

**BEFORE THE HILLIARD CITY SCHOOLS  
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

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In Re:            *Budgetary Considerations Relative to Gifted Education Services  
Curriculum Effective Academic Year 2011-2012*

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**Position of Support for the  
Non-Discretionary Provision and  
Funding of Gifted Services  
within the Public Education System**

Submitted by:

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## **Position Statement**

### **Introduction**

Budgetary considerations have been increasingly problematic throughout the last several years. Ohioans are now faced with a looming financial crisis that has forced citizens, legislators and businesses alike to tighten belts and reallocate many resources. Public funds are particularly significant because of the wide array of programs, special interests and programs that rely on public funding for their success.

In the course of the many decisions and efforts to solve the budget dilemma, public education - as a constitutionally protected right in Ohio - has likewise been challenged. Unlike many other special interests, however, public education has little opportunity for direct funding or other private development opportunities. As such, the responsibility of the State for ensuring that the children of Ohio are afforded a public education has been placed squarely upon the shoulders of local school districts.

***...[T]he local [school districts] should believe  
in what it takes to have all their students  
succeed to the best of their abilities.***

*Robert Sommers, Ph.D., Director, Governor's Office of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Education (Ohio)  
[Excerpt from Televised Interview, April 8, 2011]*

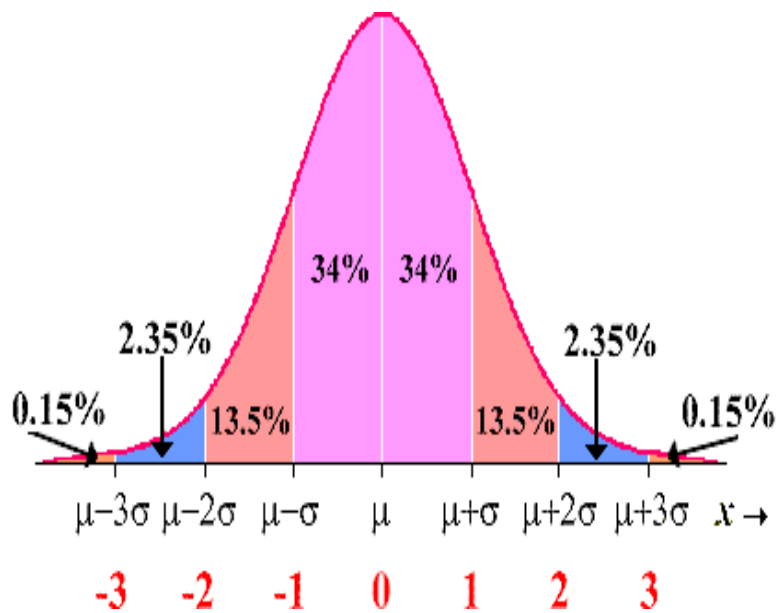
It has long been recognized that certain programs and services are indispensable as a part of the public education system. Such programs and services include special education programs and reasonable accommodations for children with disabilities. To date, Ohio has failed require protection and services for our children who are identified as 'gifted' pursuant to Chapter 3324 of the Ohio Revised Code. As a result, the services and programs that are absolutely and critically necessary to ensure that this subset of children receives an adequate public education are being cut, altered or generally eliminated across the board.

Without these necessary services, the children with the highest potential for academic success within our community cannot thrive, cannot reach their own potential and are arguably denied even the opportunity for a basic education that Ohioans hold so dear. As such, it is now incumbent upon this Board of Education - as tasked with ensuring that the standards education are maintained - to provide the support necessary to ensure that gifted services remain available to the children in our public education system.

### **Background**

Educational experts and scholars confirm that 'academic potential' is assessed on a generic standard deviation curve identical to those used in virtually all statistical evaluations. On the curve, the center ("mean") divides 50 % of the population to one side and 50% of the population to the other. Each curve carries 'standard deviation' categories from the mean.

With about 70% of kids falling into the 'norm' with another 20 to 25% or so in the 'one deviation removed' category, we are left with 5 or 10% of our kids on the fringes in terms of their potential for academic success. As it happens, the experts and scholars will also confirm that these children are on the fringe specifically because of their processing abilities and the general function of their minds. On the left side of the bell, the children are identified in accordance with special education requirements and **must** be served accordingly. On the right side of the bell, the children are identified as 'gifted' and **may** be served accordingly.



The experts and the scholars will provide to you the results of decades of research and conclusive evidence that the children whose academic potential and whose general processing skills place them on the very edges of the curve but the greatest missing element from these discussions is the reality that these individuals; these statistical markers - are CHILDREN.

No set of statistics or illustrations can convey to you what life is like for these children or what life is like for the parents of these children. As it happens, the parents are often the best resource and have the most relevant and reliable anecdotal proof of what the experts and scholars espouse:

***Gifted Children Must Receive  
Specialized Educational Services  
In Order to Succeed.***

Any parent will confirm that a child generally starts to understand where they 'fit' socially from about the age of three. At this point, the children on the edges begin to know that they DO NOT fit in. They know that the other kids laugh at jokes that they don't get and the other kids respond to each other and to the world in a way they don't understand.

They hurt.

Society has developed an understanding that not all children operate on the same wavelength and that some children just do not process the world around them the same way as the majority of the rest of the world. We now know that children on the bottom end of that bell curve are not going to process the information, instructions and lessons in the same way as the kids in the middle and so we devote ourselves and our resources to helping them learn in a way that works FOR THEM.

***It is not different on the other end of the curve.***

## *My Experiences as a Mom*

When my elder daughter was three, she started hiding under her bed because the world was too chaotic for her. She would withdraw and shut down whenever kids played wildly or excitedly. She could not watch the NatGeo movies that were shown in school because - even though the camera stopped rolling just before (i.e.,) the lion caught the baby gazelle - she knew what 'came next' but she was too young to understand why and it was frightening.

Social skills were a challenge because she could not understand the concept of 'hurting someone's feelings' because that didn't make sense.

In a black and white world, any assignment that required imagination was nearly impossible. She was even reprimanded at one point for 'not trying' when a teacher asked her to explain what she imagined a certain uniform might look like and she 'would not' do it. She kept repeating, "I don't know." I had to explain later to the teacher that she really didn't know and the fact that she didn't KNOW meant that she couldn't answer the question - because 'guessing' didn't make sense.

When my daughter began to receive gifted services, the world changed. In this small group of kids - whose class was only able to meet for a short time once a week - she found solidarity and understanding. There were other kids who knew 'what happened next' when the lion chased the baby gazelle. She was able to talk and think and consider information with other children and with a teacher who understood her approach.

### *She was taught how to 'do school.'*

The most glaring misconception and the greatest hurdle to effectively serving my daughter and the children like her is the notion that the 'gifted kids' will be just fine and they do not need help. There is a notion that gifted services is just an opportunity to give 'extra information' to the kids who are smart enough to handle it.

The key is in letting people know that 'extra information' is not what gifted services are about. Gifted services are designed to teach these kids how to 'do school.'

My younger daughter is the exact opposite of her sister. The expectation is of unkempt hair, dirty fingernails and the same mismatched clothes on any given day. She cannot understand the purpose of most of the rules set out in front of her and so she just does not follow them. She listens to instructions and reprimands - especially from adults - and they do not make sense to her so she does not follow them. And so she fails at 'doing school.'

In failure and in isolation - she hurts. And because I am the mom - I hurt.

I have tried to help her with school work but her 'approach' to the lessons is completely different from the conventional lesson plans. At one point, she could not understand the WAY her teacher was explaining long addition. We tried to work through it but her teacher's method for the long math just didn't resonate and she just did not get it.

The next day, my 7 year old came home with a math test comprised of ten questions - each with a big red “X” on it and a “zero” at the top of the page. My daughter told me in tears that she was sorry for being ‘stupid’; that she still didn’t understand what she had done wrong on the test or even how to take it. As it happens, *every answer on her test was correct*. I asked the teacher directly about this and was told that my daughter was given no credit because she failed to *follow the instructions* that said to show her work.

I know of no better illustration or anecdotal evidence of the need for proper services for gifted children. In this situation, the traditional classroom teacher at that time saw *the process* of the math as far more important than the *result*. (which ultimately carried no weight at all). Since my little one could not understand the PROCESS, she was labeled a failure.

***‘Failure’ was a word that she could and did process.***

Again, gifted services are about helping the child FIND the process that works for them - even if it is not the same process that may work for every other kid in the class. And it is about telling them that they are NOT failures.

We’ve recognized as a society that a child who is failing to thrive in the classroom because of processing challenges AND whose ‘potential for academic success’ as measured on this bell curve is low - will need special help in order to receive a basic education.

We must next ask: “*What about the child who is failing to thrive in the classroom because of processing challenges and whose ‘potential for academic success’ is high? What about them?*”

**Conclusion**

Public sentiment is consistent focused on ‘brain drain’ and the importance of the Third Frontier. At that same time, I am wondering where we will be in 20 or 30 years if we disregard the children who can be our future leaders, scientists and engineers. We cannot complain that we have no roses in our garden if we treat every flower like a daisy and just ‘expect’ the roses to grow anyway. As a citizen of this community, I am just as concerned about the future we are creating for our children.

As a mom though, I cannot help my children succeed if the education system itself is stacked against them. Children such as my daughters cannot function in public schools without gifted services. Like the rose in the daisy garden, they will shrivel.

I now ask this Honorable Board to confirm publicly that it is NOT ok to leave these children behind and to blame them for the way they were born. I respectfully ask that you - as the leaders that you were chosen to be, proclaim “no - I will not abandon these children.”

Respectfully,

Kim Doucher