



Preliminary Analysis – Updated 2.24.09
Proposed Gifted Funding Under the Funding and Education Reform Plan

Governor Strickland has made many public statements about the need for all gifted children to be adequately served in Ohio. He clearly supports gifted education and gifted children. Unfortunately, the proposed funding system under Governor Strickland's funding reform plan will not achieve the goal of providing adequate opportunities to all gifted children in Ohio. The proposal, as currently laid out, may do harm to current gifted services, which are provided to about a quarter of the gifted population in Ohio. The plan would eliminate the current unit funding and instead provide funds at \$25 per ADM (based on the Odden and Picus finance model) in each district and community school. The identification funding that has been critical in building the support for the appropriate identification of gifted students, particularly those in under represented populations, has been eliminated under this budget. The Summer Honors Institutes and the Martin Essex program funding have been eliminated. The full effect of this funding system would be to reduce dedicated gifted funding from the current level of **\$48,000,000 to less than \$21,000,000 for currently funded Ohio school districts**. As funding would no longer be tied to highly qualified, gifted staff, some districts have already told their gifted coordinators and intervention specialists that they will not be employed next year. The funding plan for gifted is problematic on several levels:

- 1) **The \$25 per ADM for gifted education recommended in the Odden and Picus text book, Adequate Staffing and Resources for America's Schools does not reflect the Ohio experience with respect to gifted services and funding.** In fact, as gifted education is handled very differently from state to state, it is nearly impossible to extract a funding system looking at high level national data. Gifted data must be collected state by state as the data are not reflected properly in national educational statistics. Unfortunately, it appears that the researchers did not look at national level or at state level data. In fact, it appears that the \$25 per ADM figure was derived from a seat license fee for a canned enrichment computer program. As inappropriate as this recommendation is, it is made worse by failing to include the annual site license fee, which would run approximately \$5300 per school building in Ohio. There are roughly 3,700 school buildings in Ohio. Odden and Picus cannot defend this figure as an adequate method for funding gifted students.
- 2) **The Odden and Picus model does not take into account that gifted personnel are needed to support the needs of gifted in each district.** Interestingly, in their textbook, the researchers lay out the elements necessary to adequately educate gifted students. These elements include: funding to identify hidden talents in diverse populations; funding to provide access to appropriate curriculum; funding to support accelerated opportunities, and funding to provide access to appropriate trained teachers. (Pg. 112) Without gifted coordinators and gifted intervention specialists, gifted services will be dubious at best in districts. The \$25 per ADM would be appropriate only after gifted staff is employed at the required ratios, which are already specified in the gifted operating standards. A better evidence model for gifted funding can be found in the Pennsylvania school funding cost study, which looked at actual costs for serving gifted students, including required staff. In addition, the Pennsylvania study takes into account the difficulties that small districts have in covering fixed costs. Two gifted cost studies completed in Ohio in the last decade indicate that funding for gifted students should include gifted coordinators, gifted intervention specialists, identification funds, materials and supplies, and professional development funds. The State Board of Education school funding plan called for gifted funding at a level of \$163 million to adequately fund all of identified gifted students in Ohio.
- 3) **The additional funding for intervention in the governor's plan is very unlikely to be used for gifted students unless a certain minimum level of gifted staffing and service is required.** Districts are already planning to cut gifted staff based on the new plan. Some districts may use the intervention funding to support gifted students, but many others will not. A quick poll of 185 coordinators found that 50 districts will make immediate cuts if the plan is implemented. Gifted services will be hit and miss across the state. Whether or not a gifted student is appropriately served would depend very much on where he or she lived. Students in rural and urban areas will be particularly hurt under this funding system.

- 4) A very rough preliminary analysis shows that under this plan, **555 districts lose dedicated funding for gifted students. Of the fifty nine districts that gain or do not lose funding, over half do not currently report providing services of any kind to gifted children in their district.**

If the gifted funding plan goes into effect as is, gifted services across the state will be dismantled. There are, however, ways to remedy the plan by specifically dedicating the gifted and enrichment funds to gifted students and tying the funding to gifted staff, professional development, and gifted identification. Districts would need to be held accountable for the service to gifted students. Until the necessary information from OBM is available, it is impossible to do a thorough analysis of this issue and to propose a solution. But given the funding level currently proposed in the gifted *and enrichment* areas, a solution that works for gifted students as well as other students in the buildings is possible. Attention must be paid to the current operating standards for identification and service in the development of any plan.

It is important to understand the current method of gifted funding in Ohio in order to move forward to a new system. The following information provides an outline of the current funding level, an explanation of gifted unit funding, and provides statistics on the current state of gifted service in the state of Ohio.

Current Estimated 2009 State Gifted Funding:

Gifted Funding:	<u>\$48,006,613</u>
Gifted Units:	\$42,188,166*
Gifted Id Funds:	\$4,794,470**
Summer Programs:	\$1,026,017***

*Approximately \$33 million in unit funding (coordinators and intervention specialists) flows directly to districts and is included on the SF-3. Approximately \$ 9 million flows to ESCs to hire units that in turn serve districts that contract with the ESC.

**The gifted identification funds Support the appropriate identification of gifted students in districts. A portion of the ID funds are used to support the identification of underrepresented populations. These funds flow directly to districts and are not on the SF-3.

***Includes Summer Honors Institutes and Martin Essex programs that are housed at Ohio's universities and are used in part to encourage gifted students to attend Ohio colleges.

- Current state funding for gifted students is largely based on a unit funding system, similar to the system proposed for other categories of students in the governor's new plan. For every 2,500 ADM, a district is eligible for a coordinator unit. For every 1,000 ADM, a district is eligible for a gifted intervention specialist unit. Districts are eligible for a minimum of one coordinator and one gifted intervention specialist.
- The current unit funding system is based on the Pre-2002 state minimum teacher salary schedule which maxes out state payment at \$39,659 per unit depending on years of experience and education. No state share is applied to the units.
- The state currently funds 1,110 units (285 coordinator units and 916 gifted intervention specialist units; 9 units are in transition and will be reallocated).
- Approximately 20% of the identified gifted population is served by these units. Approximately, 7% more of the identified gifted population is served through gifted units fully supported by local funds. 73% of Ohio's gifted students are reported as not served.
- There are currently 281,870 gifted students identified in Ohio or 15.85% of the Ohio student population.
- Community schools are not currently required to identify gifted students.
- If the current rule for funding were fully implemented, 2,641 units would be required (855 coordinator units and 1756 teacher units). If the operating standards for gifted intervention specialists were implemented, 855 coordinators and 2472 gifted intervention specialists would be required.

For more information, please contact Ann Sheldon, Executive Director of the Ohio Association for Gifted Children at anngift@aol.com or 614-475-4416(office) or 614-325-1185 (cell).