

**SUMMARY REPORT
Talented and Gifted (TAG) Education in Oregon Public Schools
April 2004**

Purpose

The purpose of the TAG public input sessions was to gather information from interested parties in regions across the state about TAG education in Oregon public schools. This summary report documents the statewide responses in both public testimony and written surveys.

Process

Participants attending the public input session in each geographical area of the state were informed of the meeting through flyers and articles in their school newsletters and local newspapers. This information was distributed through the Education Service District (ESD) contacts to the local media. The Oregon Department of Education provided to the ESD contacts all materials for advertising the sessions and also materials used at the sessions. Materials available at each site included agendas, parent surveys, student surveys, TAG coordinator/teacher surveys, copies of the TAG law, and sign-in registration forms.

On the afternoon of each session, Department staff welcomed participants and gave a brief explanation of the procedures for speaking. Several ESDs were connected each afternoon, allowing speakers from each site to address all participants statewide as well as the Department staff. Sign-in registration forms and completed surveys were returned to the Department following each session.

Schedule of Meetings

DATE/TIME	ESD MEETING SITE	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
March 2	Clackamas	9
	Multnomah	24
	Region 9	4
March 3	Northwest Regional	34
	Grant	2
	Malheur	9
	Umatilla/Morrow	4
	Union-Baker	3
March 9	Douglas	6
	Linn/Benton/Lincoln	9
	South Coast	24
	Southern Oregon	19
	Willamette	42
March 15	Harney	4
	Jefferson (at High Desert)	1
	Lake	7
	North Central	6
	Lane	29
	High Desert	9

Who Attended Input Sessions

The sessions were designed for parents, students, teachers, curriculum directors, administrators, specialists, TAG coordinators, and TAG advocates. Approximately 250 people attended the sessions.

Who Completed Surveys

Approximately 300 parents, 140 students, and 75 TAG coordinators/teachers completed surveys.

What Happened with the Testimony and Survey Results

Department staff reviewed all of the testimony and survey results, categorized the comments by themes, and prepared this summary. Verbatim comments from the surveys are on file at the Department.

Themes From Public Testimony and Written Surveys

Generalizations

- ODE has raised expectations and hope with these hearings.
- The remnant of the TAG program must be retained.
- TAG is the most under-served minority population in schools today.
- TAG students are the forgotten population.
- Because the TAG mandate is unfunded, it fosters the illusion that TAG doesn't really matter.
- TAG means one meeting per year and some advanced math classes and more work, not necessarily appropriate work.
- There is no guarantee that anything will happen differently for a student identified as TAG.
- If people want to know what needs to happen with TAG programming, just ask any TAG student.
- It seems that No Child Left Behind = No Child Allowed Ahead.

Student needs

- Every student needs an equal opportunity to meet his/her full potential.
- TAG students do not automatically reach their potential.
- All children deserve to be educated at their own level.
- TAG students are high-needs children.
- All children's abilities must be honored.
- Because TAG funding has been cut, an equity problem exists.
- If IEPs were required for TAG students, the IEPs would include proper instruction and appropriate pace.

Student placement

- Skipping children to the next grade level doesn't address the rate of learning.
- TAG students must learn how to relate in regular classes.
- TAG students are happier and learn more when placed together in one class.
- TAG students often feel isolated.

Instruction at the appropriate level

- The work must be meaningful work, not more work.
- Wasted learning time produces negative attitudes and potential behavior problems.
- TAG children are sometimes not challenged even once during a week.
- The TAG “plan” has often been to go alone into the hall to do extra research.
- The TAG “plan” has often been to do extra homework.
- Most TAG activities happen after the regular school day.
- Saturday and summer enrichment classes are not replacements for sufficient, daily, challenging schoolwork.

Inequity of services: within districts and the state

- TAG identification and services are not consistent within school districts.
- TAG identification and services are not consistent across school districts.

Inequity of services: learning differences

- Students scoring 97% are just as different as those scoring at the 3% level.
- Most resources are targeted at NCLB low performing students. Providing services to one group of students should not alter the services for another group.
- Teachers have been forced to focus on learners who have not met the benchmarks. It is assumed that TAG students will meet the benchmarks, and therefore, no emphasis is placed on their learning.
- Families must leave the public schools to have their TAG children educated, either in private school or home school.
- Because of funding issues, many electives have been cut. This creates a problem for all students, and especially for TAG students.

Parent Advocates

- Year after year, parents must continuously advocate for TAG services for their children.
- Parents are “plowing the same ground” every year over TAG plans and services.
- Parents need to be informed of their rights.
- Parent volunteers, the backbone of many TAG programs, have no teacher training. They often have full-time jobs, other children, and may suffer from volunteer burnout.
- Parents who have good jobs can afford to enhance their own children’s education. However, many TAG children do not have family financial support or advocacy.

Advice for the Department

- Follow-through and implement the decisions.
- Provide funding.
- Strengthen the program with a full-time leader.
- Form partnerships with COSA, OSBA, and OATAG to strengthen the program.
- Be consistent.
- Don’t allow the TAG program to be the “second class citizen.”

Responsibilities of the Department

- The Department should provide state leadership with adequate staffing.
- There is no opportunity for grant funding without leadership from the Department.
- A cadre of professionals has worked together in six regional planning groups during the past years. The Department needs to coordinate their work and gain from their shared expertise.
- The Department should facilitate teacher training and pursue a TAG endorsement for certification through TSPC.
- Schools are at risk of losing leadership and expertise in the state, districts, and at the universities. Teachers with TAG experience have moved into regular classrooms. Building from the ground floor in the future will be much more difficult than maintaining the current programs.
- If the funding problems were corrected and the law followed, Oregon would have an exemplary program.
- Other states are continuing to provide TAG services.
- Monitor compliance according to TAG law.
- Recommendations for responsibilities of the Department TAG coordinator:
 - ▶ Facilitate training in instruction and assessment for TAG teachers.
 - ▶ Facilitate general education staff development on TAG issues.
 - ▶ Promote a process for TAG identification.
 - ▶ Promote policies and practices to improve instruction and service delivery.
 - ▶ Bring expertise to a central location for rural areas.
 - ▶ Bring expertise to impact pre-service training in TAG.
 - ▶ Promote networking across the state.
 - ▶ Expand and enhance the TAG website.
 - ▶ Form a TAG Advisory Committee.

Teacher training, resources, time

- TAG teachers need training in TAG assessment, instruction, and consultation skills.
- Because children are placed in regular classes for most of their school day, all classroom teachers need training in TAG instruction.
- All teachers need training in differentiating curriculum and instruction for the entire spectrum of abilities.
- All teachers need training in meeting the social and emotional needs of TAG students.
- Regional planning groups have successfully offered services to districts in the past.
- Frequently, parents meet with teachers to sign TAG plans, but there is no follow-through in services because of time limitations on teachers.
- The quality of TAG services depends on the good will of the teacher.
- Teachers are over-worked.
- The teachers, to whom TAG children are assigned, are expected to do even more work to meet the needs of the TAG students. TAG students feel they are “bothers” to teachers.
- Teachers need time, resources, and training in order to successfully squeeze TAG into their busy schedules.

Please note: All survey information, letters, written responses, CDs, and other materials offered for the input process are on file for further reference by Department of Education staff.

Parent Survey Results

1. I am well informed about the TAG laws.

Strongly Agree					Strongly Disagree
46	55	71	56	77	

2. I know what to do if I have concerns/questions about my child’s TAG plan.

Strongly Agree					Strongly Disagree
67	58	68	46	63	

3. I am given the opportunity to participate in meetings about my child’s TAG plan.

Strongly Agree					Strongly Disagree
52	51	55	40	94	

4. I understand what is being discussed when we are developing my child’s TAG plan.

Strongly Agree					Strongly Disagree
79	52	52	20	71	

5. I am comfortable asking questions and expressing concerns at meetings about my child.

Strongly Agree					Strongly Disagree
123	64	38	16	43	

6. My suggestions and ideas are listened to when we are developing my child’s TAG plan.

Strongly Agree					Strongly Disagree
47	55	50	39	81	

7. My child’s education services have been provided in a timely manner.

Strongly Agree					Strongly Disagree
46	43	59	47	82	

8. Staff in the regular classroom consistently carry out and support my child’s TAG plan.

Strongly Agree					Strongly Disagree
42	48	53	47	85	

9. My child’s referral to TAG was acted upon in a timely manner. *

Strongly Agree					Strongly Disagree
51	31	23	10	31	

* Please note that for 56% of the respondents this question was not applicable because referrals had occurred prior to the past 12 months.

TAG Coordinator/Teacher Survey Results

1. Parents are given information about TAG laws.

Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
41	17	6	4	6

2. Parents are given information about what to do if they have concerns or questions about their child's TAG plan.

Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
36	18	16	1	5

3. Parents are given the opportunity to participate in meetings about their child's TAG plan.

Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
36	22	10	6	2

4. Parents are given the opportunity to arrange a mutually agreed upon time and place for a meeting about their child's TAG plan.

Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
38	21	11	3	3

5. Parents are given the opportunity to ask questions and express concerns at meetings about their child's TAG plan.

Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
40	17	12	2	4

6. Parent suggestions and ideas are listened to when the child's TAG plan is being developed.

Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
32	16	15	4	4

7. Education services are provided in a timely manner.

Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
23	28	15	4	5

8. Staff in the regular classroom consistently carry out and support the child's TAG plan.

Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
13	26	20	12	5

9. During the last 12 months, referrals to TAG were acted upon in a timely manner. **

Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
29	24	14	1	8

** Please note that for 8% of the respondents this question was not applicable because referrals had occurred prior to the past 12 months.

Student Survey Results

1. I know what to do if I have concerns or questions about my TAG plan.

Strongly Agree					Strongly Disagree	
44	13	19	15	52		

2. I am given the opportunity to participate in meetings about my TAG plan.

Strongly Agree					Strongly Disagree	
34	13	19	13	64		

3. My suggestions and ideas are listened to when my TAG plan is being developed.

Strongly Agree					Strongly Disagree	
29	23	12	14	62		

4. I am receiving the TAG services I need.

Strongly Agree					Strongly Disagree	
36	18	21	16	54		

5. My referral to TAG was acted upon in a timely manner. ***

Strongly Agree					Strongly Disagree	
29	11	11	3	14		

*** Please note that for 53% of the respondents this question was not applicable because referrals had occurred prior to the past 12 months.