i>This allows students an additional choice in filming the monologue. In consideration of oral fluency proficiency (for linguistically diverse students), this task allows practice and re-take opportunities for students who do not wish to perform directly in front of an audience.</i></p>	<p>Replace characters in the story with members of a popular TV show or movie. How would these characters act in the story and would it change the storyline?</p> <p><i>Students have expanded opportunities to replace characters with familiar contexts. This is important for students who may not wish to discuss family members as indicated in the previous task.</i></p>

In addition to choice boards and interest inventories, independent studies can be used as a way to link the passions of a student to the curriculum as a means to keep them engaged in the learning process. Independent studies allow students to share a passion that may not connect directly to the curriculum. For example, if the class studies the topic of simple machines, a student whose passion is sketching Italian cars might research Lamborghinis and reference all of the simple machines found in the cars through a sketch.

Additionally, Winebrenner and Brulles (2018) suggested that teachers of gifted students from diverse populations should learn about the cultural values of students before creating assignments. For example, some cultures value work completed in a “communal environment,” while others value independent work. Being aware of cultural values will provide teachers with the opportunity to assure students that all modes will be implemented, but everyone will have a chance to work in their preferred mode.

Considerations should also be made for students learning a new language. Graphic organizers and verbal assignments can be used to reduce the amount of writing that linguistically diverse students have to complete during the language acquisition phase so that students get past barriers and truly demonstrate what they know. Such scaffolding supports can be gradually removed as students continue to gain language skills and content knowledge. Supporting gifted students who are culturally and linguistically diverse also includes addressing their social-emotional needs as they pursue advanced academic content. As with other gifted students, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may deal with issues of perfectionism, underachievement, lack of motivation, or asynchronous behaviors. Therefore, digging beyond students’ interests to tap into what motivates them or creates anxiety and triggers their frustration is critical. Additionally, as teachers develop plans for rigorous instruction, they can co-create a navigation guide with the student using S.M.A.R.T. goals (S-Specific, M-Measurable, A-Attainable, R-Realistic, T-Timely). As students progress to achieve self-selected academic learning goals, they develop a sense of accomplishment and confidence. Achieving attainable goals allows stu-

dents to develop self-regulation skills, motivation, and self-efficacy, all important psychosocial factors that facilitate talent development.

Through building background knowledge, tuning in to student interests, planning culturally responsive instruction, providing a gradual release of scaffolded supports, and addressing social-emotional needs, we can pave paths for students to demonstrate their strengths and progress in their learning. As educators, we must reflect on the extent to which we teach with high expectations, engage in collaborative practices to benefit diverse learners, and thoughtfully plan culturally responsive instruction. Such practices are promising in supporting diverse students as they aim to reach their greatest potential.

## RESOURCES

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# Susan Faulkner Memorial Art Scholarship

By Alesha Haybin

The Susan Faulkner Memorial Art Scholarships are offered each fall and will be awarded to Ohio students currently in grades K–12 who are applying for a special program or activity designed to nurture an interest or talent in an area of the visual or performing arts. Qualified candidates will demonstrate outstanding participation, dedication, and service to the arts through their application materials and submission of original art work or performance.

One scholarship will be awarded to an outstanding applicant from each grade-level tier: K–4 = \$150, 5–8 = \$250, 9–12 = \$350. Applications are reviewed by the OAGC’s Visual/Performing Arts (VPA) Scholarship Committee, which is composed of professionals specializing in the areas of art, music, drama, and dance.

This year, the VPA Scholarship Committee would like to highlight our 5–8th grade scholarship recipient, Hyunyoung Lee.

Hyunyoung is a 6th-grade student at Hilliard City Schools and plans to attend Camp Architecture at the Center for Architecture and Design in Columbus. Hyunyoung is passionate about art. In her essay, she wrote, “I feel that through art I am showing my talent for drawing and for having the ability to express my thoughts . . . I am serious about my desire to learn about architecture as a career. I have the talent and interest to make architecture a realistic goal. My art reflects both my talent and my personality and interests. The knowledge I will acquire at Camp Architecture will help me achieve my career goal.”

Hyunyoung’s artwork is very important to her and reflects how the world around her has shaped and molded her perspective.



## “We are Equal”

*Equality of treatment for all people is also important to me. When I drew this the Black Lives Matter and All Lives Matter movements were underway. I took interest in that subject because I want equality of treatment for all. Equality is important to me because as a Korean we are sometimes the victims of racism. My mother taught me about the subject from the age of ten. So drawing this picture mirrored my opinion that everyone should be treated equally.*



### “Nesta”

*When we recently moved to our new home we became friends with our neighbors. They have a dog named Nesta . . . This painting is important to me because it represents our friendship with our neighbors and reminds me of their kindness. Both friendship and kindness are important to me.*

A special thank you to all our applicants this year! Please refer to our Web site for the application materials and deadlines associated with each of the scholarship opportunities that the OAGC offers.

- Susan Faulkner Memorial Art Scholarship, Nov. 15 application deadline
- Student Scholarship, Feb. 15 application deadline
- College Scholarship, Apr. 15 application deadline
- Distinguished Student, June 1 application deadline

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Student Scholarships



#### AVAILABLE SCHOLARSHIPS & DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSION

All applications are available online at [www.oagc.com](http://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 (\$1000)
- November 15** Susan Faulkner Memorial Art Scholarship (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 Memorial Art Scholarship

- 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 non-transferrable (to a different program)
- Notification of awards may fall AFTER a deadline for registration and/or payment required by a particular program or activity. 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.
- OAGC is not responsible for any registration fees submitted and does not guarantee that your child will receive a scholarship
- Scholarship awards 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](mailto:Alesha.Haybin.OAGC@gmail.com)
- Applications must include ALL of the 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 email address that submitted materials. Materials mailed 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 OAGC's Scholarship Chair, Parent Division Chair, two Governing Board Members, and a current Member of OAGC. One committee member must be the parent of a gifted child.

#### 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 they **do not exceed** the maximum word count
- Recommended formatting: single spaced, 12-point font (Calibri, Times New Roman, Arial)

#### 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](mailto:Alesha.Haybin.OAGC@gmail.com)

Updated: 7/23/20

All materials available in fillable PDF on our website!  
[www.oagc.com/scholarship.asp](http://www.oagc.com/scholarship.asp)



# STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP AWARD For Summer Programs



**DUE FEBRUARY 15**

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

- Ohio students in grades K-12 who are identified as gifted or talented according to OAC 3301-51-15 in one or more areas: Cognitive Ability, Specific Academic Ability, Visual/Performing Arts, Creative Thinking
- Students who have not received another OAGC scholarship within the past twelve months

## HOW DOES A STUDENT APPLY FOR A SCHOLARSHIP?

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

## APPLICATION SUBMISSION/POSTMARK DEADLINE: FEBRUARY 15

Submit materials electronically to:  <a href="mailto:Alesha.Haybin.OAGC@gmail.com">Alesha.Haybin.OAGC@gmail.com</a>	*You will receive confirmation of materials received as a reply to the email address that submitted materials
Mail a paper copy of materials to:  Ohio Association for Gifted Children - Scholarships PO Box 30801 Gahanna, Ohio 43230	*You will NOT receive confirmation of receipt unless you include a self-addressed, <b>stamped</b> 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
- Program Brochure
- OAGC Member Nominator Form
- District Contact & Eligibility Form
- Letter of Recommendation and Form #1
- Letter of Recommendation and Form #2
- Student Essay Form
- Student Essay

## SCHOLARSHIP AWARD PROCEDURE

- Applications will be reviewed by a committee consisting of OAGC's Scholarship Chair, Parent Division Chair, two Governing Board Members, and a current Member of OAGC. One committee member must be the parent of a gifted child.
- Students may apply for a scholarship award of up to 75% of the total cost of the program with a maximum award of \$500 possible
- Applicants will be notified whether or not they were selected to receive a scholarship within 45 days of the submission deadline

### QUESTIONS?

Contact Alesha Haybin - OAGC Scholarship Committee Chair  
[Alesha.Haybin.OAGC@gmail.com](mailto:Alesha.Haybin.OAGC@gmail.com)

Updated: 7/23/20

All materials available in fillable PDF on our website!  
[www.oagc.com/scholarship.asp](http://www.oagc.com/scholarship.asp)

# COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP AWARD For Undergraduate Students



**DUE APRIL 15**

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

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

## HOW DOES A STUDENT APPLY FOR A SCHOLARSHIP?

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

## APPLICATION SUBMISSION/POSTMARK DEADLINE: APRIL 15

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

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

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

## SCHOLARSHIP AWARD PROCEDURE

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

## QUESTIONS?

Contact Alesha Haybin - OAGC Scholarship Committee Chair  
[Alesha.Haybin.OAGC@gmail.com](mailto:Alesha.Haybin.OAGC@gmail.com)

Updated: 7/23/20

All materials available in fillable PDF on our website!  
[www.oagc.com/scholarship.asp](http://www.oagc.com/scholarship.asp)

# DISTINGUISHED STUDENT Award Scholarship



**DUE JUNE 1**

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

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

## HOW DOES A STUDENT APPLY FOR A SCHOLARSHIP?

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

## APPLICATION SUBMISSION/POSTMARK DEADLINE: JUNE 1

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

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

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

## SCHOLARSHIP AWARD PROCEDURE

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

## QUESTIONS?

Contact Alesha Haybin - OAGC Scholarship Committee Chair  
[Alesha.Haybin.OAGC@gmail.com](mailto:Alesha.Haybin.OAGC@gmail.com)

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# Self-Care in the

Before anything else, let's reinforce some facts. You are an expert in your field. You love your students. You work hard. Whether recognized by others or not, facts are facts. ;-)

Over the past few months, these statements may not always have felt true. Whereas most education professionals would agree that we have chosen a high-stress vocation, stress levels since March have been significantly higher than usual. You may feel depressed, exhausted, confused, and overwhelmed. We all do. With all the factors we can't control—whether or not our district is back face-to-face, whether or not we have training in teaching virtually, whether or not our students and their families are sick—there is one factor we can control.

We can show ourselves some love. We can show ourselves the care and attention we consistently give to others. By taking better care of ourselves, we will have more and better energy to take care of our families and our students. These self-care strategies may not be new to you, but these days, reminders are a good thing, right?

The most important self-care strategy to remember is that we control our attitude about any situation, and this new (but thankfully temporary) normal is no exception. We can learn several important things from our current situation. The increased opportunities for quiet reflection imposed upon us by quarantine and social distancing can afford us the time and the quiet needed to notice the

importance of relationships in our lives. We now have the time and the quiet to prioritize what's really important to us. We can navigate new boundaries in our lives as our perception of what is possible changes. Not the least of these changes is to establish how technology functions in our lives. While we may not have thought long and hard about balance before, we now have the opportunity to find the balance that we need to function and to function well.

To cope with life these days, "care" can fall into three categories: taking care of ourselves, taking care of our community, and taking care of our students.

There are several ways in which we can take care of ourselves that can be implemented in even the busiest of schedules. Do you have a commute to work? Leave the radio off for 10 minutes in order to reflect in the quiet. In your mind, list all the things for which you feel gratitude. Do you walk from your car to your office or classroom? Incorporate more physical movement into your day by parking at the far end of the lot; take an indirect route through the building to your office or classroom. Our minds and bodies are connected; good nutrition and physical exercise—even little things like parking farther away—improve our attitude and our ability to solve problems.

Although these self-care strategies are important, we get the most bang for our buck from mindfulness. The Oxford English Dictionary defines mindfulness as "a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging

# (Temporary)

# “NEW NORMAL”

*Rachel Winters, Region 10 Representative*

and accepting one’s feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations, used as a therapeutic technique.” Sounds easy, right? Our modern society—especially in the midst of a pandemic—does not encourage mindfulness, but there are some helpful apps (most of them free): Headspace (<https://www.headspace.com/>), Calm (<https://www.calm.com/>), and Ten Percent Happier (<https://www.tenpercent.com/>) are some of the best.

Collectively, the world is experiencing not only a COVID-19 pandemic but also a grief pandemic, and it helps to know that we are not alone in feeling anger, depression, and fatigue as a natural part of mourning the world that once existed. It is always important to show others that you appreciate them; now it is even more important to take a moment and let someone know that you have noticed and appreciate their hard work, extra effort (or just effort), kindness, and care. Random acts of kindness make all of us feel better, and little notes of appreciation do not cost anything extra. Just as Marie Kondo has encouraged us to declutter our physical surroundings, we can also improve our mood and focus by decluttering our people. Who makes you feel better about yourself? Who makes you feel better about your situation? Who supports you even when things are difficult? With whom do you feel a positive connection of shared interests or attitudes? Try to surround yourself with those people when you find them.

Last, we serve as role models and supports for our students. No matter what the age, our students are thinking about the pandemic and how it has

changed our daily lives. If they ask, give them the information they need: talk about the grieving process. Talk about death as a natural part of life. Talk about the facts we know about COVID-19 and about what information we know is not true. Talk about our worries; even older students could benefit from a strategy called worry tickets. Find a graphic that looks like a ticket. Print some and cut them out. Find a box or bucket with a lid and cut a slit in the lid slightly larger than the ticket. Before students come into your classroom, have them write what is worrying them on the ticket and place it in the box. The physical process of removing the worry and placing it in a closed box—taking the worry out of our minds even just for the time that we are in that classroom—provides a necessary support and relief.

Sometimes our modeling involves risk: trying something new, like a new creative habit or time management strategy, in front of our students, including talking through the process of embracing this new habit and the inevitable failures and mistakes that are a normal part of trying something new, is scary. We make ourselves vulnerable to others, and we admit that even though we are the adults, we aren’t perfect. These are valuable lessons for all of us.

Because, after all, we are in this together. And we will come out on the other side stronger and better.

# 15

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*Once you've read this issue, why not pass it along?*

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## Call for Articles—Spring 2021 *Review*

### General Call

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

In addition, we will be accepting the following articles from all regions: teacher features, spotlight on student talent, and other regional articles of interest 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](mailto:anngift@aol.com).