

To: Join Committee on Student Success
From: George Hegarty (george.heg@gmail.com)

My name is George Hegarty, and I'm writing both as a parent of a Redmond Proficiency Academy junior, and as an 20+ year English teacher in large public high schools in the San Francisco Bay Area, North Country San Diego, and now Redmond. I've taught at RPA for the past 6 years, and my daughter has attended RPA since 8th grade. For Emi, the proficiency model at RPA has allowed her to soar as a student and to excel in her extracurricular activities. She made the move to RPA because she was practicing gymnastics over 25 hours/week, and the school's flexible schedule allowed her to embrace her academics, excel in her sport, and still have time to take a breath.

I had seen so many students over my career try to do too much, and most of them eventually broke down in one way or another. In contrast, Emi has thrived, and I attribute so much of it to fact that she feels genuine ownership and agency with regard to her education.

Because of the skills placement at RPA, not only was she taking primarily high school level courses as an 8th grader, but also she had room in her schedule to pursue her love of computer science, and I am beyond thrilled that she was, because of the wide range of courses that are open to all students and not limited just to upperclassmen, take and pass both of the College Board's AP Computer Science exams by the end of her sophomore year.

Moreover, she has, and this is, for me, as a literature teacher and lover of the arts incredibly important, taken classes in and fallen in love with theatre. I really feel lucky as a teacher and as a parent to be a part of a theatre program that not only excels on a national level, but also provides a welcoming and compassionate environment for anyone who wants to take part in the performing arts.

Emi is also a part of the College Board's AP Capstone Diploma program, which we brought to RPA over three years ago, and when we did so, we were only one of two high schools in Oregon to provide students with the opportunity to take classes that emphasized college-level research and research writing that were based not on prescribed topics or curricula but on students' individual academic passions.

At its core, RPA is a place that respects students' abilities to know themselves, and we create pathways rather than hurdles between our students and their goals. For instance, our AP courses are open access so that students can enroll in the classes in which they are most passionate regardless of their age. I've had 8th graders and freshmen soar in my AP English Lit class, and those same students in other systems in which I've taught wouldn't have had access to the course until, at the very earliest, their junior years. And because of Measure 98 funding, we've been able to continually enhance our AP program to offer each of our students the opportunity to experience accelerated coursework in their areas of academic passion.

As both a teacher and as a parent, I have been amazed at the Redmond Proficiency Academy's ability to nimbly adapt to the needs of a diverse range of students, and to provide an education where all students feel respected for who they are as human beings.

Best,
George

All true paths lead through mountains.