Ohio's Plan for K-12 Gifted Education

2026

Department of Education & Workforce

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Executive Summary

Ohio's Plan for K-12 Gifted Education establishes a statewide approach for the identification and support of gifted and high-ability learners in grades K-12, reflecting Ohio's commitment to supporting all students to ensure they can gain the knowledge and life skills they need for the future. The plan was developed in collaboration with Ohio's Gifted Advisory Council, whose members include school district administrators, gifted educators, general education teachers, university faculty, parents, and other key stakeholders. The plan supports Ohio's educational vision by ensuring all learners, including gifted students and high-ability learners, have access to effective instruction and appropriate supports. The plan leverages Ohio's Integrated Multi-Tiered System of Supports framework to address both academic and non-academic needs and is grounded in shared leadership among districts, educators, regional partners, families, and the state. It is intended to serve as an anchor for local, regional, and state education leaders, policymakers, partners, and others who play a role in improving students' access to effective instruction and overall academic achievement.

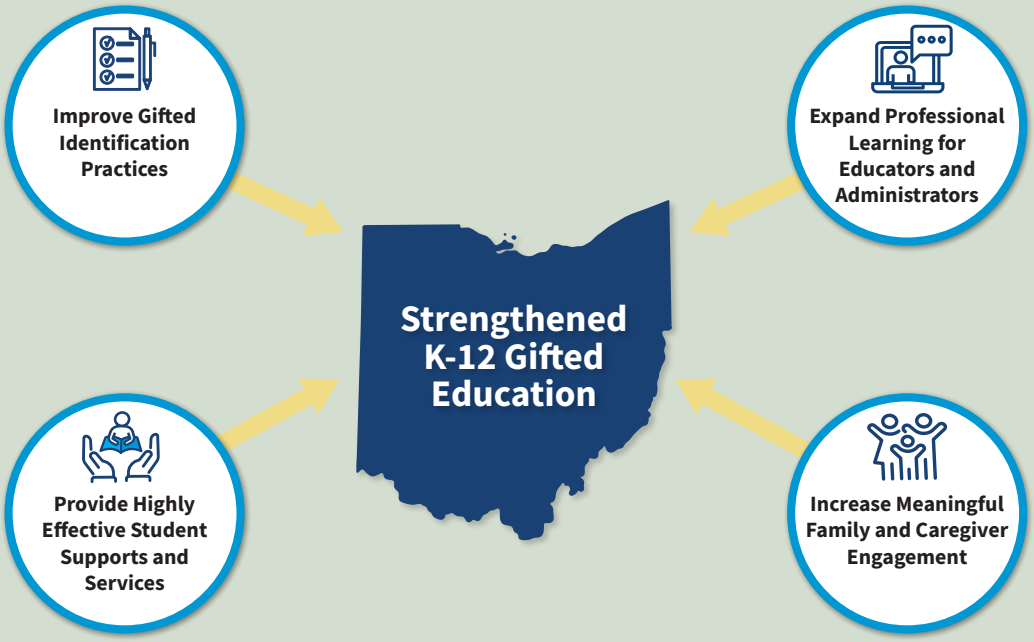
Why a Plan for Gifted Education is Needed: All students need access to appropriate academic and non-academic supports, including students who are gifted or demonstrate high ability. For these learners, this requires proactive, early access to challenging instruction and supports that promote engagement, with educators able to intensify supports to meet individual learner needs. When supports are absent or delayed, gifted and high-ability learners may experience learning challenges, underperformance, frustration, or disengagement. A prolonged lack of appropriate challenge can also lead to difficulties that are misunderstood or overlooked (Crepeau-Hobson & Bianco, 2013). However, these outcomes are preventable when schools respond early and deliberately to the needs of gifted and high-ability learners, allowing students to grow, excel, and develop the skills they need to succeed.

Ohio has a long history of support for gifted education, strengthened over time by state laws and regulations. While Ohio has made progress in strengthening gifted programming and many districts demonstrate strong practices, gaps are still present. Some districts and specific student populations are under-identified and receive few or no specialized services. Embedding gifted education and other advanced learning opportunities within an integrated multi-tiered system of supports provides a structured way for addressing uneven rates of access, developing talent, and providing a flexible continuum of services calibrated to the needs of gifted students and high-ability learners. Recent data and a survey of educators indicate that Ohio can do more to ensure that high-quality gifted services exist alongside, and are strengthened by, a broader continuum of advanced learning opportunities for all students across the state.

Ohio's Gifted Education Vision	***Ohio students who are gifted or demonstrate high ability are prepared for success in the real world.***

To advance this vision, the plan provides guidance to Ohio districts to address gaps in current practices by ensuring that high-quality gifted education services remain a cornerstone of student support, while flexible, tiered opportunities expand talent development to high-ability learners in every school across the state.

Ohio's Theory of Action: Based on recent data trends in Ohio, stakeholder input, and research on effective practices in gifted education, the plan establishes four overarching strategies of action, with shared leadership among districts, educators, regional partners, families, and the state. Together, these strategies outline how Ohio will support gifted and high-ability learners through coherent, coordinated efforts at every level of the education system.



Improve Gifted Identification Practices. Prioritize the processes to identify gifted students using fair and research-aligned identification process for all student populations. Implement universal screening and data-based decision-making within an integrated multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) to ensure access to gifted identification for all learners.

Provide Highly Effective Student Supports and Services. Design and deliver a continuum of gifted services and talent development opportunities anchored in high-quality instructional materials and effective instructional practices. Within an integrated MTSS, provide differentiated and advanced learning opportunities across all tiers to meet academic and non-academic needs.

Expand Professional Learning for Educators and Administrators. Increase access to gifted-focused professional learning that builds educator and administrator capacity to identify and support gifted and high-ability learners across instructional tiers. Professional learning should engage educators and administrators to integrate gifted education within an integrated MTSS that include strategies for differentiation, progress monitoring, and data-based decision-making.

Increase Meaningful Family and Caregiver Engagement. Engage families and caregivers as partners in gifted students' education by providing clear opportunities to learn about giftedness and to participate meaningfully in decision-making. Build two-way communication and partner with families through each step of their student's journey.

Next Steps: *Ohio's Plan for K-12 Gifted Education* outlines an ambitious vision strengthening gifted education access and quality statewide. Districts are encouraged to review the plan carefully, assess their progress against the recommended strategies, and identify next steps for improving gifted education and talent development within their local contexts. The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce ("the Department") will continue to seek feedback to guide implementation based on successes, challenges, and the evolving needs of gifted students, their families, educators, and administrators.

Department of Education & Workforce

Introduction

The Department is dedicated to preparing students today for the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow by ensuring every learner is equipped with the skills and tools necessary to thrive in a rapidly changing world. Strengthening all aspects of a student's educational experience requires a focus on four core statewide priorities: literacy achievement, accelerating learning, student wellness, and workforce readiness. By advancing these priorities, Ohio can ensure all students, including those who are gifted, have the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to achieve their goals following graduation, paving the way for a brighter future for both students and the workforce.

This plan is the first-ever statewide initiative for strengthening gifted education across Ohio's K-12 schools and districts. It supports administrators, educators, and families to work together to develop comprehensive programming, including gifted services and talent development opportunities, designed to meet the academic and non-academic needs of gifted and high-ability learners.

Development of Ohio's Plan for K-12 Gifted Education

To establish the plan, the Department worked closely with Ohio's Gifted Advisory Council. The Gifted Advisory Council is charged with assisting the Department in the development of a plan for gifted education as a part of the *Operating Standards for Identifying and Serving Students Who are Gifted* (Ohio Administrative Code 3301-51-15). The Council met regularly and achieved the following objectives:

- Reviewed and analyzed data on gifted identification and services
- Identified strengths and areas for improvement
- Established a shared vision and theory of action for meeting Ohio's commitment to gifted learners

This input informed the plan's recommended strategies and actions.

Why a Plan for Gifted Education is Needed

For more than fifty years, national leaders have recognized the importance of identifying and meeting the educational needs of gifted and high-ability learners. The landmark 1972 Marland Report to the U.S. Congress established a federal definition for gifted and underscored the importance of identifying and addressing their educational needs. Building on this foundation, Ohio has long recognized the importance of gifted education, with strong commitment and support from policymakers, families, and educators.

Why Gifted Education Matters

Gifted learners are a varied group with complex and multifaceted learning needs (Webb et al., 2007) and, like all students, they require appropriate academic and non-academic instruction and supports. This includes proactive, early access to challenging instruction and supports that promote engagement, with educators able to intensify supports to meet individual learner needs. When supports are absent or delayed, gifted and high-ability learners may experience learning challenges, underperformance, frustration, or disengagement. A prolonged lack of appropriate challenge can also lead to difficulties that are misunderstood or overlooked (Crepeau-Hobson & Bianco, 2013). However, these outcomes are preventable when schools respond early and deliberately to the needs of gifted and high-ability learners, allowing students to grow, excel, and develop the skills they need to succeed.

Gifted learners are a varied group with complex and multifaceted learning needs (Webb et al., 2007) and, like all students, they require appropriate academic and non-academic instruction and supports.

Therefore, an appropriately engaging and rigorous curriculum for gifted learners includes opportunities for critical thinking, depth and complexity, acceleration, creative and analytical problem-solving, and access to advanced or enriched learning experiences, as well as intentional supports that develop the non-academic needs of students. Practices like fostering a growth mindset, normalizing challenges, and addressing pressures that affect student performance can help students manage emotions, build resilience, and feel included, promoting overall well-being and success (Neihart et al., 2016; National Association for Gifted Children, 2019).

A gifted learner's school environment and their access to teachers who receive ongoing professional learning in gifted education, as well as a student's access to appropriate learning resources, play an essential role in developing their potential (Nicholas et al., 2024; Sternberg & Davidson, 2005). It is essential to equip the adults working with students and families with the skills needed to best support students in school. This assists in meeting both a student's academic and non-academic needs.

Gifted Students in Ohio

Ohio law establishes the definition and requirements for the identification of students who are gifted and outlines gifted service options that districts may choose to provide. While gifted identification is required by state law, gifted services are not. Within this policy landscape, statewide data on gifted education highlights successes and opportunities for improvement for educators, districts, regional partners, and the state.

In 2025-2026, there were **234,665** identified gifted students attending Ohio traditional public (city, local, and exempted village) schools, according to student enrollment data reported by districts. Gifted students represent **17%** of the total Ohio traditional public school population. The percentage of students identified as gifted in Ohio has remained stable over the past decade. Meanwhile, the percentage of gifted students receiving services has increased in recent years, from **44%** of identified students receiving services in 2015-16 to a high of **73%** of identified students receiving services during the 2025-2026 school year. The statewide rates of identification and service present a strong foundation and are symbolic of Ohio's commitment to gifted education, supported by educators, families, and caregivers.

UNDERREPRESENTATION IN OHIO

Although Ohio's gifted education data demonstrates a strong statewide commitment to identifying students who are gifted and expanding access to gifted services over the past decade, the data also reveals a persistent challenge: lower identification and service for some students, a pattern referred to as underrepresentation. For example:

- **Economic Disadvantage:** Students are nearly three times more likely to be identified as gifted if they are not experiencing economic disadvantage (28.2% to 9.9%).
- **Students with Disabilities:** 2.8% of students with disabilities are identified as gifted.
- **English Learners:** 1.4% of current and former English learners are identified as gifted.
- **Racial and Ethnic Minorities:** Black students (5.7%) and Hispanic students (8.1%) are identified at less than half the rate of students overall.
- **School District Type:** Students living in urban areas (8.9%), rural areas (13.3%), and in small towns (14.2%) are less likely to be identified as gifted compared to their suburban peers (25.2%).
- **Gifted Service Gaps:** Among students identified as gifted, students with disabilities, English learners, and students who attend urban school districts are substantially less likely to receive gifted services compared to other students.

Chart 1: 2025-2026 Gifted Identification and Service Provision by Student Group

Student Group	Total FTE	Gifted FTE	Pct. Gifted Identification	Served FTE	Pct. Gifted Served
All Students	1,387,935	234,665	16.9%	172,089	73.3%
With Economic Disadvantage	859,071	85,336	9.9%	62,851	73.7%
Without Economic Disadvantage	528,863	149,329	28.2%	109,238	73.2%
Students with Disabilities	229,683	6,529	2.8%	3,656	56.0%
Students without Disabilities	1,158,251	228,136	19.7%	168,433	73.8%
English Learners	74,851	1,074	1.4%	454	42.3%
Not English Learners	1,313,084	233,590	17.8%	171,635	73.5%

[1] FTE: Full Time Equivalent refers to the time a student attends school. For example, each student attending school on a school's regular all day, every day calendar counts as 1.0 FTE.

Chart 2: 2025-2026 Gifted Identification and Service Provision by Race or Ethnicity

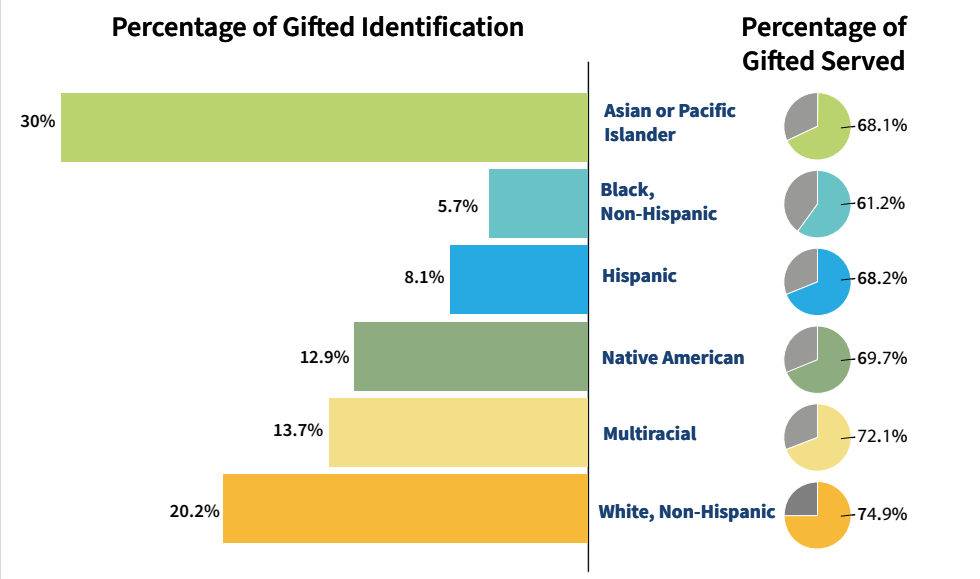
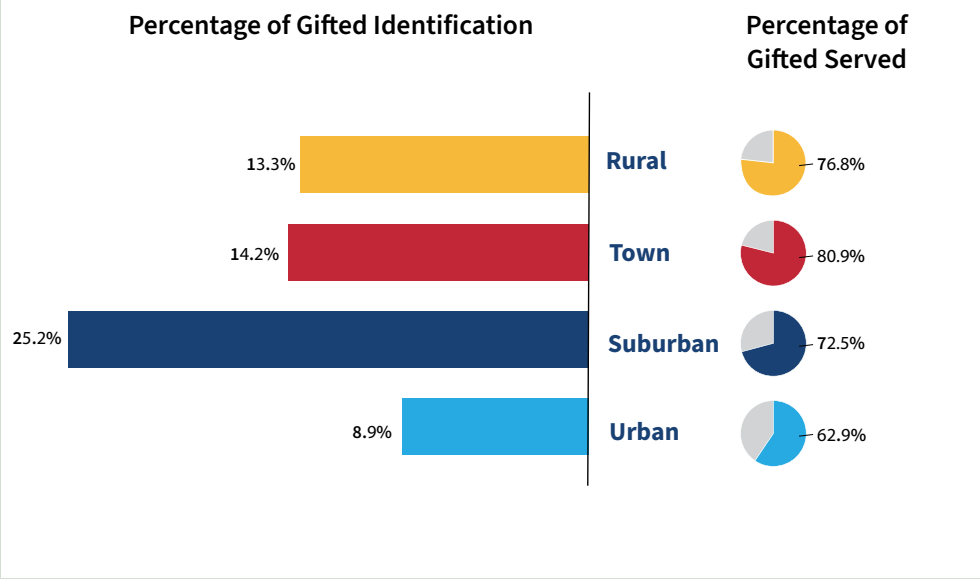


Chart 3: 2025-2026 Gifted Identification and Service Provision by District Type



As Nicholas et al. (2024) note, “There is growing recognition that the heterogeneous nature of high potential may result in a child not yet or never being identified as gifted,” due to a range of factors. For example, very young students’ skills may still be emerging, or they may not have been formally screened due to their age or grade level. For other students, giftedness may be masked by multiple underlying causes, including the presence of a disability, classroom behaviors, teacher expectations, limited access to resources, limited English proficiency, or high mobility (Barbier et al., 2022; Baldwin et al., 2015; Desmet et al., 2020; Hately & Townend, 2020; Dai & Chen, 2013; Cavilla, 2014). These and other similar factors can make it difficult to identify some learners as gifted. In many cases, these students may still demonstrate advanced potential, such as high levels of creativity, problem-solving, or complex thinking. These students are often referred to as high-ability learners. Talent development offers a proactive mechanism to support these learners before formal identification or to reach those who may not otherwise qualify for gifted services.

WHAT IS TALENT DEVELOPMENT?

Every classroom contains students with remarkable strengths, advanced capabilities, and untapped potential and educators are well positioned to recognize and cultivate those talents.

Talent development is the systematic process of ensuring that all students' strengths are seen, nurtured, and matched to appropriately challenging learning experiences.

Talent development strategies support access to gifted services and advanced learning opportunities for all students by providing access to challenging content in combination with instructional support, enabling students to gain confidence and maximize their potential. Rather than serving as a replacement for formal gifted identification, talent development functions as a pathway through which students may be recognized and referred for gifted services, and also as a proactive approach for expanding access to advanced learning opportunities for high-ability learners who are not identified as gifted (Dixson et al., 2020; Lamb et al., 2022).

GIFTED STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

Gifted students who receive services perform better academically than gifted peers who do not receive services, as measured by Ohio's Performance Index, which calculates combined student performance scores on state assessments. Ohio students identified as gifted in reading who also received gifted services in reading scored an average of **3.7 points** higher on Ohio's Performance Index in English language arts compared to identified students who did not receive gifted services. Similarly, students identified as gifted in math who received gifted services in math scored an average of **5.1 points** higher on the Performance Index in mathematics compared to identified students who did not receive services.

Chart 4: 2025-2026 Ohio Performance Index for English Language Arts and Mathematics, Gifted Students Served and Not Served.

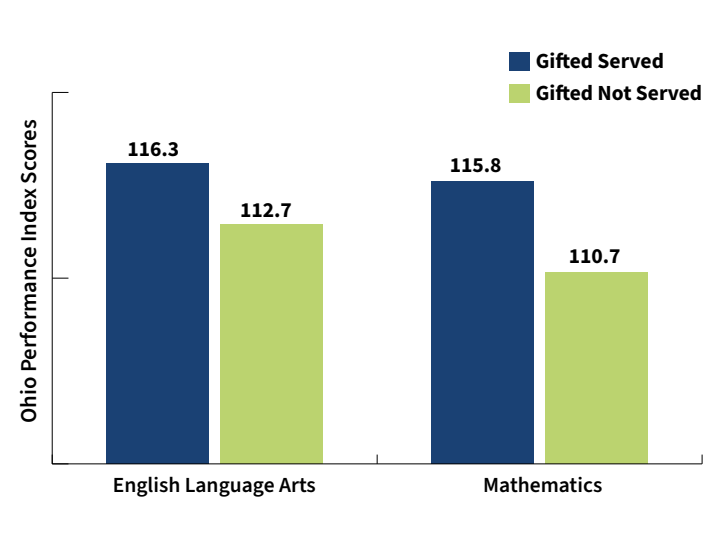
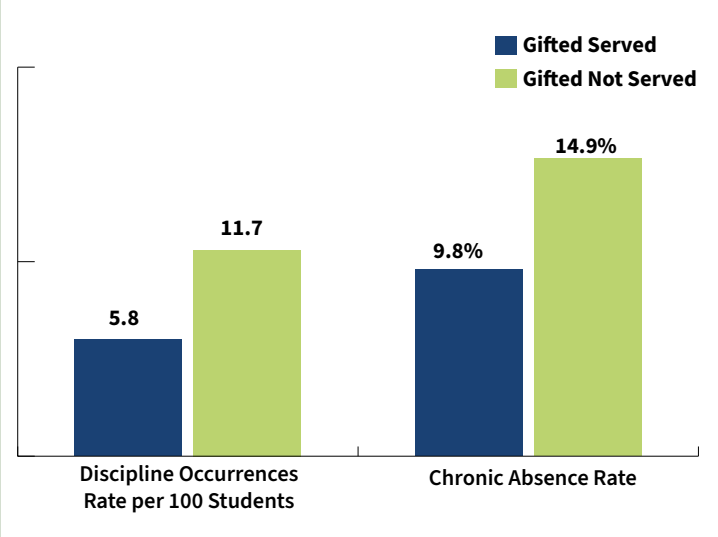


Chart 5: 2025-2026 Disciplinary Rate and Chronic Absence Rate, Gifted Students Served and Not Served.



Department of Education & Workforce

The impact of gifted services in student engagement is even more dramatic. Of all students identified as gifted in the 2025-2026 school year, those who were reported as receiving gifted services had a disciplinary rate that was nearly half of those not served: **5.8** versus **11.7** incidents per 100 students. Similarly, gifted students receiving services had a chronic absence rate that was about 5 percentage points lower than gifted students not receiving services (**9.8%** versus **14.9%**).

Stakeholder Perspectives

To complement Ohio's gifted education data, performance data, and student engagement data, the Department conducted a statewide survey of educators in the fall of 2024. More than 600 respondents, including general education teachers, gifted intervention specialists, school and district administrators, gifted coordinators, and school psychologists shared their perspective. The survey aimed to identify themes and trends in gifted education in Ohio and highlighted areas of improvement where district, regional, and state strategies could be strengthened.

STAKEHOLDER SURVEY RESPONSES

Survey findings revealed differences in how educator groups perceive the priority and implementation of gifted education in their districts. Most administrators, gifted coordinators, and school psychologists reported that gifted identification is a district priority, with strong agreement rates ranging from 75-80%. In contrast, general education teachers were less aligned, with more than half strongly agreeing and nearly one-third strongly disagreeing with this statement.

There were also notable differences in how groups of educators viewed the quality of instruction provided to gifted students, the availability of high-quality curriculum materials suitable for gifted learners, and access to professional learning that builds educators' capacity to serve gifted learners. Overall, the survey results point to differences in how educator groups experience and interpret their district's approach to gifted education. This highlights the importance of strengthening guidance, resources, and professional learning so that all educators can more effectively support Ohio's gifted students and high-ability learners.

STAKEHOLDER OPEN RESPONSES

Survey respondents provided open-ended responses to further illustrate their perspectives on gifted education practices in their districts. They highlighted strengths, such as improved use of assessments to identify a greater number of high-ability students and investments in licensed gifted intervention specialists that contribute to improved student outcomes. Respondents referenced cost-sharing partnerships with regional educational service centers (ESCs) and collaborations with other community partners as being essential for expanding access to gifted services and other programming for their gifted and high-ability learners, especially in smaller districts.

Respondents also identified areas where districts have room for improvement. Across these responses, several themes emerged:

1. **Insufficient gifted identification practices:** Respondents view their district's available assessments as unable to adequately identify students from traditionally underrepresented populations. They also pointed to the criteria for identification and limited understanding of appropriate strategies for identifying underrepresented students as related challenges.
2. **Limited instructional resources and services:** Respondents noted that competing priorities, limited access to high-quality instructional materials and other resources to support gifted students and high-ability learners, and limited funding, as well as a lack of a requirement that students identified as gifted receive services, contribute to overall underinvestment in gifted services in their districts.
3. **Educator capacity challenges:** Respondents reported that limited funding and teacher shortages result in too few staff with gifted education licensure. They also noted a significant need for professional learning related to gifted education and pointed to funding, competing priorities, and substitute teacher shortages as factors. At the systems level, respondents highlighted the need for more gifted coursework in teacher preparation programs and for more gifted education licensure options for current teachers.
4. **Family and school partnerships:** Respondents reported that stronger family and school partnerships are needed to build support for gifted education in their districts. In particular, they noted limited opportunities and methods for communicating with families and a lack of understanding of giftedness and gifted services.

The Need Is Clear

Given the importance of gifted education services to high-ability learners' experiences in school, educational outcomes, and the trends in Ohio (such as unequal rates of gifted student identification and service provision by school type and student population), as well as challenges identified by stakeholders, it is evident that Ohio districts, regional partners, and the state have gaps to address. Continued and collective effort is required to ensure all gifted and high-ability learners in Ohio have access to the academic and non-academic supports they need and that families and caregivers are meaningfully engaged. The following section describes a theory of action to inform this work and offers practical strategies, including leveraging an integrated MTSS, to assist all partners in this important work.

Continued and collective effort is required to ensure all gifted and high-ability learners in Ohio have access to the academic and non-academic supports they need and that families and caregivers are meaningfully engaged.

Ohio's Gifted Vision and Theory of Action

Based on research on effective practices, statewide data trends, and stakeholder input, the Department recognizes the need for more intentional, comprehensive, and student-centered approaches to gifted education. These approaches are designed to address uneven rates of identification and access to gifted education programming across the state and to ensure rigorous, challenging learning opportunities for all Ohio students.

The following vision statement guides Ohio educators in meeting Ohio's commitment to gifted and high-ability learners.

Ohio's Gifted Education Vision	***Ohio students who are gifted or demonstrate high ability are prepared for success in the real world.***

A Theory of Action for Ohio

Improving access to gifted education in Ohio requires a thoughtful, multi-pronged strategy. *Ohio's Plan for K-12 Gifted Education* leverages multiple activities into one theory of action. This theory builds upon existing policies in Ohio and proposes additional strategies to support access, high-quality instruction, identification, services, and professional learning and family engagement.

Improve Gifted Identification Practices. Prioritize the processes to identify gifted students using fair and research-aligned identification process for all student populations. Implement universal screening and data-based decision-making within an integrated multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) to ensure access to gifted identification for all learners.

Provide Highly Effective Student Supports and Services. Design and deliver a continuum of gifted services and talent development opportunities anchored in high-quality instructional materials and effective instructional practices. Within an integrated MTSS, provide differentiated and advanced learning opportunities across all tiers to meet academic and non-academic needs.

Expand Professional Learning for Educators and Administrators. Increase access to gifted-focused professional learning that builds educator and administrator capacity to identify and support gifted and high-ability learners across instructional tiers. Professional learning should engage educators and administrators to integrate gifted education within an integrated MTSS that include strategies for differentiation, progress monitoring, and data-based decision-making.

Increase Meaningful Family and Caregiver Engagement. Engage families and caregivers as partners in gifted students' education by providing clear opportunities to learn about giftedness and to participate meaningfully in decision-making. Build two-way communication and partner with families through each step of their student's journey.

Strategies for Statewide Action

This plan recommends four overarching strategies for strengthening gifted education and talent development practices across Ohio. It also includes the supporting rationale and research, along with specific action steps and recommendations for districts, as well as recommendations for regional and state supports. These strategies are interdependent and are meant to be implemented as elements of a cohesive, comprehensive approach to improving opportunities and outcomes for gifted and high-ability learners.

LEVERAGING OHIO'S INTEGRATED MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS FRAMEWORK

Meeting the academic and non-academic needs of all learners, including gifted and high-ability learners, requires a coherent, responsive system of supports. When viewed as a needs-based model for differentiation (Seedorf, 2014, p. 250), an integrated MTSS is a more inclusive and less restrictive way to ensure the talents of gifted and high-ability learners are recognized and nurtured (Dai & Chen, 2013).

Research confirms that high-ability students benefit most when differentiation is embedded in everyday classroom environments rather than relegated to pull-out programs alone, and that schoolwide structures and leadership are essential to making this sustainable (Nicholas et al., 2024).

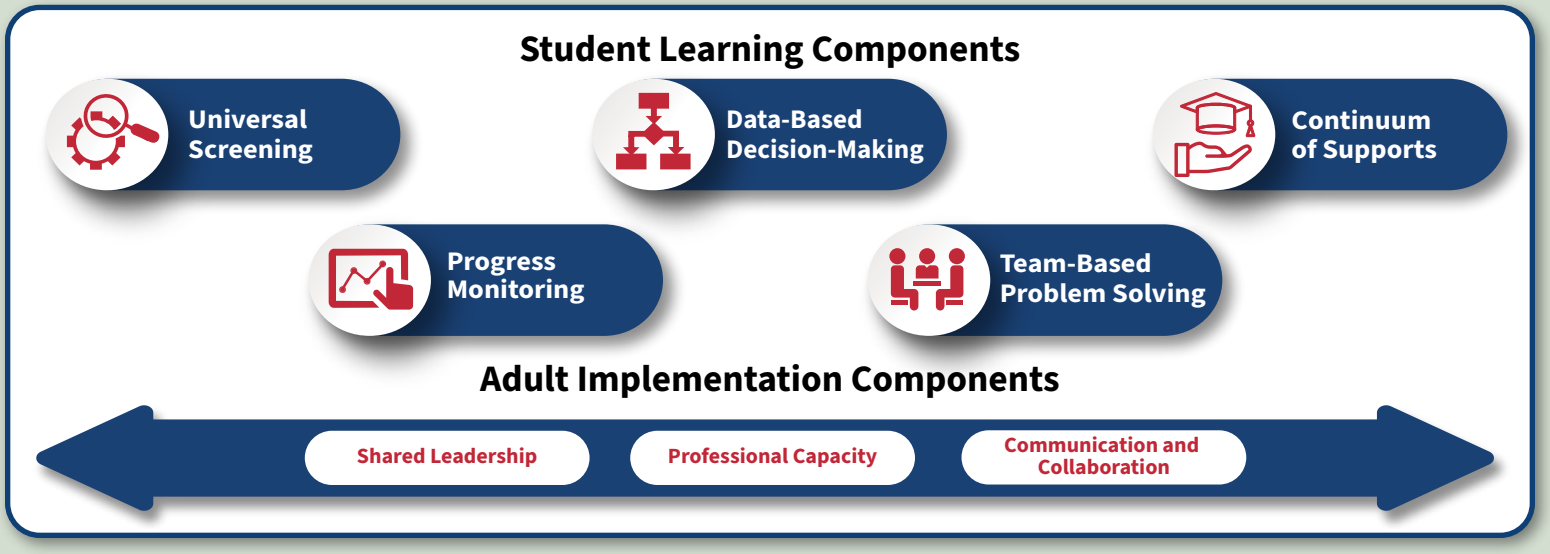
Within this framework, instruction and support can be intensified, allowing for proactive responses to student strengths that enable earlier and more consistent access to advanced content (Dixson et al., 2020; Lamb et al., 2022).

Utilizing an integrated MTSS framework does not replace formal gifted identification or specialized services; rather, it provides infrastructure to strengthen and systematize them. Tiered models emphasize universal screening, diagnostic assessment, progress monitoring, and data-based decision-making to ensure that advanced learners are recognized early and supported responsively. Research further suggests that universal screening can reduce underrepresentation, while ongoing progress monitoring allows students demonstrating advanced performance or rapid growth to access increasingly intensive enrichment and acceleration (e.g., Bianco, 2010; Coleman & Hughes, 2009; Johnsen et al., 2015; Robertson & Pfeiffer, 2016; Rollins et al., 2009).

Formal identification remains essential for students who require sustained acceleration, individualized programming, or specialized services. However, the broader-tiered model expands access to enrichment and talent development experiences that can surface potential and cultivate readiness for even more advanced learning opportunities. In this way, traditional gifted services are enhanced by embedding them within a coherent, prevention-oriented system of support.

Utilizing an integrated MTSS framework does not replace formal gifted identification or specialized services; rather, it provides infrastructure to strengthen and systematize them.

Ohio's Integrated Multi-Tiered System of Supports



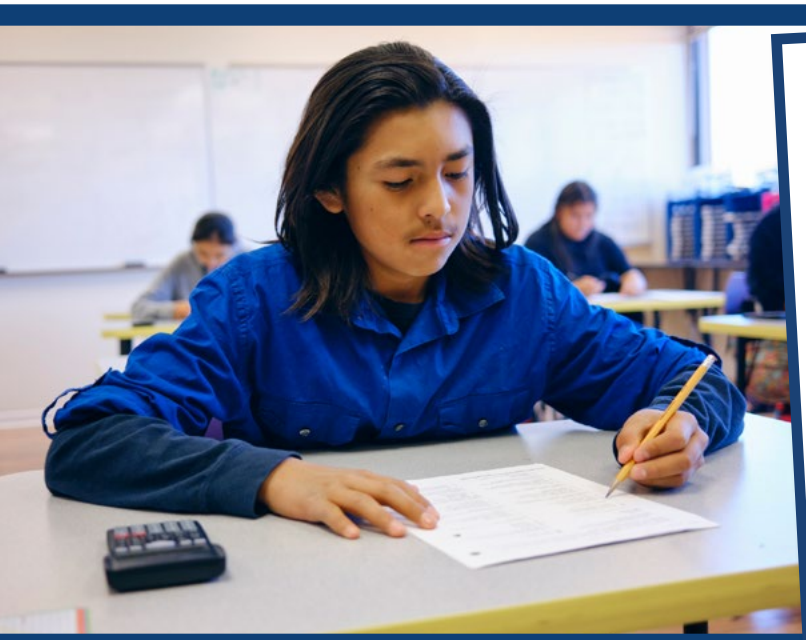
The plan seeks to intentionally leverage key components of Ohio's Integrated Multi-Tiered System of Supports Framework. The student learning components and adult implementation components provide essential features and conditions required for districts and educators to meet the academic and non-academic needs of all students. An integrated MTSS is the collective responsibility of all levels of the educational system, and this fundamental principle of collective responsibility and shared leadership is embedded throughout.

While the plan includes several key leverage points from Ohio's Integrated MTSS Framework, it is important to keep in mind that this is not an exhaustive list. Districts should continuously seek to embed gifted education practices into their integrated MTSS framework. An integrated MTSS can assist districts to continuously consider and evaluate their gifted education practices. Likewise, gifted education practices can inform and strengthen districtwide initiatives, instruction, and supports for all students.

Improve Gifted Identification Practices

Gifted students are present in every school district across Ohio; however, state data shows that not all of these students are being identified and supported. To recognize these students and provide an education that meets their needs, districts — with support from families, regional partners, and the state — must implement effective gifted identification practices to ensure that the full range of a student's academic and non-academic needs is not overlooked. Universal screening, particularly at early grade levels, and data-based decision-making help districts identify student strengths early and fairly, reducing barriers and expanding opportunities for all learners.

Traditional identification methods may overlook twice-exceptional learners (students with both advanced abilities and special learning needs), making it essential for schools to adopt multifaceted evaluation processes that consider both a student's strengths and challenges. English learners are also at risk for being overlooked. Careful analysis of subscale scores and a student's language development experiences can help educators identify gifted students among diverse populations. Districts and educators should regularly collaborate to determine which tests or subscale scores are most appropriate for a particular student, and should consult with families and caregivers for their input on a student's strengths.



In Their Own Words: Ohio Educators Share Views on Current Gifted Education Practices

"Identifying gifted students from diverse backgrounds can be challenging because traditional tests may not reflect their abilities well. Language barriers, limited resources, and different cultural experiences can make it harder to spot giftedness in students from minority groups, low-income families, or those with disabilities. Teachers may also need more training to recognize gifted traits in these students."

USING LOCALLY DETERMINED CRITERIA FOR TALENT DEVELOPMENT

Current research in the field of gifted education strongly encourages the use of locally determined criteria, also referred to as local norms, to identify students who are gifted (Peters, Makel, Rambo-Hernandez, 2021).

Although Ohio's gifted education laws do not currently include the use of local norms as a method for formal gifted identification across all recognized ability areas, districts are encouraged to incorporate their use in talent development initiatives.

Locally determined criteria may include examples, such as reviewing assessment data to determine high performing students at the school building level, examining a student's progress related to the subject area learning standards, and considering the rate at which a student learns new content or meets established learning goals.

Using local norms to match students with talent development programming can help address common barriers to accessing gifted education and other advanced learning opportunities. When districts use local norms for participation in talent development programming, they are better able to compare students' strengths to the strengths of peers in their immediate learning environment rather than a national benchmark that may not reflect local circumstances or context (Augenblick, Palaich, and Associates, 2022; Foley-Nicpon and Teriba, 2022). The use of local norms is especially helpful for revealing the potential of high-ability learners in rural and urban areas where national comparisons may overlook the strengths within the local student population and local opportunities.

The key actions that follow for districts, regional partners, and the state have a foundational emphasis on the core elements of gifted identification and talent development set forth in this section.

Improve Gifted Identification Practices

Goal: Ohio districts will implement effective, research-aligned gifted identification practices that recognize the full range of students' academic and non-academic needs.

District Actions

Establish processes and procedures for nominating and identifying a broad range of students for gifted education, including:

- Screen all students beginning in early grade levels, regardless of any factor aside from parent-initiated opt-out, ensuring multiple opportunities for gifted identification as students progress through school.
- Ensure that administrators, educators, school counselors, school psychologists, families, and students are aware of gifted identification opportunities and referral processes.
- Review data regularly to identify potential gaps in access to gifted education and to inform further improvements to the district's system for gifted identification.
- Evaluate current gifted identification practices for accessibility and fairness.
- Educators should regularly collaborate to determine which tests or subscale scores are most appropriate for a particular student, and consult with families and caregivers for their input on a student's strengths.

Embed gifted identification within a more holistic approach to supporting and cultivating talent from a young age, including:

- Utilize local norms to identify high-ability learners for talent development programming and access to rigorous and advanced coursework and engage with families to assist in determining student strengths.

Regional Actions

Support districts in adopting more effective gifted education practices, including:

- Support districts in providing gifted identification opportunities that address the needs of all students.
- Create regional collaboration opportunities with schools, districts, and educators to analyze gifted identification data and examine related practices.

State Actions

Provide resources and supports to assist districts and regional partners in adopting more effective gifted identification practices, including:

- Provide resources related to the implementation of state laws, policies, and operating standards for identifying students who are gifted.
- Communicate research-based best practices for gifted identification and provide resources and toolkits to support implementation of strategies that consider all students.
- Demonstrate how to effectively establish processes and procedures for effective identification practices and the development of gifted identification plans.

Provide Highly Effective Student Supports and Services

Meeting the academic and non-academic needs of gifted and high-ability learners requires effective instruction and supports across the K-12 academic program. Gifted and high-ability learners need differentiated learning opportunities within general education settings, as well as opportunities to accelerate through advanced coursework and to participate in gifted-specific enrichment programs.

CONTINUUM OF SUPPORTS IN AN INTEGRATED MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

Continuum of Supports

A continuum of supports organizes and delivers effective instruction and supports within three flexible, fluid tiers, which include core (Tier 1), targeted (Tier 2), and intensive (Tier 3) instruction. Tiers represent a continuum of supports that intensify according to student need; tiers do not represent a type of student or a location for instruction. Districts should establish a continuum of gifted services and talent development opportunities, anchored by high-quality instructional materials and effective instructional practices, within an integrated MTSS. This ensures that gifted and high-ability learners receive differentiated and advanced learning opportunities across all tiers based on their academic and non-academic needs.

- **Tier 1 Core Instruction:** Uses high-quality instructional materials, evidence-based programs and practices, and research-based practices that align and are differentiated according to student needs. Includes the use of effective and efficient academic and non-academic supports, provided to all students, that assist students in accessing and engaging with core instruction. Student wellness strategies and supports are provided throughout.
- **Tier 2 Targeted Instruction:** Targeted use of high-quality instructional materials and evidence-based programs and practices that supplement, rather than replace, Tier 1 core instruction. Provided to (a) students at risk, to cause them to catch up to grade-level expectations and standards, and (b) students demonstrating proficiency, to cause them to experience greater depth and complexity of grade-level expectations and to prevent underachievement in academic areas. Student wellness strategies and supports are provided throughout.
- **Tier 3 Intensive Instruction:** Intensified use of high-quality instructional materials and evidence-based programs and practices provided to (a) students at risk to address severe and persistent learning difficulties in academic areas, and (b) students demonstrating proficiency to prevent underachievement in academic areas. Student wellness strategies and supports are provided throughout.

Districts should establish a continuum of gifted services and talent development opportunities, anchored by high-quality instructional materials and effective instructional practices, within an integrated MTSS.

At all tiers, the integrity and fidelity of the implementation of academic and non-academic supports are evaluated prior to concluding that a student is not responsive to instruction.

Talent development fits within an integrated MTSS as a way to provide early, flexible access to challenging and rigorous content for a wider range of learners. Leveraging an integrated MTSS, districts can provide talent development as a universal support for all students. District teams can engage with families broadly to better understand students' strengths and available talent development opportunities. Districts can then apply data-based decision-making to locally determine which students may benefit from more rigorous or advanced coursework. Together, these practices offer a more holistic approach to developing student talent.

This approach reflects a fundamental shift from asking "Who qualifies for gifted services?" to asking "What does this student need to maximize their potential?" This reframing expands opportunities without diminishing rigor.

Talent development also ensures students receive the appropriate academic and non-academic supports for success in more rigorous and advanced coursework.

Districts should ensure there are multiple entry points and pathways for students to reach accelerated and advanced coursework, including gifted services. To ensure that all gifted and high-ability learners have access to rigorous coursework, districts should consider evidence-based practices such as automatic enrollment in advanced learning opportunities and flexible scheduling. Districts should eliminate restrictive policies, such as requiring a teacher recommendation or requiring an unnecessarily high score in a prerequisite course. Families should receive information and support to understand and navigate these entry points and pathways.

These effective practices provide a starting point for the recommended district, regional, and state strategies that follow.

Provide Highly Effective Student Supports and Services

Goal: Ohio districts will provide a continuum of gifted education services and supports grounded in high-quality instructional materials and strategies that meet the needs of all gifted students and high-ability learners, with special attention to those who are less likely to have access to gifted education opportunities.

District Actions

Establish a comprehensive plan for gifted programming and advanced learning opportunities, including gifted services and talent development programs, that address the academic and non-academic needs of a range of gifted students and high-ability learners, including:

- Implement effective Tier I (core) instruction within an integrated MTSS to meet the academic and non-academic needs of students who are gifted, with additional Tier 2 (targeted) and Tier 3 (intensive) instruction and supports as determined by data-based decision-making processes.
- Offer talent development opportunities to all students, including in early grade levels, to enrich the core curriculum and support student success. In addition, consider talent development opportunities that offer language development opportunities such as dual immersion programs and the Seal of Biliteracy.
- Implement responsive, evidence-based practices that foster the potential of underrepresented learners, including English learners, students with disabilities, students from various racial and ethnic groups, and students with economic disadvantages.
- Ensure that administrators, educators, school counselors, school psychologists, families, and students are aware of opportunities for gifted services and talent development programming.

Adopt and implement high-quality instructional materials and strategies in all courses serving gifted and high-ability learners, including:

- Draw on the expertise of gifted educators in the adoption and implementation of appropriate high-quality instructional materials for gifted and high-ability learners.
- Support educators to implement high-quality instructional materials and research-informed teacher practices.
- Integrate curriculum-embedded assessments into the district's assessment strategy and track this data through districtwide systems to promote their use.
- Set goals and plans for monitoring the effectiveness of high-quality instructional materials implementation and analyzing the impact on student achievement.
- Create collaborative planning time structures when educators can internalize high-quality lessons and plan for interventions and supports for gifted and high-ability learners.

Collect and analyze high-quality program data to evaluate programming at the student, course, building, and district levels, including:

- Conduct a needs assessment with input from administrators, educators (including gifted intervention specialists), students, and families to inform program design.
- Develop and implement a district evaluation plan for gifted education programs.
- Utilize existing academic and non-academic data to monitor access and outcomes for gifted students and high-ability learners.

- Incorporate data points related to implementation and quality of instruction for gifted students and high-ability learners, including but not limited to high-quality instructional materials used in each classroom and other supports or interventions.

Regional Actions

Support districts in developing a continuum of effective gifted education services, including:

- Support districts in implementing talent development strategies that benefit all students.
- Create regional collaboration opportunities with schools and districts and educators to ensure coherence and understanding, communication, professional learning, and supports related to research and evidence-based instruction for gifted and high-ability learners.
- Provide support to districts in developing and using data systems to examine gifted program data to aid districts with monitoring access and outcomes for gifted and high-ability learners, as well as to evaluate the implementation and quality of instruction for gifted and high-ability learners.

State Actions

Provide resources and guidance to assist districts and regional partners in developing a continuum of effective gifted education services, including:

- Provide resources related to the implementation of state laws, policies, and operating standards for serving students who are gifted.
- Communicate and illustrate research and evidence-based teaching practices for gifted and high-ability learners across all grade levels.
- Collaborate with regional partners to build coherent support and communication about effective teaching practices for gifted and high-ability learners.
- Create resources and toolkits to support districts with developing and implementing comprehensive plans for gifted services and talent development programming.
- Provide guidance for districts on selecting high-quality instructional materials for gifted and high-ability learners that include standards-aligned content, a coherent scope and sequence, and embedded research- and evidence-based instructional practices that support data-driven instruction. These materials should also be educative and support teachers in meeting the diverse learning needs of all students.

In Their Own Words: Ohio Educators Share Views on Current Gifted Education Practices

"Partnering with [our Educational Service Center] to provide professional development to staff working with gifted students has [helped our district to] support meeting the needs of students who are gifted."

Expand Professional Learning for Educators and Administrators

To meet the needs of gifted learners, professionals like educators, administrators, specialists, school counselors, and school psychologists need opportunities to deepen their knowledge about giftedness and effective instruction. Educators must understand data-based decision-making, differentiated instruction, progress monitoring, and provide evidence-based non-academic supports that build affective skills. It is essential to provide training on the characteristics of gifted students and the range of ways that giftedness can present in order to support the identification of gifted students in their school, and to provide supports and services to meet their academic and non-academic needs.

Schools and districts should ensure that professional learning related to gifted education is ongoing, job-embedded, and integrated into a broader system of professional learning that supports educators to meet the needs of all learners.

Professional learning should leverage the expertise of gifted education specialists and should include opportunities for differentiation by grade level, subject area, student population, and an individual teacher's experience and goals.

Administrators also need professional learning to understand the unique needs of gifted learners so they can guide educators in implementing data-driven approaches that improve outcomes. Instructional leaders benefit from exploring the conditions in which gifted students learn best, including strategies educators can use to tailor content, instructional processes, the classroom environment, and assessments for gifted learners.

In addition, administrators should develop schoolwide systems and structures that support diverse learners. This includes maximizing instructional time and resources to support student success; developing a master schedule that accommodates diverse learning needs; identifying and collaborating with service providers; and accurately tracking the progress of gifted students.

Importantly, the intent of the following strategies and activities is not to add to classroom educator responsibilities, but to revise and reallocate existing professional learning time and resources.

OHIO'S STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Through ongoing and evidence-based professional learning aligned to the Ohio Standards for Professional Learning, educators and staff gain new knowledge, skills, and ideas that allow them to best meet the learning needs of each student. To be effective in increasing educator effectiveness and student learning, a system of professional learning must:

- Occur within a collaborative culture in which all share collective responsibility for continuous improvement
- Be advanced by leaders who prioritize professional learning and develop the capacity and structures to support it
- Be supported by resources
- Be evidence-based, and use data for planning, assessment, and evaluation
- Represent best-practice models and theories of adult learning and active engagement
- Be research-based, using what is known about leading and managing change to sustain implementation
- Be focused on specific goals and align outcomes with existing educator and student standards

Expand Professional Learning for Educators and Administrators

Goal: Ohio districts will design and sustain a system of professional learning for teachers and administrators that results in high-quality support for gifted learners.

District Actions

Ensure administrators, educators, specialists, and other staff have access to sustained, job-embedded professional learning in gifted education that strengthens outcomes for gifted and high-ability learners and ensures the transfer of professional learning to instructional practice:

- Establish a shared vision for effective instruction for gifted and high-ability learners that guides professional learning and instructional practice.
- Provide professional learning opportunities aligned to the gifted education competencies in Ohio's Operating Standards for Identifying and Serving Students Who are Gifted (Ohio Administrative Code 3301-51-15).
- Include gifted professional learning within job-embedded structures, such as professional learning communities, coaching cycles, and teacher teams, to support the transfer of new learning to instructional practice.
- Ensure all staff, not only those directly serving gifted learners, have access to gifted professional learning opportunities.
- Leverage gifted intervention specialists, gifted coordinators, and others with expertise in gifted education to lead professional learning, including the development, planning, evaluation, consultation, and collaboration for the range of professional learning provided to school and district staff.

Build administrator capacity as instructional leaders to support and sustain job-embedded professional learning in gifted education that strengthens outcomes for gifted and high-ability learners and ensures the transfer of professional learning to instructional practice, including:

- Prioritize and sustain systems and structures that support job-embedded professional learning in gifted education, including allocating time, resources, and collaborative structures that promote implementation and continuous improvement.
- Use data to monitor the implementation of professional learning in gifted education and student outcomes for gifted and high-ability learners, and to guide continuous improvement at the classroom and building levels.
- Build the capacity of building and district leadership to support the skillful implementation of high-quality instructional materials and research- and evidence-based teaching practices to meet the academic and non-academic needs of gifted and high-ability learners.

Regional Actions

Support districts in expanding professional learning opportunities and supports for gifted education:

- Assist in the identification of district and building-level professional learning needs and assist in identifying appropriate opportunities.
- Offer gifted professional learning opportunities that support administrators and educators at varying levels of knowledge and skill and align with individual professional learning goals.
- Provide professional learning opportunities related to gifted identification and talent development for classroom educators, specialists, administrators, school counselors, school psychologists, and others that include varied definitions and presentations of gifted ability.
- Offer professional learning on evidence-based instructional practices for gifted and high-ability learners to build the capacity of educators to meet students' academic and non-academic needs within Tier 1 (core) instruction, as well as Tier 2 (targeted) and Tier 3 (intensive) instruction.
- Provide professional learning that builds the capacity of building and district leadership to use data to drive decisions about gifted education.

State Actions

Provide resources and guidance to assist districts and regional partners in expanding professional learning supports for gifted education:

- Develop and provide professional learning on evidence-based practices that expand access to gifted programs and talent development opportunities, including the use of local norms.
- Develop and provide professional learning that covers key concepts, strategies, and evidence-based approaches in gifted education and that supports implementation and deeper understanding of state laws, policies, and the gifted education professional learning competencies in Ohio's Operating Standards for Identifying and Serving Students Who are Gifted.
- Develop and provide professional learning that builds educator and administrator capacity to use data-based decision-making to inform instructional decisions and evaluate program effectiveness for gifted and high-ability learners.
- Facilitate collaboration with educational service centers and other professional organizations to support regional partnerships and cost-sharing models for expanded professional learning opportunities related to gifted education.
- Collaborate with state support teams, educational service centers, and educator preparation providers to develop training for gifted specialists and administrators that builds capacity to implement research- and evidence-based instruction that meets the academic and non-academic needs of gifted and high-ability learners.

Increase Meaningful Engagement of Families and Caregivers

Families of gifted learners should be engaged in developing goals and the vision for their child's education, and they should have frequent opportunities to authentically participate in their student's educational decision-making and the life of the school.

All students need a strong and knowledgeable support network to nurture their development and success, and families and caregivers are a major part of that support system.

By offering resources and opportunities that increase understanding of giftedness and cultivating partnerships that honor the strengths and preferences of families and caregivers, educators and districts can create the conditions for communication, collaboration, and student success.

The Department has developed guiding principles and resources for building family and school partnerships that are relevant to all student populations and that should form the foundation of family and school partnerships for gifted and high-ability learners.

These guiding principles serve as a starting point for the recommended district, regional, and state actions to strengthen collaboration with families and caregivers, and to increase communication with families and caregivers regarding a student's academic and non-academic needs.

Increase Meaningful Engagement of Families and Caregivers

Goal: Ohio districts will engage families and caregivers as partners in supporting gifted students' success and improving gifted education programming and services.

District Actions

Develop family engagement initiatives that are aligned to gifted education.

- Seek and honor families' own expertise by involving them in educational decision-making, including the development of Written Education Plans, and engage them in regular review and feedback to support ongoing improvement of gifted education services.
- Provide families and caregivers with clear and consistent communication about student progress and expectations, along with practical tools and resources that enable them to support gifted and high-ability learners at home and at school.
- Reduce barriers to family engagement in school events by including language supports in families' preferred languages and addressing needs such as childcare, transportation, and meals, when possible.
- Provide learning and engagement opportunities for families and caregivers that build their understanding of how giftedness presents in a full range of students and increases their knowledge of academic and non-academic supports for gifted and high-ability learners.
- Collaborate with community agencies and providers to fill any gaps in what the district or school can provide for gifted and high-ability learners, particularly related to student wellness or wraparound services.

Regional Actions

Support districts in effectively engaging families in gifted education, including:

- Develop and provide professional learning opportunities on gifted education and communication and collaboration with families and caregivers.
- Create regional collaboration opportunities with schools and districts and educators to share effective family engagement strategies.
- Encourage engagement and alignment with existing Department and employer partnerships.

State Actions

Provide resources to support districts and regional partners in effectively engaging families in gifted education, including:

- Develop shareable resources for families of gifted and high-ability learners, such as key questions to ask related to gifted identification, gifted service, and talent development opportunities.
- Highlight district models of family and community engagement efforts to support gifted and high-ability learners. Describe the types of partners (such as higher education, early childhood, after-school, and business) that districts should engage with to build an interconnected community that supports gifted and high-ability learners.

Next Steps

Ohio's Plan for K-12 Gifted Education sets out an ambitious vision for improving access and excellence in gifted education across the state. Ohio districts and educators are encouraged to review the plan carefully, assess their current practices against the recommended strategies, and identify next steps for improving gifted education access and quality. Districts are encouraged to embed effective practices for gifted and high-ability learners within their district planning to ensure continuous monitoring and to align with district priorities. Initiatives at the regional and state level should continue to be directed at supporting districts and educators to meet the needs of all district students, including students who are gifted.

The Department will continue to offer resources and work with the Gifted Advisory Council to update recommendations as the work unfolds. The Department welcomes the input of colleagues and stakeholders across the state and looks forward to engaging with partners in this important work.

Appendix A: Glossary

Acceleration is the practice of moving students through coursework at a faster pace compared to peers. This may include, but is not limited to, whole grade acceleration, subject acceleration, early entrance to kindergarten, or early graduation from high school.

Differentiation is adapting instruction to meet a student's educational needs, readiness, and interests.

English Learners are students developing proficiency in multiple languages, including English, and whose primary or home language is not English.

Gifted refers to a student who "performs or shows potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared to others of their age, experience, or environment (Ohio Revised Code 3324.01).

High-Ability Learners are students who demonstrate advanced potential, strengths, or performance but may not meet Ohio's criteria for gifted identification. These learners benefit from advanced learning or talent development opportunities.

Local Norms refers to criteria used to compare student performance relative to peers within the same local context, for example, a school building.

National Norms refers to criteria used to compare student performance to a nationally representative sample of students. National norms are commonly used in standardized assessments.

Student with Disability refers to a student "who has an intellectual disability, a hearing impairment (including deafness), a speech or language impairment, a visual impairment (including blindness), a serious emotional disturbance, an orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, an other health impairment, a specific learning disability (including dyslexia), deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities; and who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services" and may include a student "who is experiencing developmental delays" (Ohio Revised Code 3323.01).

Talent Development is the systematic process of ensuring that all students' strengths are seen, nurtured, and matched to appropriately challenging learning experiences.

Twice Exceptional refers to students with both advanced abilities and special learning needs.

Written Education Plan (WEP) refers to a document that guides services for students who are gifted. It includes a description of the gifted service, measurable academic goals and may also include curricular, guidance, and instructional practices which support the student's non-academic needs.

Appendix B: References

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