



# Avon Lake City

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Assistant Superintendent – Dr. Jack Dibee

# Schools

Parent Meeting: Gifted Services for the 2025-2026 School Year

# Welcome to Our Gifted Services Presentation!

Mrs. Alice Ogonek, Gifted Coordinator

- Passionate about gifted education - every child deserves to be challenged, supported and valued
- 20 years of experience as a Gifted Intervention Specialist (GIS)
- Proud to be a part of the ALCS Family for 5 years as a GIS
- ESC of Lorain County: Gifted Coordinator for multiple districts (6 years)
- Parent of three gifted children - understand firsthand the joys and challenges



Avon Lake City Schools

# What is Giftedness?

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) defines gifted learners as “students with gifts and talents that perform – or have the capacity to perform – at higher levels compared to others of the same age, experience, and environment in one or more domains.”



# What is Giftedness?

- Giftedness is not just about high grades. Some gifted learners excel in school, and others may struggle due to challenges such as perfectionism, asynchronous development, or lack of appropriate challenge.
- Giftedness looks different in every learner. Some may demonstrate creativity or leadership, while others may show intense curiosity or deep emotional sensitivity.



# Common Traits of Gifted Learners

- Advanced vocabulary and complex thinking skills
- Absorbs information quickly with few repetitions needed
- Intense curiosity and deep love of learning
- Strong memory and quick processing skills
- High sensitivity - emotionally and/or socially aware
- Creative problem-solving and innovative thinking
- Preference for challenging or complex tasks
- Self-aware, socially aware, and aware of global issues
- May struggle with perfectionism or frustration
- Quirky or mature sense of humor

**Understanding these differences helps us better support and nurture gifted students.**

# Gifted Identification in Ohio

- Superior Cognition
- Specific Academic Ability (Reading, Math, Science or Social Studies)
- Creative Thinking Ability
- Visual or Performing Arts (Art, Music, Drama, Dance)

## How are students identified?

- Universal Screening (InView: grades 2 and 5 with 128+ CSI Score)
- MAP Assessments (reading and math with a 95th+ percentile)
- Referral Based Testing (parents, teachers, and students)
- Use of State-Approved Assessments



## What Happens After Identification?

- A Written Education Plan (WEP) outlines how a district will support the gifted student's needs based on identification area.
- Service options include cluster grouping, acceleration, honors classes, Advanced Placement (AP) classes, and College Credit Plus (CCP).
- Gifted Identification does not guarantee services. Ohio does not mandate gifted services.

Identification is the first step – the next step is determining how to support the student's needs.



## What's a WEP?

A WEP is a formal plan outlining how the district will address a gifted student's needs. It includes the following:

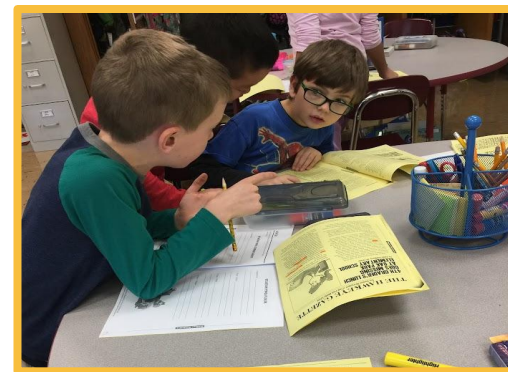
- The area of gifted identification
- Goals for the student (academic and/or social-emotional)
- Service options provided to meet these goals
- Progress monitoring to ensure the plan is effective

WEPs are signed by the teacher and shared with parents via PowerSchool and/or at parent-teacher conferences. WEPs are a living document that can be updated throughout



# What is Cluster Grouping?

- **Cluster Grouping** is a research-based educational model designed to meet the academic needs and social emotional needs of gifted learners in a mixed-ability classroom with a teacher who supports them through differentiated instruction.
- It is not a removal of services but a different service model to support gifted learners on a daily basis.



# Why Does Cluster Grouping Work?

## **Peer Interaction:**

- Gifted students thrive with intellectual peers who challenge and inspire them
- Encourages collaboration and deeper discussions

## **Tailored Instruction:**

- Simplifies differentiation for teachers
- Focused delivery of advanced content and creative tasks



# Benefits for Students

## Academic Growth:

- Realistic perceptions of their abilities
- Better understanding and acceptance of learning differences
- Enhances critical and creative thinking (deeper discussions)
- Consistent challenges

## Social-Emotional Support:

- Provides a sense of belonging
- Encourages leadership and teamwork skills

Source: Winebrenner, Susan, and Dina Brulles. *The Cluster Grouping Handbook: How to Challenge Gifted Students and Improve Achievement for All*. Free Spirit Publishing, 2008, p.23.



# Cluster Grouping at ALCS

- Identified gifted students will be placed in designated cluster classrooms with teachers who have completed the ODEW's mandated Gifted Professional Development. ***These teachers have had over 60 hours of professional development in teaching gifted students.***
- Teachers will use flexible grouping within the classroom to provide differentiated instruction tailored to students' readiness levels and interests.
- Gifted services will be embedded into daily instruction, along with enrichment opportunities such as Math Mania and the Pitch Challenge.



# Is Cluster Grouping the Same as Tracking?

**No, cluster grouping is not the same as tracking.** While both involve grouping students based on ability, they serve different purposes and have an impact on student learning.

## **Cluster Grouping:**

- Flexible and fluid
- Focus on differentiation
- Encourages collaboration across all ability levels

## **Tracking:**

- Rigid
- Limit opportunities with early placement
- Creates separation from peers

**Sample of Cluster Grouping Districts in NE Ohio:** Amherst, Avon, Bay Village, Beachwood, Cuyahoga Falls, Fairview Park, Highland, Kirtland, Lakewood, Mentor, Nardonina, North Olmsted, North Royalton, Rocky River, Shaker Heights, Twinsburg, Westlake



# Implementation Across Elementary Schools

**Gifted Intervention Specialist will support the 3rd and 4th grade gifted cluster teachers at all 3 elementary buildings.**

**Gifted services will include:**

- Curricular enrichment
- Co-teaching opportunities
- Differentiated instruction support
- Project-based learning facilitation
- All identified gifted students will benefit from the program. Currently, SOAR only serves 29.3% of gifted students.



## Next Steps and Timeline

- Notification to parents of students who newly qualify for gifted services (through InView or MAP scores)
- School visits by GIS to other districts to observe cluster grouping
- Program begins next academic year (August 2025)
- Principals will assign classroom teachers to cluster groups
- Cluster group assignments forthcoming
- Quarterly professional development for cluster teachers
- Regular program evaluation and adjustment



## Questions or Additional Information?



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