



July 14, 2017

Dr. Bruce D. Riegel
Lead Specialist for Gifted and Talented Education
Maryland State Department of Education
200 W. Baltimore Street, 5th Floor
Baltimore, Maryland 21201-2595

Re: Comments re Maryland Every Student Succeeds Act

Dear Dr. Riegel:

I have reviewed with interest the draft of the Maryland Every Student Succeeds Act that has been posted on the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) website. My comments are these:

- 1) I very much like the inclusion of the term “gifted” in this document. All too often, gifted children have been ignored when policy was conceived and implemented, to their detriment. The use of this term throughout the draft document is to be commended;
- 2) The readiness for postsecondary success section, while valuable, does little to address the needs of gifted children, especially those from underserved populations (children of color, English learners, and students from low-SES backgrounds). The level of readiness as indicated by SAT and ACT scores is below that which each organization (ETS and ACT) believe indicates college readiness;
- 3) More support would be helpful for those students aiming to go to college or university. With underserved groups, prioritizing those students who indicate promise either through test scores, referrals of teachers or parents, or self-identified interest would be especially helpful;
- 4) Emphasizing inclusion of AP and IB offerings in schools shows good intentions, but gifted children often need more. Suggesting acceleration or dual enrollment programs at local colleges or universities would benefit gifted children more than AP or IB programming, which, at the end of the day, remain high school classes taught to high school students by high school teachers;
- 5) With regard to teacher preparation—Maryland has long lacked adequate teacher preparation or professional development opportunities to assist in teaching gifted children. Because pre-service teachers are not required to take a class devoted to gifted learners, and because few faculty members in higher education or the PreK-12 schools have such training, implementing a mandate that such a class be made part of pre-certification coursework would do more to benefit gifted children than any other reform.
- 6) While assessing gifted children, I also think it is important to build into the assessment system some way of tracking these children specifically. Gifted children will often perform at or above grade level, but for some this may represent severe underachievement. Unless

and until these children are specifically tracked, they are at risk of getting overlooked in the shuffle;

- 7) That being said, the efforts of MSDE to provide professional development opportunities for teachers across the state are to be commended. Of the 50 states and the District of Columbia, only Ohio requires a gifted class from its teacher candidates. This initiative to improve in-service teachers' knowledge and understandings of gifted education is much needed.

Again, I was very pleased to see reference made to gifted children in the document, I just wish there were more specific actions and accommodations required for this key constituency.

Thank you for the opportunity to make comments. If there are any questions regarding this letter, please feel free to contact me either by E-mail at sschroth@towson.edu or by telephone at (410) 704-4292.

Very truly yours,

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