

To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Stacey Torres and I am a licensed teacher and the mother of an identified TAG student. As a teacher and a parent, I believe that ALL children have the right to a quality education that provides opportunities for true learning. Unfortunately, most of the TAG students in our public education system are not receiving the necessary instruction that leads to meaningful learning. TAG students like my daughter are overlooked and their academic needs are ignored since they "are already reading above grade level," or "are already proficient in the current math standards for their grade." They are sitting in the classrooms and being presented with information that they either already know, or learn much more quickly than other students. Thus, TAG students are expected to listen quietly to examples they don't need, complete busy work that they already understand, and can spend an entire year in a classroom in which they are learning minimal new material. Without adequate instruction at their appropriate level and pace of learning, TAG students are not being allowed to reach their full learning potential.

As a teacher, I understand the dilemma. Teachers need to make sure that all students are performing at grade level. Their focus and attention is logically drawn to those students who still need help mastering grade level curriculum. However, TAG students deserve attention also. Teachers need support in meeting the needs of ALL the students in their classroom. We need to do a much better job in Oregon of meeting the needs of our most academically advanced students. First of all, it is their right as a student, and secondly, it bodes well for the future of our state to nurture the intellectual needs of our TAG students.

Without deliberate state support, only the TAG students with wealthy and privileged families will ever receive the academic nurturing they need....because these families can afford to pay for evening, weekend and other extracurricular learning opportunities. Meanwhile, the majority of students, both privileged and not, are spending days of boredom and wasted time during the 6-7 hours of daily public school instruction. It is no wonder that TAG students are considered "at-risk" by misbehavior and underperformance metrics. Students who are ignored have a tendency to either act out with misbehavior, or disengage from participation and underperform because they don't feel like the education system is meant for them. According to Ms. Angela Allen, the TAG Specialist at the Oregon Department of Education, TAG students are also at a higher risk of both dropping out of school and committing suicide. With this data, the need for equitable and accurate identification (SB 478), student involvement in their own education (SB 486), and classroom support and training in TAG Best Practices (SB 487) take on even higher stakes and importance.

I urge the Oregon Legislature to start including TAG children in their care and attention. It is the right thing for the students themselves, their families, and the state as a whole.

Thank you,

Stacey Torres
Corvallis Resident