



## **Gifted Education in Ohio: An Overview**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In the realm of education, much attention is paid to making sure that all students reach a minimum level of achievement. Raising the performance of those who struggle academically is a worthy and necessary goal. But in order to provide all students with an excellent education, attention must also be paid to the students on the other end of the spectrum—those who have a history of high achievement and performance.

Gifted education is largely a matter of state policy, and Ohio’s policies regarding the education of gifted students are both broad and complex. This paper will explore the current landscape of gifted education in Ohio.

## **THE BASICS**

### ***Who is considered gifted?***

According to the Ohio Revised Code, gifted students are those who perform—or show the potential to perform—at a higher level than other students of similar age, experience, or environment.<sup>1</sup>

### ***The identification process***

To identify students, districts utilize screening assessments that measure student ability in each of the four identification areas. The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) maintains a list of approved assessments, and districts are free to select any of the approved instruments to include as part of their district policies.<sup>2</sup> ODE’s list of approved assessments contains both initial screening tests and instruments designed to diagnose each of the identification areas outlined in state law. By law, the department is required to include assessments that appropriately identify minority students, economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and English language learners.<sup>3</sup>

In general, there are two methods by which a student can be screened for gifted categorization:<sup>4</sup>

- 1. Referrals:** A student can be referred for a gifted identification evaluation by a wide variety of people. This list includes parents, teachers, school personnel, community members, peers, or students themselves. After a district receives a referral, it must test the student within ninety days. Districts must also offer at least two evaluation opportunities per year for students who are referred.
- 2. Whole grade screenings:** In addition to accepting referrals, districts are responsible for administering two whole-grade screenings for specific identification areas using assessments from the department-approved list. These screenings must be administered once during the span between kindergarten and second grade, and once during the span between third and sixth grade.

In Ohio, gifted identification is permanent. Regardless of future academic performance, students cannot lose their gifted status once they have been identified. Identification is also considered to be statewide, so students who move to a new Ohio public school district must also be considered gifted by their new district.<sup>5</sup>

### ***Identification areas***

Ohio law outlines four types of gifted identification.<sup>6</sup>

- 1. Superior cognitive ability:** Students are identified as possessing superior cognitive ability if they have achieved either of the following within the previous two years:
  - Score two standard deviations above the mean, minus the standard error of measurement, on an approved individual standardized intelligence test. This test must be administered by a licensed school psychologist or licensed psychologist.
  - Accomplish any of the following:
    - Score at least two standard deviations, minus the standard error of measurement, on an approved standardized group intelligence test.
    - Performed at or above the 95th percentile on an approved individual or group standardized basic or composite battery of a nationally normed achievement test;
    - Attained an approved score on one or more tests that are above-grade-level, standardized, nationally-normed, and approved.
- 2. Specific academic ability:** These students are identified based on their superior grasp of a certain academic subject compared to children of similar age. Within the previous two years, they must perform at or above the 95th percentile at the national level on an approved individual or group standardized achievement test in the specific subject area. Students can be identified in more than one subject area.
- 3. Creative thinking ability:** These students are identified because they exhibit creative thinking that is superior to that of similarly-aged children. Within the previous two years, these students must score one standard deviation above the mean, minus the standard error of measurement, on an approved individual or group intelligence test and also do one of the following:
  - Attain an ODE-established score on an approved individual or group test of creative ability.
  - Demonstrate adequate performance on an approved checklist of creative behaviors, as determined by ODE.
- 4. Visual or performing arts ability:** Students are identified as possessing superior visual or performing abilities if they have achieved both of the following:
  - Established superior ability in a visual or performing arts area through a display of work, an audition, or other performance or exhibition.
  - Demonstrate adequate performance on an approved checklist of behaviors, as determined by ODE.

### ***The role and responsibilities of the district***

School districts are legally responsible for identifying gifted students who are enrolled in their district in grades kindergarten through twelve.<sup>7</sup> By law, the school board of each district must adopt both a policy statement and an identification plan that outlines how the district will go about identifying gifted students.<sup>8</sup>

Policy statements are designed to inform parents of a district's gifted identification and service procedures. The district is required to provide a copy of the policy statement to all parents. It must include:<sup>9</sup>

- The district's criteria and methods for screening students
- The assessment sources that the district uses to determine whether students need additional testing
- An explanation of the assessments that are required by state law
- An explanation of how the district will provide equal access to screening for all students, including minority students, economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and English language learners
- Provisions which ensure that all identified students in the district receive services from the district
- Provisions explaining how students may withdraw from programs and services, how students may be reassessed, and how students transferring into the district will be assessed
- A detailed list of services that students may receive based on their identification type
- A list of all gifted services currently available in the district and the criteria for receiving those services
- The process by which the district and parents will settle disagreements regarding identification and placement decisions

While district policies are an informational source for parents, district plans are more like an implementation strategy. After these plans are approved by the local board of education, they must be submitted to and approved by the Ohio Department of Education. In order to be approved (a process that takes no more than sixty days) plans must include the following aspects:<sup>10</sup>

- A description of which state-approved assessments the district intends to use to screen and identify students
- At least two whole-grade screening opportunities:
  - One prior to the end of second grade for the superior cognitive ability identification; the specific academic ability identification in math, reading, writing, or a combination of skills; and the creative thinking identification
  - One after the completion of second grade but prior to the end of sixth grade for the superior cognitive ability identification; the specific academic ability identification in math, reading, writing, or a combination of skills; and the creative thinking identification
- Scheduling procedures regarding the administration of identification assessments
- The protocol for notifying parents of student results on any assessment within thirty days

- An explanation of how parents may appeal any decision related to assessment results, assessment scheduling, student placement, or the receipt of services

If a plan does not meet state approval, the district must work alongside ODE to revise the plan. Districts must also resubmit plans to ODE if any changes are made.

Districts are required to accept assessment results from other districts and from qualified individuals that work outside the district. They are also permitted to contract with public or private service providers to provide screening or assessment services.

## **STUDENT EXPERIENCE**

Although districts are required by law to identify gifted students, they are not required to provide services to students who are identified. If a district decides not to provide services to an identified student, it is responsible for distributing a “no services” letter to parents and guardians, which states that the student does not receive services from the district.<sup>11</sup>

For districts that do choose to offer gifted services, there are several policies and procedures that must be followed.

### ***Services provided***

According to Ohio Administrative Code (OAC),<sup>12</sup> gifted services must include instruction that is distinct from the district’s chosen curriculum in depth, breadth, complexity, pace, and content level. Despite curriculum differences, however, services must be equivalent to what districts offer in terms of instructional time, class size, and caseload ratios for analogous subjects and grade levels. Services must also occur during the instructional day, though flexibility is provided for opportunities such as internships, mentorships, and higher education coursework.

Students must be provided with services that match their area of identification and are differentiated to meet their needs.<sup>13</sup> Each district is responsible for providing a continuum of services to gifted students. *All* students who meet the written criteria for a gifted service are required to be provided with an equal opportunity to receive the service. Subjective criteria, such as grades and teacher recommendations, are not permitted to be used as the basis for excluding students from services. Services may include, but are not limited to:<sup>14</sup>

- A full-time, self-contained classroom made up of a maximum of twenty identified students and led by a gifted intervention specialist
- A single-subject, self-contained course made up of identified students and led by a gifted intervention specialist
- Co-teaching services, where one teacher is a gifted intervention specialist and no more than twenty identified students are clustered together in a group setting. Each student utilizing this service must be provided with instruction for no less than one core class period a day or an average of 15 percent of the school week

- A pull-out classroom staffed by a gifted intervention specialist and serving a maximum of twenty identified students. Each student utilizing this service must be provided with instruction for no less than one core class period a day or an average of 15 percent of the school week
- Cluster grouping, with a small group of identified students deliberately placed together for no less than one core class period a day or an average of 15 percent of the school week
- An honors course
- An International Baccalaureate course
- An Advanced Placement course
- Services provided by a trained arts instructor
- Early entrance to kindergarten or first grade, grade acceleration, subject acceleration, or early graduation
- Dual-enrollment opportunities, including College Credit Plus
- Internships or mentorships
- Credit flexibility, advanced online courses and programs, or other options

### ***Written Education Plans***

The gifted services offered to students are determined and guided by a Written Education Plan, or WEP. WEPs are developed in collaboration with a teacher who holds a license or licensure endorsement in gifted education. When crafting a WEP, districts have two options: They may utilize an ODE-designed template,<sup>15</sup> or they may design their own that better fits with the district's needs and priorities. Regardless of which option districts choose to use, every WEP must meet the standards outlined in the OAC. To ensure compliance, ODE offers a minimum requirements checklist for districts to use.<sup>16</sup>

WEPs outline which services a student will be provided with, and must include the following:<sup>17</sup>

- A description of the services that will be provided
- Goals for each service that will be offered, including measurable academic goals; these goals may also include practices that support a student's social and emotional needs
- Methods and measurements for evaluating progress toward goals
- Methods and a schedule for reporting progress to students and parents
- Which staff members will be responsible for ensuring that services are provided
- Policies regarding how to handle assignments and tests missed due to gifted services participation that occurs outside the general education classroom
- The date by which the WEP will be annually reviewed

Parents, the collaborating teacher, and all teachers responsible for providing gifted services must be provided with a copy of the WEP. In addition, districts are responsible for periodically reporting to parents and guardians the student's progress toward meeting the goals outlined in the plan and the effectiveness of the services that are administered to the child.

### ***School choice***

In addition to the gifted services offered by school districts, Ohio parents also have the option to send their students to schools that are designed specifically for gifted students. These school choice options include both charter schools and private schools.

## **TEACHERS AND STAFF**

### ***Licensure***

Ohio offers a variety of teacher licenses.<sup>18</sup> One of these licenses is the intervention specialist license, which permits educators to teach a particular group of students. This includes the gifted intervention specialist license, which is valid for teaching identified gifted students in grades K–12.<sup>19</sup> Ohio also offers teacher license endorsements. Like an intervention specialist license, an endorsement permits educators to teach a particular group of students. Ohio currently offers a gifted intervention specialist endorsement, which can be used to teach gifted students in grades K–12 and can be added to a standard teaching license.<sup>20</sup> The requirements for each of these options are set by the Ohio Department of Higher Education.<sup>21</sup>

### ***Roles***

The OAC outlines three types of gifted-services personnel who are tasked with providing services to identified students.<sup>22</sup>

#### **Gifted intervention specialist**

In order to be considered a gifted intervention specialist, an educator must hold a license or endorsement in gifted education from the state of Ohio and participate in ongoing gifted education professional development.

#### **General education teacher**

It's possible for a general education teacher to be designated as the provider of gifted services. In order to receive this designation, teachers must receive specialized training in gifted education that enables them to master the following competencies:

- The ability to differentiate instruction based on student readiness, knowledge, and skill level
- The ability to select, adapt, and create a variety of differentiated curricula that incorporate complex and advanced content
- The ability to extend, replace, or modify general education curricula and select alternative assignments and projects
- The ability to understand the social and emotional needs of gifted students
- The ability to recognize and respond to the needs of gifted students who are from traditionally underrepresented populations
- The ability to use data from a variety of sources to measure and monitor student growth

- The ability to select, use, and interpret formal and informal assessments
- The ability to participate in the development of a student’s WEP

General education teachers who are tasked with providing gifted services must also participate in ongoing professional development. This development includes training in the aforementioned competencies, with the number of documented clock hours set by the OAC: Teachers who do not have certified Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) training must clock sixty hours of gifted education professional development over the course of four years, while AP and IB teachers must clock thirty hours over four years.<sup>23</sup> General education teachers are also required to receive ongoing support in curriculum development and instruction from an educator who holds a license or endorsement in gifted education.

#### Coordinator of gifted education services

Coordinators differ from gifted intervention specialists and general education teachers who provide gifted services because they offer additional services to districts. These services include:

- Assisting in the student identification process
- Assisting in the placement of identified students into appropriate services and settings
- Assisting school personnel in the design of gifted services
- Consulting with school personnel regarding gifted education issues, including the district’s strategic planning process and the development of school improvement plans
- Assisting school personnel in the ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of gifted services
- Consulting with school personnel about developing and adapting curricula, materials, and teaching strategies
- Assisting school personnel in ensuring that documents regarding identification procedures and written criteria for placement in services are accurate and accessible to parents and other stakeholders

In order to become a coordinator, the following conditions must be met:

- Demonstrate at least three years of successful teaching experience
- Hold a license or endorsement in gifted education
- If the coordinator will be supervising teachers, they must also hold an administrative specialist license
- Participate in ongoing gifted education professional development

By law, educators in each of these positions must be provided with “appropriate space and sufficient time” to complete their work.<sup>24</sup> They must also be evaluated by the state’s teacher evaluation system.

#### ***Professional development***

Each of the gifted services personnel outlined above are tasked with receiving specialized training and participating in ongoing professional development related to gifted education. ODE provides all districts



with resources and guidelines for how to fulfill these requirements.<sup>25</sup> According to the OAC, training and development must be documented in an Individual Professional Development Plan.<sup>26</sup> Districts may also use locally developed forms for documentation, provided they meet certain criteria. These forms are not required to be submitted to ODE unless requested by the department.<sup>27</sup>

## **DATA REPORTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

### ***Data reporting and audits***

Each year, school districts are required to submit a report to ODE that outlines the number of students in each grade who were screened, the number of students who were assessed, and the number of students who were identified as gifted in each area.<sup>28</sup> Districts must also report the number of students who receive gifted services. ODE is required by law to audit each district's identification numbers at least once every three years, and is permitted to audit any district at random or in response to a complaint or suspicion of noncompliance.

Districts are also required to participate in audits based on risk assessment criteria.<sup>29</sup> These audits may include onsite reviews, desk reviews, and self-reviews of gifted education data, policies, practices, and procedures. Districts are able to validate the data used in an audit and to respond to audit findings, but audit results may require a district to be placed under corrective action or to implement a district improvement plan. If a district continues to be noncompliant, ODE is authorized to reduce the districts' funds by any amount.

### ***State report cards***

The gifted indicator on the state report card was first reported in 2012–13 and again in 2013–14. Beginning in the 2014–15 school year, however, the indicator became part of a graded portion of the report card—a portion of the Indicators Met part of the Achievement component.<sup>30</sup> Within this indicator, there are three components: 1) Performance, as measured by state assessment data via the Gifted Performance Index; 2) Progress, as measured by value-added data disaggregated for gifted students; and 3) Input points that measure a district's and school's gifted identification and service.<sup>31</sup>

Overall, the gifted indicator is graded as either "Met" or "Not Met" and requires a district or school to obtain a minimum threshold for each of the three components.<sup>32</sup> For the 2017–18 school year, the qualifying thresholds are as follows:

- For the Gifted Performance Index score, an index of 117.0
- For Gifted Value-Added, a letter grade of C
- For Gifted Inputs, 80 points (point totals can range from 0–100)

On a published report card, the gifted indicator looks like this:

## Gifted Students



The Gifted Students data and Indicator highlight the opportunities for and performance of gifted students. The dashboard answers several questions: How many students are identified as gifted and in what categories? How many of those students are receiving gifted services? How well are those gifted students performing? The Gifted Indicator measures whether opportunity and performance expectations are being met for gifted students.

INDICATOR

# Not Met

ALL ACHIEVEMENT

### Gifted Indicator

Overview
  Performance Index
  Gifted Inputs

The Gifted Indicator is derived from three components: Gifted Value Added, the Performance Index for gifted students, and a Gifted Inputs score.

#### Gifted Value Added

**Value Added Grade:** A  
**Enrollment:** 4,433  
**Value Added Met?** Met

Districts must earn a Gifted Value Added grade of C or better to meet the Gifted Value Added component. A grade of NR results in Not Met if the district has an Enrollment of 600 or more.

#### Gifted Performance Index

**Performance Index:** 116.158  
**Performance Index Met?** Not Met

Districts with at least 10 unique students in the Gifted Performance Index calculation must score 117.0 or better to meet the Gifted Performance Index component.

#### Gifted Inputs

**Total Points:** 61.0  
**Gifted Inputs Met?** Not Met

Points are earned based on identification and services provided to gifted students. Districts must earn at least 80 points out of a possible 100 to meet the Gifted Inputs component.

#### Gifted Indicator Final Result

INDICATOR

# Not Met

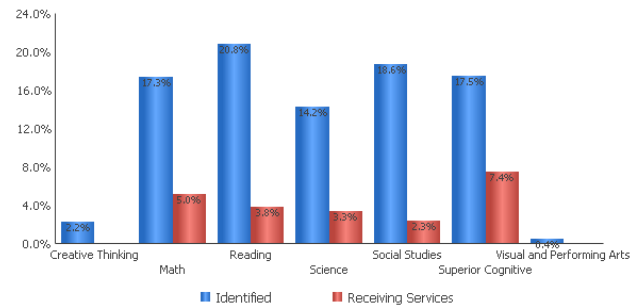
The Gifted Indicator is Met if none of the three components are Not Met. Gifted Inputs alone cannot determine the Gifted Indicator, however; if both the Value Added and Performance Index components are NC, then the Gifted Indicator is also NC.

### Additional Information on Identification and Services

Identification and Services
  Screening and Acceleration

All Grades

This chart shows the percentage of all enrolled students that are identified as gifted and that are receiving gifted services.



Note: Students may be identified in more than one category

## FUNDING

Funds for gifted identification are calculated based on a funding formula set in state law.<sup>33</sup> As of publication, the gifted identification formula is \$5.05 multiplied by the district's formula average daily membership (ADM), which is a method for calculating student enrollment.

Districts also receive gifted unit funding, which is calculated by ODE based on units for services to students who are identified as gifted. To calculate this funding allocation, ODE uses the gifted unit ADM—which is a school district's formula ADM minus the number of students reported by a district to be attending a community school or a science, technology, engineering, or mathematics school.<sup>34</sup> Districts are allocated gifted units in the following ways:<sup>35</sup>

- One gifted coordinator unit is allocated for every 3,300 students in a district's gifted unit ADM with a minimum of 0.5 units and a maximum of 8 units allocated for each district
- One gifted intervention specialist unit is allocated for every 1,100 students in a district's gifted unit ADM, with a minimum of 0.3 units allocated for the district.

Gifted coordinators must have gifted licensure, and must also have an administrative license if they are assigned to supervise other staff members. Gifted intervention specialists must also have gifted licensure.

Once the number of units has been established, ODE pays the school district \$37,370 multiplied by the number of units allocated.<sup>36</sup> Districts are free to use the gifted unit funding however they see fit, including but not limited to making arrangements for gifted services with other districts, charters, STEM schools, or educational services centers.

Districts are required to report the amount of funds they spend on gifted education each year, but they are not obliged to provide students with gifted services.<sup>37</sup> ODE must also publish on its website every school district's expenditures for gifted education no later than October 30th of each year.<sup>38</sup>

## END NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Ohio Revised Code § 3324.01

<sup>2</sup> Ohio Department of Education, Chart of Approved Assessment and Gifted Education, accessed October 24, 2017, <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Other-Resources/Gifted-Education/Gifted-Screening-and-Identification/Chart-of-Approved-Assessment-and-Gifted-Education>.

<sup>3</sup> Ohio Revised Code § 3324.02

<sup>4</sup> Ohio Department of Education, Gifted Screening and Identification, accessed October 24, 2017, <https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Other-Resources/Gifted-Education/Gifted-Screening-and-Identification>.

<sup>5</sup> Ohio Department of Education, Gifted Education in Ohio: Facts for Parents, accessed October 24, 2017, [http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Other-Resources/Gifted-Education-\(1\)/Resources-for-Parents/Gifted-Education-Fact-Sheet/Parent-Factsheet.pdf.aspx](http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Other-Resources/Gifted-Education-(1)/Resources-for-Parents/Gifted-Education-Fact-Sheet/Parent-Factsheet.pdf.aspx).

<sup>6</sup> Ohio Department of Education, Ohio Revised Code Chapter 3324: Gifted Students, accessed October 24, 2017, <http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Other-Resources/Gifted-Education/Rules-Regulations-and-Policies-for-Gifted-Educatio/Ohio-Revised-Code-3324.pdf.aspx>.

<sup>7</sup> Ohio Administrative Code § 3301-51-15

<sup>8</sup> Ohio Revised Code § 3324.04

<sup>9</sup> Ohio Department of Education, Operating Standards for Identifying and Serving Students Who are Gifted, accessed October 24, 2017, <http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Other-Resources/Gifted-Education/Rules-Regulations-and-Policies-for-Gifted-Educatio/Gifted-Operating-Standards-OAC-3301-51-15.pdf.aspx>.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ohio Administrative Code § 3301-51-15

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ohio Department of Education, Model Written Education Plan, accessed October 24, 2017, <https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Other-Resources/Gifted-Education/Teaching-Gifted-Students-in-Ohio/Written-Education-Plans-WEPS-for-Gifted-Students/Model-Written-Education-Plan.pdf.aspx>.

<sup>16</sup> Ohio Department of Education, Written Education Plan to Serve Gifted Students in Ohio, accessed October 24, 2017, <https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Other-Resources/Gifted-Education/Teaching-Gifted-Students-in-Ohio/Written-Education-Plans-WEPS-for-Gifted-Students/Checklist-to-Evaluate-Local-WEP-2014.pdf.aspx>.

<sup>17</sup> Ohio Administrative Code § 3301-51-15

<sup>18</sup> Ohio Administrative Code § 3301-24-05

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ohio Department of Higher Education, Ohio Educator Licensure Programs: Standards and Requirements Chart, accessed October 24, 2017, [https://www.ohiohighered.org/content/ohio\\_educator\\_licensure\\_programs\\_standards\\_requirements\\_chart#endorsements](https://www.ohiohighered.org/content/ohio_educator_licensure_programs_standards_requirements_chart#endorsements).

<sup>22</sup> Ohio Administrative Code § 3301-51-15

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ohio Department of Education, Gifted Education Professional Development Resource Guide, accessed October 24, 2017, <https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Other-Resources/Gifted-Education/Teaching-Gifted-Students-in-Ohio/High-Quality-Professional-Development-HQPD-in-Gi/Gifted-Education-Professional-Development-Resource-Guide.pdf.aspx>.

<sup>26</sup> Ohio Administrative Code § 3301-51-15

<sup>27</sup> Ohio Department of Education, Gifted Education Professional Development Resource Guide, accessed October 24, 2017, <https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Other-Resources/Gifted-Education/Teaching-Gifted->

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[Students-in-Ohio/High-Quality-Professional-Development-HQPD-in-Gi/Gifted-Education-Professional-Development-Resource-Guide.pdf.aspx](http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Data/Report-Card-Resources/Achievement-Measure/Gifted-Students/Gifted_Indicator_tech.pdf.aspx).

<sup>28</sup> Ohio Revised Code § 3324.05

<sup>29</sup> Ohio Administrative Code § 3301-51-15

<sup>30</sup> Ohio Department of Education, Gifted Indicator—Description and General Business Rules, accessed October 24, 2017, [http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Data/Report-Card-Resources/Achievement-Measure/Gifted-Students/Gifted\\_Indicator\\_tech.pdf.aspx](http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Data/Report-Card-Resources/Achievement-Measure/Gifted-Students/Gifted_Indicator_tech.pdf.aspx).

<sup>31</sup> Ohio Department of Education, Gifted Students, accessed October 24, 2017,

<https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Data/Report-Card-Resources/Achievement-Component/Gifted-Students>.

<sup>32</sup> Ohio Department of Education, Gifted Indicator—Description and General Business Rules, accessed August 20, 2018, [http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Data/Report-Card-Resources/Achievement-Measure/Gifted-Students/Gifted\\_Indicator\\_tech.pdf.aspx](http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Data/Report-Card-Resources/Achievement-Measure/Gifted-Students/Gifted_Indicator_tech.pdf.aspx).

<sup>33</sup> Ohio Revised Code § 3317.022

<sup>34</sup> Ohio Revised Code § 3317.051

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ohio Revised Code § 3317.051

<sup>37</sup> Ohio Administrative Code § 3301-51-15

<sup>38</sup> Ohio Revised Code § 3324.09