

Thank you this opportunity to testify in support of HB 2419.

Here is just one story of what it is like to have a Talented and Gifted child in Portland Public Schools.

A child was identified early in Kindergarten as TAG. He tested as what is considered to be Highly Gifted; scoring in the 99th percentile in all 3 of the areas- Reading, Math and Cognitive Ability. But there was a big problem. He hated school. HATED IT .He went from a child that loved school, to a sullen, angry child. Rage and crying every morning. Walking the half mile to school, and no matter how early he left, he dragged his feet to be late -everyday. Everyday,he yelled "WHY are you making me go?" "Why? ***I haven't learned ANYTHING.*** ANY DAY.EVERY DAY. ALL DAY. ALL YEAR LONG!"

The school tried to differentiate. It did not work. They whole grade advanced him from K to 2nd. It did not help. They tried.

As a parent, there is nothing that will stop your heart like hearing these words.

From a seven year old: ***"Mom, if I kill myself, would you kill yourself too? "***

That is the moment the world changes and a TAG parent thinks-"I don't care if he ever even goes to college.Please God just let him be OK" .

Luckily, the pediatrician assessed it was a just a situational reaction to his severe boredom and anger at school.

The bar then quickly changes. Early entry to college? Ivy League school? Scholarships? No, not those dreams. Now, a TAG parent just wants their child to be emotionally healthy, and graduate from high school without spiraling into depression, or turning to alcohol and drugs to fend off the anger and boredom.

This child, thankfully, was accepted to ACCESS Academy, PPS's only real TAG service. A 2012 PPS TAG parent survey showed overwhelmingly that TAG services have been virtually non-existent in neighborhood schools. A new PPS TAG director is making headway, but there is no money.

ACCESS is stand alone K-8 alternative program for those with 99th percentile scores. The waitlist that year was 179 students. They advanced him an additional grade level in math, and meet both academic level and rate, in other subjects. And guess what, he is a much happier child, slowly returning to his old self, but, He Still Hates School. It is taking years to undo the years of boredom, and the one thing he learned in K and 2nd grade: He Learned to To Hate School . But there is hope: he has friends,loves his teacher, wants to be early to the bus everyday, and for the first time, he is learning how to *learn something at school.*

So, I actually am not here to advocate on his behalf. Because even though I worry about high school, there is a more pressing matter.

I am here for the thousands of kids who are like him, but who are still stuck at the neighborhood schools. Because without the privilege of having 2 working parents whom have

the time, and wherewithal, to figure out *how* to advocate for their TAG child, he would not have any TAG services to speak of. Even then, there are no services to speak of at neighborhood schools for the 95th-98th percentile students.

This is also a huge equity issue.

Some kids are in schools that have practically zero children TAG identified. They go unidentified for many reasons- the excuse is always money.

And then when they are Identified, they get no services. But at least their ability would be acknowledged.

So, this problem is even worse for those kids who are not, and never will be, TAG identified. For they are so **EXTREMELY BORED OUT OF THEIR MINDS**, they are disruptive beginning in Kindergarten, and will soon get the "bad kid" label. Unidentified TAG kids are acting out. Social outcasts. In the counselor's office everyday. Or how about Checking out? Zombie during the day ? Desk full of origami to fill their time? And then they fall apart at home. That's what they do.

They do not fit the picture of a "gifted child" because people confuse a Gifted Child with a Bright Child. Not all gifted children are over-achievers.

In one Kindergarten class, 5 TAG students left PPS before 2nd grade to go to private schools. Without a parent advocate, they'd go un-identified as TAG. These parents were NOT looking for anything more than a solution to the behaviors and depression CAUSED by lack of proper instruction at their child's rate and level.

Oregon public schools need funding to support the teachers with Professional Development, to learn what these Gifted children really look like. For real TAG Identification and Services, you need money to exist and be effective.

Schools need more training and curriculum materials, so children can be taught at their RATE and LEVEL, DURING the school day.

It can be done. A little money can go a long way. Look to Paradise Valley, Arizona. Dina Brulles, PHD. Impressive TAG Identification rates, and effective TAG services in the regular classroom.

TAG parents are often misunderstood in their advocacy.

These kids won't automatically "be OK".

Quite the opposite.

Please fund this mandate.

Please support HB 2419.

<http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2016/03/31/472528190/the-rare-district-that-recognizes-gifted-latin-students>