

Submitter: Bede Hubel
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure: SB595

I am writing to support bill 595 along with bills 596 and 736. I am a parent of a now 16-year-old TAG identified child and I wanted to share our very unfortunate experience as an example of why we need these bills. Teachers are being asked to provide TAG services, yet they have received no tools or guidance. This is confusing for parents and teachers alike, and leaves students without the instruction they need to stay engaged in school.

When my child was in kindergarten in West Linn/Wilsonville SD, a letter arrived to me stating that my child had been tested and identified as TAG. I was very happy to get this news about the TAG program because my child has other learning differences, and I knew having some areas of strength would be valuable to offset the areas of struggle.

That letter was the first and last document or communication that I ever received regarding TAG. At every conference I would ask the teacher about TAG services, and every time I got the same reaction: first a blank look, then the question "oh, is she TAG identified?" The teacher would say they would research and get back to me. I never received any plan or services and all of elementary years passed. I asked at every conference. Teachers would point out that my child was one to two grade levels ahead as a reason not to worry about doing anything further. I do not blame teachers for this, but this is why we need bill 595. The teachers should have had some programming or direction provided to them. Elementary school passed with my daughter doing very well academically and feeling proud of her schoolwork, so I did not worry about the confusing TAG situation. I trusted they would advance her at the first opportunity.

In sixth grade, my child who was ahead of grade level was placed in the regular math track instead of the advanced. This misplacement may not have happened if there had been some kind of TAG oversight. Neither she nor I knew that two tracks existed. A peer asked my child why she wasn't in the advanced class and that is how we became aware of the two different tracks. When I asked how they placed a TAG student that was so far ahead in the regular math, I was told "oops". When I asked how this would be rectified, I was told my 11-year-old could take home the current advanced math textbook and teach herself over the summer. Then they would place her correctly in advanced 7th grade math the following fall. Looking back, this is clearly not a well thought out plan for providing instruction. To expect the child to teach themselves! Unsurprisingly, my child was not able to teach herself a year of curriculum over the summer, but we still started 7th grade with high hopes for the advanced math anyway. My child struggled. She knew many skills but was completely in the dark with others. She went in before school and stayed after for support. I hired a math tutor privately. She was so determined to keep her grades up.

By winter, her anxiety spiked and she became depressed. This was a terrible time. To combat this stress, I moved her to a smaller school. While things improved, her once ambitious drive is gone. She is anxious and checked out of school now. At last formal testing, she was still well above grade level despite having had no consistent instruction since 6th grade. Imagine if she had received appropriate instruction all of those years!

I know that my child's story is common. Children with extra needs and/or amazing strengths are being pushed aside because they are not working at a convenient level for their school. This hurts the specific child and their family, but it also hurts the school and the community in the loss of that talent.

If all children were able to thrive and learn in school settings, how different would our high school graduation rates be? Our average testing scores?

Please vote yes on these bills so that future students might have the TAG support that my child did not.