

February 24, 2017

Dear members of the Oregon House Education Committee,

I am writing in support of House Bill 2419, which will fund Talented and Gifted (TAG) educational services in our state's public schools.

Since 1987, the Oregon state TAG mandate has required that schools teach accelerated learners at their rate and level of learning, but for decades the state has offered no funding to back this requirement up, leaving districts to their own devices. As of the 2014-2015 school year, districts spent an average of \$137 per identified student on TAG services and my own school district, Portland Public Schools, spent just \$32.27. In other words, Oregon schools are legally obligated to provide services to accelerated learners, but the overwhelming majority don't.

Why does this matter? Like many Oregonians, you might think that any students designated "talented and gifted" will do fine whether or not their needs are met in the classroom. But this simply is not true. TAG isn't a vanity label. Like the Special Education label, it indicates a group of students who require specific interventions in order to fulfill their potential.

My oldest child arrived his first day of school with an elaborately decorated note to his teacher, telling her how excited he was to be in her classroom. By the end of that year, he was suffering from insomnia as well anxiety-related gastrointestinal issues. He'd become belligerent and explosive. To his teacher, he seemed to be an unmotivated boy who asked way too many questions. It took us a year to figure out that he was both highly gifted and learning disabled. He needed access to an accelerated curriculum just as much as he needed handwriting accommodations and sensory breaks.

As the chair of Portland's Talented and Gifted parent Advisory Council, I've talked to countless parents who've had similar experiences. Without appropriate educational services, many TAG students either check out or act out. Some disrupt the classroom, others explode with frustration at home, and some simply become "mental dropouts," slowly losing their love of learning while never learning how to work hard and persist in the face of challenge.

Today I'm asking you to change this. By passing House Bill 2419 and finally funding our state's TAG mandate, you will make a positive difference for Oregon's roughly 40,000 TAG-identified students and for our state as a whole. All students deserve a chance to learn something new every day they go to school. Please take this step and fund Oregon TAG services.

Sincerely,



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