



OAGC Position Statement Regarding Amended Substitute House Bill 1 as Passed by the Ohio House

Approved May 27, 2009

AREAS OF SUPPORT

- 1) Gifted Funding Factor** -- The Ohio Association for Gifted Children (OAGC) is both pleased and gratified that the members of both parties in the Ohio House listened to our concerns about the grave consequences of using the funding method proposed in the introduced version of House Bill 1 (HB1). The original gifted funding proposal was based on faulty gifted funding methodology developed by school funding consultants, Allan Odden and Lawrence Picus. The overall method of funding for gifted education in the House passed version of HB1 is a significant improvement over the introduced bill. OAGC believes that the multi-part gifted education component, *if* fully funded and *if* accompanied by appropriate funding and service accountability measures, will result in a system that would provide adequate levels of funding and services to every Ohio gifted student regardless of where they live. This is the first time in the twenty-five years since the Ohio General Assembly mandated the identification of gifted students, that a legislative body has acknowledged the full cost of appropriately serving gifted students in Ohio. OAGC **supports** the gifted funding plan in the House version of HB1 over the gifted funding plan in the introduced version of HB1 and looks forward to working with state policy makers to ensure that this plan is implemented in a manner that best supports a fully-funded service mandate for Ohio's gifted students.
- 2) Funding Ties to Gifted Staff** – OAGC **supports** the HB1 provision requiring gifted funding be tied to licensed gifted staff in HB1. Few general educators have any training in the needs of gifted students. Despite current state and national standards, few of the colleges and universities in the state include this training in general pre-service teacher preparation. Without the presence of licensed gifted staff in districts, very little in the way of real service happens for gifted students.
- 3) Performance Indicator for Gifted Students** – OAGC **supports** a measure on the report card regarding district service to gifted students. Many districts rated as excellent do little to support the needs of high ability students. A gifted performance indicator is necessary information for the general public to consider as they evaluate true measures of excellence across the state. OAGC encourages the Ohio Senate to maintain this provision regardless of the funding mechanism ultimately implemented.
- 4) Directed Gifted Transitional Aid** – The maintenance of effort for gifted services provision included in HB1 requires districts to use the gifted units included in transitional aid for gifted staff. OAGC **supports** this revenue neutral provision and believes that it is necessary to protect gifted students from loss of service. Regardless of the funding system in place, OAGC encourages the Ohio Senate to keep this provision in HB1.
- 5) Gifted ESC Funding** – OAGC **supports** the continued funding of gifted staff in ESCs. Many districts are supported by state funded coordinator and gifted intervention specialists employed in Ohio's Educational Service Centers (ESCs). OAGC believes the continued funding of these units is critical to ensure the continued service of gifted children, particularly in smaller districts,

as the gifted funding system moves to organizational units or any other funding system. If ESCs are to be studied, OAGC requests that a member from the gifted community be included as part of the study group.

- 6) **Summer Honors Institutes** – OAGC **supports** the reinstatement of the Summer Honors Institute programs (including the Martin Essex Scholars program), which provide tremendous opportunities to gifted students in 9th and 10th grades – especially for rural students who do not always get to interact a regular basis with academic peers.
- 7) **Replacement of the OGT with the ACT or SAT** – OAGC **supports** the provision in HB1 to replace the OGT with the ACT or SAT. The OGT has long been viewed as a gatekeeper for high ability students, who are too often denied opportunities to appropriate curriculum until they pass the OGT. Additionally, we believe that nationally normed tests should be used to replace the current Ohio Achievement tests.
- 8) **Development of Course Mastery (End of Course) Exams and Interim Measures to Support Content Mastery** – OAGC **supports** the development of end of course exams. Ohio is behind in this area even though the Ohio Core legislation clearly directed the Ohio Department of Education to move forward with these exams that measure course mastery. We suggest that the term “end of course exams” be changed to “course mastery exams” in order to allow students to show content mastery at any time during the school year. As there appears to be no set time frame for the full development of these assessments, OAGC recommends a policy be developed to allow students to show content mastery using national assessments such as the ACT, SAT, SAT Subject examinations, Advanced Placement examinations and other appropriate assessments for grades K – 8. States such as Indiana and New Hampshire should be used as models for this course mastery policy.
- 9) **Gifted Community School** – OAGC **supports** the provision in HB1 which allows certain community schools focusing on the needs of gifted students to operate outside of their district.
- 10) **Visual and Performing Arts Provisions** -- In order to ensure all children are provided appropriate arts education opportunities in Ohio's schools, OAGC **supports** the provisions included in the House passed version of HB1 be retained:
 - a. Including the identification of promising programs, research, models, and best practices in arts education and creativity in the Center for Creativity and Innovation;
 - b. Including arts specialists as part of the Specialist Teachers factor in the Evidence-Based Model;
 - c. Including fine arts as part of the acceptable activities to be funded out of the Enrichment Support Component; and
 - d. Including the arts in the areas to be studied by the Ohio School Funding Research Advisory Council.

AREAS OF CORRECTION OR NOT SUPPORTED

- 1) **Enrichment Funds Correction** – OAGC believes that a technical amendment is required to ensure that gifted students are not inadvertently excluded from Advanced Placement (AP) and Post Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) courses supported by the enrichment funding factor. The current language prohibits the use of enrichment funds to support gifted services, but AP and PSEO are allowable services for gifted students under Revised Code. The language as currently written is

discriminatory and would exclude gifted students from these services. OAGC requests that the language needs to be rewritten to remove any reference to gifted students to avoid confusion.

- 2) **District Waivers for Gifted Funding** – OAGC **does not support** waivers to any districts for the gifted funding component beyond FY2010 and requests that the language be amended to clarify *all* districts will be responsible for spending the gifted funding component on gifted services by FY2011.
- 3) **Gifted Accountability Provisions** – Unfortunately, the necessary accountability provisions that are required for any gifted funding system are not fully delineated in the House version of HB1. OAGC **recommends** that gifted education should be identified as one of the Core Academic Strategies required of all districts. Otherwise, gifted services will remain largely hit-and-miss across the state, even in districts rated as effective and excellent.
- 4) **Waivers for Effective and Excellent Districts** -- OAGC is **highly opposed** to allowing waivers to districts rated as excellent or effective from the gifted funding provision. If districts are provided with funding to support gifted services, those funds should be used appropriately. Many districts rated as excellent or effective do little to support the needs of their high ability students.
- 5) **Coordination services** – OAGC **recommends** that Revised Code be amended to mirror gifted operating standards by requiring gifted coordinator services in a district before funding for gifted intervention specialists can flow to the district.
- 6) **Ohio School Funding Research Council** – Given the disastrous recommendations on gifted funding by Odden and Picus, neither of whom are well-versed in gifted education policy or funding, it is clear that any gifted funding study must include individuals who have both gifted education and funding expertise. While gifted education funding is to be one of the areas to be studied by the Ohio school funding research council, no gifted education or funding experts are currently included on the council. OAGC requests that this oversight be rectified and **recommends** that a member from the gifted community be placed on the Ohio school funding research council.
- 7) **Increasing the School Year by Twenty Days** – OAGC is **not in favor** of extending the school year by twenty days for all students. OAGC believes that Ohio is far behind in allowing students to move forward using content mastery as the criteria for course passage rather than arbitrary time requirements. Without a complete overhaul of our content standards to incorporate more rigor, the extended time is not appropriate for most students. While extended time is appropriate for some Ohio students, it will be a burden to most gifted students, many of whom could adequately complete course material in twenty *fewer* days. Without additional material for these students to cover, the extended time is wasteful. This recommendation is in direct conflict with the movement toward increasing the flexibility in Carnegie unit seat time requirements.
- 8) **ESC Funding** – OAGC believes that funding to ESCs should be reinstated to the pre-cut 2009 levels of \$52 million.
- 9) **Correction to Early Entrance Language** – The current early entrance language conflicts with the state model acceleration policy. OAGC requests that the early entrance language be modified to align the early entrance requirements with the model acceleration policy provisions.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE THE EDUCATION REFORM PROVISIONS IN HB 1

OAGC believes that any effort to reform education in Ohio should include the following provisions:

- 1) **Accountability System Overhaul** – It is clear that the focus of Ohio’s accountability system on minimum levels of proficiency has created perverse disincentives for districts to support the needs of all children safely above the proficiency line, particularly high ability students. Until the accountability system is overhauled to reflect true excellence, we do a disservice to students,

the public at large and the districts that truly are offering excellence across a spectrum of needs. Specific areas of concern include the following:

- a. **Many districts with excellent ratings have appallingly little to offer students** by way of Advanced Placement courses, gifted services, and acceleration opportunities. Some of these excellent rated districts are pushed to this rating by a bizarre use of value added measures whereby some districts that have negative value added growth for two of five grade levels are still bumped up from a lower ranking due to an inflated value added growth ranking.
 - b. **Excellent rankings in Ohio do not reflect any true measure of excellence.** The rating simply means that many districts are excellent in moving the majority of their students over a minimum proficiency line. The accountability system should be redesigned to reward districts that are truly offering excellent opportunities for all students of various needs. Districts that are merely good at producing large numbers of students who achieve at levels of minimum proficiency should be ranked no higher than proficient.
 - c. **Districts should be rewarded for promoting acceleration opportunities in the accountability system.** This recommendation is necessary to ensure that the model state acceleration policy is put into practice across the state. Small districts in particular are loath to accelerate students in many cases for fear of hurting their performance ratings.
- 2) **Assessment on Demand** – Students should be allowed to take required state assessments when they are ready to show mastery. The rigid adherence to age/grade level assessments unnecessarily impedes the continuous progress of many Ohio students.
 - 3) **Lack of Technological Innovation** – Ohio recently received a ranking of D+ in the use of technology from the most recent Education Week’s technology ranking, largely due to the lack of a statewide platform for K – 12 virtual opportunities. The only viable options for Ohio students are local area opportunities or community e-schools that don’t allow for a blended virtual/brick and mortar experience. Under Ohio’ rigid system, students are often denied access to the coursework that they need. The movement to bring virtual Advanced Placement courses to each district is a welcome advance. However, OAGC believes Ohio should develop a virtual, web-based school that would allow all K – 12 students appropriate access to the coursework when they need it. The Florida virtual school movement could serve as a possible model for Ohio.
 - 4) **Movement Toward Individualized Learning Plans for All Students** – Any new school reform system should strive for the flexibility to allow students to progress in a manner best suited to their strengths and weaknesses. A complete systematic overhaul should allow for better use of practices to facilitate this flexibility beginning with the use of individualized learning plans for all students.
 - 5) **Making the Best Use of Collaboration** – OAGC believes that part of the overall education reform should include incentives to make better use of resources at the regional and state levels to bring opportunities to students even in small rural areas.
 - 6) **Support for Electives Including the Courses in the Visual and Performing Arts** -- Funding consultants, Odden and Picus, have indicated that to lower school costs, districts could cancel elective courses including courses in the visual and performing arts and Advanced Placement courses. OAGC is opposed to the elimination of electives that provide the depth and breadth of educational opportunities to many students in Ohio.

