

Hi there. I'm T, mom of an elementary TAG student who has been underserved by our school district. Since Covid began, he has been homeschooled, and I can see how much better he learns in a different environment. However, it is unrealistic and unfair to expect every parent to stay home and educate their child, just because most Oregon schools can't seem to get the job done.

My son recently got a scholarship to join in Winter Wonderings, a TAG program at Oregon State University via Zoom. Listening from the kitchen, I could hear how his behavior improved and his knowledge expanded, as he learned from these special TAG teachers, with other TAG kids. These kids are just... different. Not better, not worse, *different* learners than other kids. We should be meeting their needs and respecting their differences.

I'm also a newspaper reporter, and I'd like to share a story with you:

A Tale of Two TAGs

"I grew up in Oregon," a Eugene woman told me. In her family, one bright child was tested TAG and put in a once-weekly special program. That child grew up to have anxiety and mental health issues. Though she still struggles with those problems, she learned to work with them, graduating with high honors from one of the greatest public universities in the world. She raised a family, earned a graduate degree, enjoys a modest but gratifying career, and enjoys helping her community.

Her brother was a few years older, she went on to explain: "He was like genius-level smart, and a bit of a rascal." The school didn't have a TAG program back then. He went on to have anxiety and mental health issues. Instead of college and a career, he went on to drug addiction, alcoholism, and homelessness—problems which now plague his own children.

"I always wonder what might have happened to my incredibly bright, super-smart brother if he had been challenged in school," the woman said, "if teachers had understood his different learning style, and if a genuine TAG program had been available to him."

Don't let another kid slip through the cracks! Please step up for TAG. Get rid of the unfunded mandate, and help our schools serve TAG students.