

## **Ron Rechenmacher**

### **1) What experience do you have with Batavia Public Schools' gifted services and what knowledge do you have about gifted education in general?**

My son, AJ, was part of the gifted program at Louis White. He started there in 4th grade after transferring in from another school. My wife, Gretchen, a former middle school teacher, was fairly involved and helped out in the classroom. AJ had to take some tests and was then placed in the "challenge" program where he was pulled out for math.

Gretchen remembers how AJ went to the city math competition at the library and watched as a 4<sup>th</sup> grader. The next year he competed as one of the three 5<sup>th</sup> graders.

AJ was also involved with the NUMATS program through Northwestern. At Rotolo Middle School he was with the higher-level students on the team where he could be more academically challenged.

In 5th and 8th grade, he/we were blessed with a tremendous teacher who went above and beyond and helped AJ flourish. I would say this teacher did "differentiated instruction." In the second half of his 8th grade year, AJ's MAP score increased (from the 1<sup>st</sup> half) tremendously.

He chose to go to Marmion for high school because he had a spiritual connection with Marmion since 4th grade when he participated in their summer athletic camps there and as an 8<sup>th</sup> grader, he received a scholarship to go there. He has excelled at Marmion in all honors classes receiving straight A's. This fall he scored a perfect score on the ACT.

Throughout his academic career we gave him many opportunities to take summer classes from Fermilab, the park district and the library, to challenge him.

Through my son's giftedness (including interactions with other parents), I believe I have experience with gifted education. However, the realm of gifted education, including twice exceptional, is vast and the public education system needs to continuously adjust to meet the needs of its increasingly diverse student population.

## **2) What is your vision for gifted education in this community?**

I would like to see the following:

- the type of differentiated instruction that AJ received become the norm for all classrooms;
- CANDO (a gifted and talented student advocacy group) be recognized by the district and that recognition should be formalized in policy;
- the district be able to facilitate the use of educational resources we have in the area (i.e. Fermilab);
- focused (and effective) use of technology in this area in light of the fact that it can be easily misused;
- consistency and fairness among all the elementary schools;
- the district's program meet the requirements outlined in 105 ILCS 5/14A so as to be eligible for state funding, but I also believe that the program should be crafted in such a way that it remain viable if state funding is not available.

## **3) What issues do you believe BPS101 needs to address in its academic programs and course offerings so that students can reach their full potential and be college or career ready by the end of their tenure in Batavia schools? What changes would you recommend?**

From board meetings, board meeting minutes and communications with several members of the community, it's my understanding that at the elementary level, there needs to be uniformity/fairness between all the elementary schools. In junior high and high school, there needs to be a continuation of differentiated instruction in addition to advancing a student to the next grade level. Depending upon the number of students who advance, there may need to be a special class – as when AJ was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, he was in a math class with 6 to 8 students.

## **4) If elected, what criteria will you use to evaluate proposals to maintain or develop the existing gifted services available to students in BPS101?**

I've reviewed the criteria referenced in the ISBE 23 Ill. Adm. Code 227, which seems a reasonable starting point to evaluate proposals to maintain or develop the existing gifted services. Additionally, in addition to criteria recommended by administration, I would also take seriously input from parents, advocacy groups, teachers, and the community.