



RESOLUTION

15. RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE POLICY STATEMENT ON THE FUTURE OF GIFTED EDUCATION IN OHIO

WHEREAS the 2002 Ohio Gifted Task Force has developed a report entitled “Gifted in the 21st Century” that contains specific recommendations and action steps designed to make Ohio a leader in the education of students who are gifted; and

WHEREAS the Ohio Department of Education has developed, based on the work of the Task Force and consultation with the Resources Committee of the State Board of Education and stakeholders in gifted education, a Policy Statement on The Future of Gifted Education in Ohio that includes goals for gifted education in Ohio; and

WHEREAS that policy statement was reviewed by the Resources Committee of the State Board of Education at its meetings in March, April, and May of 2003 and was presented to the State Board of Education at its meeting of June 9, 2003: Therefore, Be It

RESOLVED, That the State Board of Education of Ohio hereby endorses and adopts this Policy Statement as a guide to the Ohio Department of Education’s efforts to improve the education of students who are gifted; and, Be It

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the State Superintendent of Public Instruction is hereby directed to develop an operational plan to implement the initiatives and changes needed to reach the goals stated in the Policy Statement; and, Be It

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the State Superintendent of Public Instruction provide periodic updates on the department’s operational plan and progress in reaching said goals.

I certify that the above is a true and correct copy of the action taken by the State Board of Education at its meeting on June 10, 2003.

Columbus, Ohio
June 12, 2003

Susan Tave Zelman
Superintendent of Public Instruction

**State Board of Education Policy Statement on
The Future of Gifted Education in Ohio
Adopted June 10, 2003**

“Ensuring that public education challenges and stimulates learning among all students is a fundamental responsibility of state policymakers, a responsibility that is made complex by the fact that students with widely varying skills and potential can be found in every school in the country.”

National Association of State Boards of Education, Educating Gifted and Talented Students

As Ohio works to raise expectations and make sure that all children are challenged to reach their potential, it is essential to ensure that our educational system truly challenges all students. This is especially true for Ohio students who are gifted. Unlike with other special subgroups of students, Ohio has not had an overall policy direction to guide our efforts to meet the needs of students who are gifted. We must make sure that the needs of gifted children are aligned with and integrated into the state’s education system. To assist with the development of such a policy, the Ohio Department of Education convened a task force on the future of gifted education during the summer of 2002.

Based on the work of the Gifted Task Force, the input of many stakeholders, and the recommendations of the Ohio Department of Education, the State Board of Education adopts the following gifted education goals to guide the department’s work over the next decade:

- Students who are gifted will have equitable access to needed services, regardless of where they live in Ohio.
- School districts will offer a continuum of educational services based on learner needs.
- Gifted programs, institutions of higher education, and local communities will work together to meet the needs of students who are gifted.
- Parents of children who are gifted will be true partners in their child’s education.
- Students will be accurately identified as gifted, including appropriate representation of students from ethnic and racial minority groups.
- Policies at the state and local level will align with the needs of students who are gifted.
- Policy makers and stakeholders will have clear knowledge of our progress towards effective and appropriate services for all students who are gifted.
- All levels in our education system will have highly qualified personnel who understand the needs of students who are gifted.
- Ohio will have an adequate and appropriate funding system to support gifted education.
- The Ohio Department of Education will have the internal capacity to provide statewide leadership on gifted issues.

When Ohio achieves these goals, we will have the **Support Systems** (including identification, aligned policies, and accountability), and **Resources** (including trained educators, funding, and state leadership) needed to ensure all gifted students will receive the **Services** they need.

Support Systems

Appropriate services require accurate identification of student needs. While significant improvements in Ohio's system for identifying gifted students have been made in the last few years, there is still work to be done. A central issue in identification is the disproportional representation of minority students. Students from minority groups are significantly underrepresented among students identified as gifted. For example, in 2001-2002, the percent of students identified as gifted statewide was 13%, while only 6% of black students were identified as gifted.

Education policies, but especially policies related to early admission requirements, acceleration, and grouping of like-ability students, must be re-examined and addressed taking into account the unique needs of students who are gifted. Educational policies at the state and local level are not always in alignment with the needs of students who are gifted. Where policy barriers to academic development exist, they must be removed.

Although Ohio's overall accountability system is robust, it does include perverse incentives that can negatively impact students who are gifted and unintentionally limit their ability to demonstrate sufficient academic growth. For example, potentially gifted students are sometimes not referred for identification because of a fear that the student might be placed in a different school for services, taking a high score to another building. To measure the impact of improved services, the accountability system must be carefully analyzed in the context of gifted education.

Resources

If the general education teacher has the knowledge, skills, and abilities to understand the needs of gifted students, most students who are gifted can receive much of their education in a regular classroom. It is imperative that all educators receive focused training and professional development activities to meet these students' specialized needs.

Even with a full continuum of services, most students who are gifted will need access to services outside the regular classroom, delivered by a trained specialist in gifted education. These intervention specialists and district coordinators make the system work "from within" and can provide direct services to the students with the greatest needs. Their training and availability are critical.

Data indicate that the current level of state gifted funding supports direct services for **only 20 percent** of Ohio's gifted school population. Educators will be trained to meet the needs of gifted students, policies will be aligned with their needs, and accountability systems will document needs. Additional resources may be needed to improve traditional services and add new services based on emerging technology and research.

Additional staff trained in gifted education must be employed by the department to:

- assist districts in planning equitable and appropriate services;
- provide technical assistance and professional development opportunities;
- address district accountability for quality outcomes; and
- ensure that all decisions about gifted education are based on the latest research.

In addition, the capacity of the Ohio Department of Education to improve education for students who are gifted must be addressed. If the unique needs of gifted students are to be considered across the entire department, then the general knowledge level in all areas of the department around gifted issues must increase.

Services

Currently, providing *services* to students who are gifted is not required. According to 2001-2002 data, only 37% of the 248,000 students identified as gifted receive services through state and local funds. However, if Ohio is to ensure that all students reach their potential, then all students who are gifted must receive appropriate services.

Providing equitable access to an appropriate continuum of needed services for all students who are gifted is critical to the future of Ohio. It is especially important due to the positive impact gifted students can bring to Ohio's economic, scholarly, and aesthetic future. The skills this particular group of students brings with them will positively impact Ohio for generations to come.

Research has shown that students who are gifted yet are not challenged in school lose their interest in learning. Ohio can ill afford to lose this valuable natural resource. Research indicates that gifted students who receive appropriate services benefit from 3 to 6 months of additional learning per year when compared to equally gifted peers who do not receive such services. This effect is cumulative; therefore, a student who receives appropriate gifted services throughout his or her career will realize a substantial increase in learning (3 to 6 years) and have ever-higher levels of talent to share.

Making appropriate services a reality for all students who are gifted will require significant work by the Ohio Department of Education, in collaboration with all school districts in Ohio. This commitment will require support from parents, higher education, and local communities. This effort, however, promises great dividends for both the students involved and Ohio as a whole.

Implementation Plan and Measuring Progress

Significant work will be required to turn these goals into reality. The Ohio State Board of Education hereby directs the Ohio Department of Education to develop an operational plan to implement the initiatives and changes needed to reach these goals. This plan will be developed in collaboration with professionals in gifted education and other important stakeholders. As additional resources, major changes in policy, and/or changes in Ohio law and administrative code are needed, the department will return to the board for direction and approval.

In addition to laying out the tasks to be completed, the plan will also describe the performance measures for ODE, districts, and students that will indicate progress towards these goals. This plan and the accompanying measures will form the basis for periodic updates to the board on the department's progress towards realizing these goals.