

Testimony on House Bill 2419 for the House Education Committee, Feb. 27, 2017

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What HB 2419 does:

Funds district services to Talented and Gifted (TAG) students in Oregon.

The funding increases in steps:

- For each year in 2017-9, the bill allocates \$250 per identified TAG student in districts with 75 or more TAG students and \$300 per TAG student in districts with fewer than 75 identified TAG students.
- in 2019-21 the bill allocates \$375 per TAG student each year
- in 2021-2023 and thereafter the bill allocates \$500 per TAG student per year.

Why does the funding come from the State School Fund?

This method will enable Oregon schools to ramp up training, programs and services in an orderly way. The Oregon Legislature cannot allocate general funds over such an extended period. Other special needs students automatically receive extra funding through additional weights in the formula, but TAG students do not. If legislators wish to avoid any impact to the State School Fund, they can backfill this allocation to the School Fund from the General Fund.

Oregon spends more than \$10,000 per student. For TAG students, setting aside a small portion of this funding allocated for each of them would allow for trained staff, planning and resources. This would help ensure that the rest of the funding was spent on appropriate instruction for the unique needs of TAG students.

Why is this needed?

Like all other students, TAG students need appropriate instruction: they don't teach themselves, no matter how capable they are. We now know that many TAG students have knowledge and abilities similar to students three to five years older. TAG services are mandated by state law because regular classroom instruction does not meet their needs. Research has found that when these needs are unmet, students suffer social and emotional harm in addition to learning less than they are capable of achieving.

There is no federal or state funding to support district TAG services (a grant-in-aid of \$350,000 per biennium funds a state TAG specialist position).

All TAG students need access to learning opportunities if Oregon is to meet its 40-40-20 goal and become competitive in the world economy.

The current situation is inequitable: there are very large differences among districts in the proportion of students identified, spending per student, and the services available to students.

Where does TAG funding fit in the larger picture?

All TAG funding in Oregon comes from state and local sources. There is no Federal funding specifically for TAG services in Oregon. Local districts pay for TAG services from the funding that each district receives from state and local taxes. This funding is supposed to provide every student with an education that meets state standards--including the standards established by the Oregon TAG mandate.

State school standards require TAG services in just the same way as they require a full school day or math instruction but many districts do not spend anything to provide services to their TAG students, creating major inequities from district to district.

- In 2014-5, the most recent year for which we have data, 86 Oregon districts reported spending nothing at all on TAG.
- Spending per identified TAG student ranged from nothing to more than \$1,400 in two small districts.

During the past decade, (2004-5 to 2014-5):

- overall spending per Oregon student has *increased* from \$8,799 to \$10,615
- average spending per TAG student has *fallen* from \$191 to \$137
- spending on TAG overall has fallen by about a third, from \$7.5 million in 2004-5 to \$5.3 million in 2014-5.
- Identified TAG students make up nearly 7% of all Oregon students
- TAG receives less than two tenths of one percent of the overall State School Fund and an even smaller percentage of overall Oregon school spending (state + local).
- Fewer TAG students are being identified despite an increase in overall k-12 student enrollment.

Educating our high-potential students would benefit both our local industries and our state. It would enable our own students to qualify for well-paid jobs that are currently being filled from outside Oregon. It would also attract families that set a high value on education to Oregon, strengthening our schools overall. The benefits would be greatest for our low-income and minority high-achieving students because these students depend most on their educational opportunities to qualify for middle-class professions. Studies have found that the "excellence" gap widens dramatically the longer students are in school.