

February 24, 2017

Oregon House Bill 2419

Dear Oregon legislators,

I am writing to urge you to vote yes on Oregon House Bill 2419. An increase in funding is the first step to meeting the academic needs of Talented and Gifted students in Oregon. We want school to be challenging enough to foster a natural interest in learning, encourage academic success and allow every student to reach their potential. State of Oregon law supports teaching each child at their academic level, and has taken legislative action to mandate it. The mandated, unfunded TAG requirements haven't been enough for school districts to meet the needs of their TAG learners.

My TAG children have hated school since kindergarten because they have not been taught at their accelerated rate, depth and level of learning. Worse yet, all but the most seasoned and exceptional teachers don't know enough about TAG education to recognize the challenges my children face. My children mentally "dropped-out" of their time in the classroom and were labelled lazy, disruptive, having a bad attitude and poor work ethic.

Children should not be placed in an educational setting where they are not learning. TAG kids who are forced to sit still and listen to information they already know is a loss and disservice to the children, their families and communities. Children who hate school, refuse to get ready or walk out the door on school mornings, cry before school and have long crying jags on Sunday night is not normal or acceptable when there are known remedies. It makes home life miserable. My children see a therapist weekly, who suspects they suffer from depression and an anxiety due to school boredom. It is hard on parents, especially those parents who do not have the means to advocate for their TAG children. I've put the effort into advocating for my TAG children for years now and have seen no improvements, in violation of state law.

Most classrooms have academic levels spanning 3 or 4 grade levels even without considering TAG students. It's a challenge for even the most talented teachers to meet that wide range of educational needs. Of all subgroups of students, TAG students make the least amount educational progress every year. TAG students being bored for 6 hours a day commonly results in TAG students who needlessly cope with anxiety, anger, depression or act out and are disruptive. TAG students become more apathetic about school with each passing year. Often TAG-identified boys act up and get into trouble, which leads to social problems as well.

Stereotypically, girls tend to behave well, not make much of a fuss, but at home the parents see the full brunt of their child's frustration and hopelessness.

My children expressed dismay that some of their classmates like and even love school. As a parent, when 95% of our daily power struggles are about just getting them to go to school every morning or doing homework, and not taking their frustrations out at home, it damages the parent child relationship. School districts are rightly obligated to teach every child at their academic level, regardless of whether they are meeting benchmarks or not, learning at, below or above grade level. There is no excuse for our children to be denied a level-appropriate education, TAG students included. Funding TAG education is crucially important.

As a last note, we recently moved from Portland to a suburb where school are more academically demanding. The teachers and principals are more knowledgeable about TAG learners. As I had suspected, the change has been dramatic for one of my children and a slight improvement for my other. I am so happy to have a child likes to attend school and feels challenged in a couple classes after hating school for 6 years. It's not perfect. Much more could and should be done for TAG students, but it confirms my suspicions that an unchallenging school environment was contributing to hopelessness in my children. Every Oregon student, regardless of ability, should be excited about learning. House Bill 2419 will help educators meet that goal.

Sincerely,

Kirsten Solberg

Lazy River Drive

West Linn, OR

97068

Kirsten.Etc@gmail.com