

July 10, 2009

Dear Ohio Gifted Coordinators,

The past several weeks have presented many challenges for the state and its government agencies, including the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). As the legislature works to complete the budget, we want to be certain that possibilities shared during these times do not represent State Board of Education priorities or definite courses of action being pursued by ODE.

We understand there have been concerns in the gifted community regarding a testimony presented by Superintendent Delisle before the House Finance and Appropriations Committee on July 2. Superintendent Delisle was asked to speculate on the impact of 32.5 percent, 40.5 percent and \$1 billion in reductions to the Department's budget. The legislature's request for this information was to illustrate scenarios for cuts to areas including special education, early childhood and career-tech education, as well as gifted services. This scenario was in addition to reductions ODE will have to make regardless of the results of the final budget. As you can imagine, the impact of such reductions would be devastating to Ohio's students and the services provided to them. The testimony clearly had to paint a dire picture as to the impact these cuts would have to students and education in Ohio.

We hope this letter clarifies that the intent of the testimony was to assist legislators in understanding the significant harm that such reductions could have on services to students and to programs offered to students and families. In no way did the testimony advocate for a reduction to gifted programming or assert the State Board of Education does not support gifted programs.

When faced with a goal of a specific dollar amount to reduce, it is important our elected officials understand the ramifications of their decisions and keep in mind how certain reductions to education have a domino effect. The testimony included the example of gifted education because of its vital importance and how this would force ODE to potentially fund only those programs and services required by law. Additionally, it was stated that it was painful to even present the notion to cut funding for gifted education. The testimony specifically said:

*"Current law requires that districts identify gifted students but does not require any programs or services to be offered to them. Currently, 14-16% of the student population is identified at a cost of \$4.8 million to the Department. This cost for identification may have to shift to districts. ODE allots \$42 million to cover the cost of services to gifted students which could be eliminated given further reductions. If such services are eliminated, the federal stabilization dollars are jeopardized as these count towards MOE. More importantly, we will lose a critical component of education- meeting the needs of our gifted students."*

As you may know, Superintendent Delisle has devoted significant work throughout her career to the advancement of gifted and enrichment programs. Additionally, the State Board of Education has made gifted education a priority. We hope this message dispels any fears among the gifted community about reductions to your work and programs for students.

The State Board of Education and ODE are committed to supporting gifted students and advancing the work for gifted and enrichment programs across Ohio. We deeply value the arduous work done on behalf of Ohio's gifted students. Thank you for the vital role each of you plays in the advancement of student success.

We recognize the many challenges the lack of a state budget presents. Despite these challenging times, we continue to remain optimistic the budget will be resolved quickly, allowing us to return to the important work of serving Ohio's students.

Sincerely,

Deborah Cain, President

State Board of Education

Deborah S. Delisle

Superintendent of Public Instruction