

Submitter: Lisa Bartee
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure: SB595

My name is Dr Lisa Bartee and I am the parent of a 5th grader who attends ACCESS Academy in Portland. I STRONGLY SUPPORT bills SB595 and SB596 because TAG education is extremely important to me and my family, as well as many other students in Oregon. My daughter went to a Montessori school for preschool and kindergarten, and was encouraged to learn at her own pace. She joined a PPS school for first grade, and it was academically a disaster. She had been learning multiplication and division by the end of kindergarten, while her first grade class spent the first several months counting and learning to add. They had gotten to subtraction by the end of the year. We repeatedly met with her teacher to request more challenging work, in fact my daughter wrote her teacher a letter asking for harder work. The teacher was not able to challenge my child in either reading or math, which I firmly believe is due to lack of teacher training and professional development. The TAG coordinator at the school said that teachers are in charge of all differentiation (including for TAG students) in the classroom, but if teachers haven't been fully trained, how can they be expected to do this? My daughter started spending a lot of time in the nurse's office because her "stomach was upset" (due to anxiety) and didn't want to go to school any more because it was boring. Luckily, we were able to get into ACCESS Academy for 2nd grade. It was a night-and-day difference - she has a peer group she is a part of and her classes are interesting and challenging. Unfortunately, ACCESS is a solution for some students - there is literally not room in the school building to increase the size of the program or to include all the students who are currently not being served by other PPS schools. Increasing funding and teacher training would help to accommodate all TAG students, who are just as deserving of an education at an appropriate rate and level as are other students. Lack of TAG services causes parents to remove their students from public schools, and since these are students who would be very likely to pass state-mandated tests, when TAG students leave public schools, test scores go down. I personally know of several families who have moved to Washington or sent their child to private school rather than have a bad experience in Oregon public schools. There are some families who have great TAG experiences in their neighborhood school, which to me emphasizes that the experience a TAG student has in their classroom is mostly due to the teacher. Therefore, better funding and teacher training would improve the educational experience of all TAG students.

Thank you very much for considering this bill because it will make Oregon better.
Sincerely, Dr Lisa Bartee