

## **TIME FOR ACTION!**

Sherry Sparks and LaToya Tung, MAGC Advocacy Committee Co-Chairs

The Michigan House of Representatives Education Committee is currently holding hearings to hear from organizations about their highest educational priorities and set the fiscal education budget for 2013-2014.

At the present time there is no mandate or funding for gifted education in Michigan. We are **NOT** one of the 30 states in America that mandates gifted education nor are we one of the 36 that requires identification of gifted children and youth. Wayne County alone has approximately 13,000 gifted children and youth and there are hundreds more in every other Michigan county. **Most of them are left to fend for themselves.**

As a result, far too many Michigan gifted students are underserved, underperform, and may ultimately underachieve and/or under-contribute to their chosen fields of endeavor, our state and our nation.

Sherry Sparks, MAGC President-elect, testified before the House Education committee Wednesday, February 20, 2013 about the current state and needs of gifted children. In her remarks, Sherry laid out MAGC's four high leverage proposals for meeting the needs of Michigan's gifted students:

"Michigan cannot afford to waste the minds of **ANY** our children. MAGC wants to ensure that **ALL** children, including the gifted, demonstrate academic growth and personal development commensurate with their potential. In that spirit we offer the following pathways:

### **1. MEANINGFUL ASSESSMENTS**

Michigan's mandate for one year of student academic gain for one year in school went into effect this fall. The MEAP and MME tests *do not* provide educators with specific data about the true extent of a student's knowledge; they only measure *minimum* proficiency. In order to advance the academic achievement of all children, including the gifted, we must accurately assess both current academic levels *and* growth.

### **2. TEACHER TRAINING**

Teacher training that includes gifted education components is essential for working effectively with gifted students. What we are asking is what I'm sure everyone sitting on this committee would like to see for all Michigan students: trained teachers provided with the necessary tools to help students attain measurable annual growth. One wonderful benefit is that gifted educational strategies, curriculum, and assessment tools benefit *all* children...so why not ensure these engaging, exciting, challenging methodologies are available to all children by training teachers in gifted education?

### 3. GIFTED CHARTER SCHOOLS

Families with gifted children have few options if their public school does not offer the types of educational programs and opportunities that will help their children realize their potential. The majority of parents with gifted children cannot afford private gifted schools.

For this reason, we ask you to allow gifted charter schools for students as an alternative pathway to maximizing their potential and ensuring their future contributions. We believe that most students would prefer to stay in their home districts if gifted programs were available, but in cases where districts do not offer these programs, we ask that you make gifted charter schools possible.

### 4. AN ALLOCATION OF 1% OF THE MICHIGAN EDUCATION BUDGET FOR GIFTED CHILDREN AND YOUTH

In order to cement its status as the next world superpower, China has invested \$500 billion dollars in gifted education. China holds the firm belief that gifted children is the key to their nation's innovation, progress, and economic future. By identifying and targeting gifted children from all socio-economic groups, China has no doubt that the return on its investment will be massive.

In Michigan, gifted children in large part, remain unidentified and under-developed. When they are underserved they underperform. That means that gifted children ultimately, will under-contribute. Economically speaking, Michigan simply cannot afford to leave the potential of its gifted children to chance.

We are happy to provide more details than time allows today regarding the criteria, distribution and uses for the 1% allocation for gifted education. Briefly the allocation would fund:

- Teacher training in gifted education
- The development, implementation, and accountability educational plans for gifted and talented students
- The purchase of high quality gifted materials, programs, and services

'It is the gifted children of today who will make the future scientific and medical contributions that will someday improve lives. It is these children who will write novels and compose symphonies that will someday move souls.

***If we want young gifted people to be prepared when society needs them, we need to be there for them when they need us.*** Please include them in your budgetary and legislative decisions."

**IMPORTANT:** This is the time that families and educators of the gifted can have impact. If you support the proposals MAGC made to the MI House Education Committee, please call or email your local MI House Representative, the members of the Education Committee, or Representative Lisa Lyons, chair of the Education Committee.

#### Education Committee

(To send a message, go to the MI House Website at

<http://www.house.mi.gov/mhrpublic/committee.aspx>, under "committees"

**click on education , then click on the name to send emails)**

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517-373-2002

Please encourage your family and friends to support gifted students by doing the same.