**GIFTED & TALENTED EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**
Thursday, January 19, 2023, 4:00 PM – 6:00 PM
Virtual Zoom Meeting

**COUNCIL MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Dr. Katharina Elbert (Co-chair), Isha Hassan, Albert Johnson-Mussad, Tyrone Mowatt, Takeru Nagayoshi, Courtney Perdios, Magalie Pinney, Donna Potter Astion (Chair), Juan Rodriguez, Dr. MaryGrace Stewart, Dr. Heny Taraz, Darnell Williams

**COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT**

Dr. Carol Cavanaugh, Kenya Guerra

**DESE REPRESENTATIVES IN ATTENDANCE**

Thomas Zorich (Liaison)

**GUESTS**

Susan Corwith and Eric Calvert (Center for Talent Development, CTD)

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**Call to Order**

Chair Astion calls the meeting to order at 4:02pm.

**Special Announcements**

* Member Dr. Taraz was presented with the 2022 MAGE Educator Award bestowed by the Massachusetts Association for Gifted Education last week at her school. Congratulations to Dr. Taraz!
* Member Hassan gave public comment at the December 2022 Board of Elementary and Secondary Education meeting. Thank you, Isha!

**Public Comment**

* Gerry Mroz provided public comment.
* Marcela Krishnamurthi provided public comment.

Comments by the public include:

Concerns about lack of accountability and enforceable policies in continuum of services/MTSS approach, concerns about administrators being unaware of and unresponsive to advanced learners’ needs in the absence of accountability measures, despite parents’ advocacy. Concerns about toxic culture in regards to gifted and advanced students, lack of legislative support and other structural elements such as gifted IEPs that exist in other states.

**Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Council members unanimously approve the minutes of the November 17th, 2022 council meeting.

**DESE Update**

DESE Liaison Zorich reports that the Continuum of Services document CTD and DESE have been working on will be sent to council members at the end of January or early February. The Department will schedule a one-hour special council meeting in February which will focus on a discussion of the full document with CTD members present to answer questions, and on the collection of feedback from council members.

Members discuss the special February meeting time and length, then settle on a two-hour meeting on February 16th, 4-6pm. Susan Corwith and Eric Calvert from CTD will attend for one hour, but may not be available for the entire two-hour meeting.

Members seek clarification on the feedback process in regards to the Continuum of Services document: whether the council is one of many stakeholders or is defining what other stakeholders see, and what the sequence of stakeholder feedback is. Liaison Zorich clarified that the same draft will be given to superintendents and other organizations for their unfiltered feedback, then CTD will edit the document and bring it back, in an iterative process.

Members add further comments:

* Highlighting the expertise and focus of this council on the education of gifted and advanced students, an expertise that is not necessarily found elsewhere; urging that council’s role be considered prominently in the development of relevant guidelines, and that council be included in the final review.
* Voice concerns that other stakeholders may not share the same urgency for the need of services for GT and advanced learners.
* Suggest that providing at-a-glance presentations with bullet-points and clear action steps for roll-out will be helpful for administrators and school committees, to facilitate and increase level of engagement.
* Members offered their assistance in developing presentations and roll-out concepts, and in providing resources on the concept of continuum of services.
* With districts’ budget season starting soon, knowing what to implement sooner than later will be beneficial to allow for appropriate planning and incorporation into budgets, to make it a reality.

**Discussion on Social-emotional Learning (SEL) Needs, Work to Date**

Chair Astion introduces two documents prepared by her and co-chair Elbert that reference the CASEL Five SEL Competencies, provide a list of recommendations, and aim to summarize, in a framework, the social-emotional/SEL issues to be addressed in regards to GT/advanced students in communities, families, schools and classrooms:

- GT-specific social-emotional needs along with the desired outcomes once needs are addressed;

- Actions that need to be taken to generate the desired outcomes;

- Responsible parties to perform and implement these actions.

The documents include the feedback council members gave at the January meeting during the discussion of Social-emotional needs and learning for the GT and advanced learner population.

Council members express appreciation for the documents, and make suggestions for edits:

* Need to clarify why the term ‘asynchrony’ is listed as part of several goals, and whether it means something slightly different in each case. Suggest to add a few words of clarification which aspect of asynchrony is being addressed in each category.
* Recommend to use the term “developmental asynchrony” instead of “asynchrony”.
* Agree that regular diagnostic assessments are very important to chart educational growth, but in addition to strengths these diagnostic assessments can also detect areas in which students need additional support, and they may be able to unmask hidden disabilities.
* Express the need for a solid definition with clearly defined terms of students to be served, in order to proceed with recommending measures to identify such students, and for solidifying program and SEL recommendations.

**Overview of Continuum of Services**

Liaison Zorich introduces Susan Corwith and Eric Calvert from Northwestern University’s Center for Talent Development (CTD), the organization that DESE has been engaging with to develop guidelines for the education of Massachusetts’ gifted and advanced students.

Susan Corwith and Eric Calvert introduce themselves and present the Continuum of Services model slides that they presented previously to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education in December 2022:

* For gifted education to be effective and equitable, it can’t be an add-on, it needs to be integrated into the education system and provide opportunities for as many students as possible.
* Buy-in from all different stakeholder groups is necessary.
* Several states and many more districts have adopted a Continuum of Services model, it is endorsed by NAGC;
* Model is meant to expand access to enrichment, differentiated instruction, acceleration and social/emotional supports; frames talent development and gifted education as a school-wide responsibility.
* Model includes a range of services, providing rich learning opportunities for all students, not only those already showing high achievement, and seeks to address specific barriers that limit opportunities for marginalized and underserved student populations.
* CTD identified the MTSS blueprint as a framework already in place in Massachusetts that can be extended to include services for gifted and advanced learners.
* Building on an existing, already known framework is expected to make transition easier.
* Comprehensive list of envisioned services will be provided in the full document at the February meeting, possible elements include differentiated instruction, acceleration, AP classes, mentorships, SEM Type I-III enrichments, independent study, twice-exceptional support services, etc.
* MTSS grew out of an earlier model RTI (response to intervention) that focused on bringing students to basic grade-level proficiency.
* Model offers many evidence-based choices without being too prescriptive, to allow flexibility for individual schools’ implementation.
* Support of academic needs to be in combination with support of SEL, not only one or the other.

Members ask clarifying questions:

* What is meant by “Arbitrary criteria”? Answer: Districts in other states often use a one-size-fits all approach to identification, e.g. pick a number such as 90th or 95th percentile in achievement assessments to find students, instead of looking for more useful, individual criteria and strategies to support and find students with advanced learning capabilities. Goal is to not create barriers, and one needs to be careful to avoid “service-rationing”. Example: Ohio has absolute criteria in state law that create barriers for identification of high-poverty students.
* How does the model work in a K-12 continuum, and how do students move through the tiers? How will Continuum of Services concepts be translated into something that reaches and impacts students? Answer: CTD will need to develop a “How to guide”, how to talk with parents, how to support educators in educating parents and students about the services and their impact. There will be a needs assessment that will help determine which students benefit from which types of services, and that takes local norms into account. Enrichment for all students as a talent development approach is also an integral part. The full document will have more details on needs assessments.
* Will there be details on implementation support for educators, and family engagement? Answer: These areas are still under development. DESE and CTD are discussing what is needed in terms of professional development. DESE/CTD will be asking for the council’s feedback on how to communicate and implement the Continuum of Services.
* Effort to avoid mistakes made with RTI? Answer: CTD is inviting gifted state directors from other states and a prominent author of MTSS literature to join them in a presentation at the NAGC conference, to collect lessons learned elsewhere on RTI and MTSS.
* Which policies are being developed, policies that legislators can buy into knowing that BESE is onboard with them? Answer: Continuum of Services is a framework to move the work forward but in order to make sure services are equitably implemented all across the state, policies, such as acceleration policy and others, will be needed. The council’s feedback is invited on what needs to be in place for equitable roll-out and to make sure districts do what the guidelines say. Discussions about the type of professional development needed are ongoing between DESE and CTD.
* How will DESE encourage districts to implement guidelines instead of seeing them as an optional menu? Answer: DESE will need to encourage districts to look at their data and determine what their students’ need, to use the best practices laid out in the guidance. Actual policies such as an acceleration policy will have to come later. If the council wants to discuss legislative initiatives it can do so.

**Adjournment**

Meeting is adjourned at 6:08pm.

**Documents Referenced During Meeting**

* Slides on the Continuum of Services, presented by CTD
* SEL draft report considerations
* SEL Goals Table