

# Delay would have negative effects on gifted students, says trustee

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pull their children out if they knew they had to ride the bus two hours a day, or the wealthy parents would enroll their children into private school.

Bateman-Olmstead said delaying assessment would have adverse effects on the gifted students, some of whom display unique behaviors in class and aren't fitting in with the other students.

"If we are not intervening early, we are creating behavioral issues in their future and mental health issues," she said.

Trustees also questioned the amount of training kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers receive in identifying giftedness in their students.

After corresponding with teachers, Hlusko said that her opinion is that most teachers don't know how to look for giftedness.

Boag said the board offers two training sessions per year to teachers, one session in the south and one in the northern communities. The training isn't mandated, but the opportu-

nity is provided and teachers are invited.

When asked how many teachers attend, Boag said he didn't know, saying attendance isn't taken.

One trustee supported the staff recommendation, though asked for some tweaks. Milton trustee Nancy MacNeill said moving the blanket assessment up one year is a good move, as it would capture gifted students sooner. Furthermore, she said removing the deadline for teacher nominations for primary screening was also good, as some individuals don't respond well to deadlines and allow them to pass. However, if they had the opportunity to nominate a student at a later date, they could be more inclined to do so.

"I like this. I think it's a step forward," MacNeill said. However, she added that early years teachers need improved training to look for giftedness. She also asked if there's a way the board could help parents identify giftedness in their children.

Hlusko didn't agree this was a step in the right direction.

"It's easier to say it looks better. It's not better for kids," she said.

She said there's a reason why ABC Ontario has asked trustees to reject the recommendation and why the gallery was packed with parents concerned about the continuance of the primary gifted program.

In addition, Hlusko provided two statistical analysis reports to trustees and staff that promote the continuance of the primary gifted screening. One of the reports goes on to say the Grade 4 screening process should be discontinued because it under-identifies gifted students and can produce a higher number of false positives.

Hlusko also noted the board's research department continually states five years of data are required for proper assessment. She said the primary gifted program hasn't had that many years.

Furthermore, she said the current Grade 4 cohort in Burlington would enter Grade 5 next year, where they would be with teachers who have many years of experience teaching self-contained gifted classes.

Along with deferring the decision until a later date, trustees have asked the board staff for a number of directions. They include:

- Develop and implement a consultation plan to seek input from the board's Special Education Advisory Committee, parents of gifted students, teachers and school staff on improving our gifted assessment process
- Share all data regarding elementary gifted education
- Share a history since 2010 of what professional development our kindergarten and primary grade teachers have received about how to successfully nominate students for assessment. Share a plan on how to improve this.

For more information, visit [www.hdsb.ca](http://www.hdsb.ca).

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