Wasting our talent

Data Submitted by the Oregon Association for Talented and Gifted for the Senate Education Committee January 22, 2025

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Introduction

For decades, we have neglected our gifted and high-achieving students. They lack the support and specialized instruction they need to thrive, and their teachers lack the necessary training to guide them.

Without appropriate interventions, many gifted students are left to struggle, becoming discouraged and disengaged. High-achieving students are rendered invisible by our data-reporting practices.

Inadequate state support not only limits their potential but also exacerbates disparities in identification and services.

Unequal access widens geographic divides, lowers overall educational outcomes, and hinders economic growth. Oregon students underperform advanced students elsewhere.

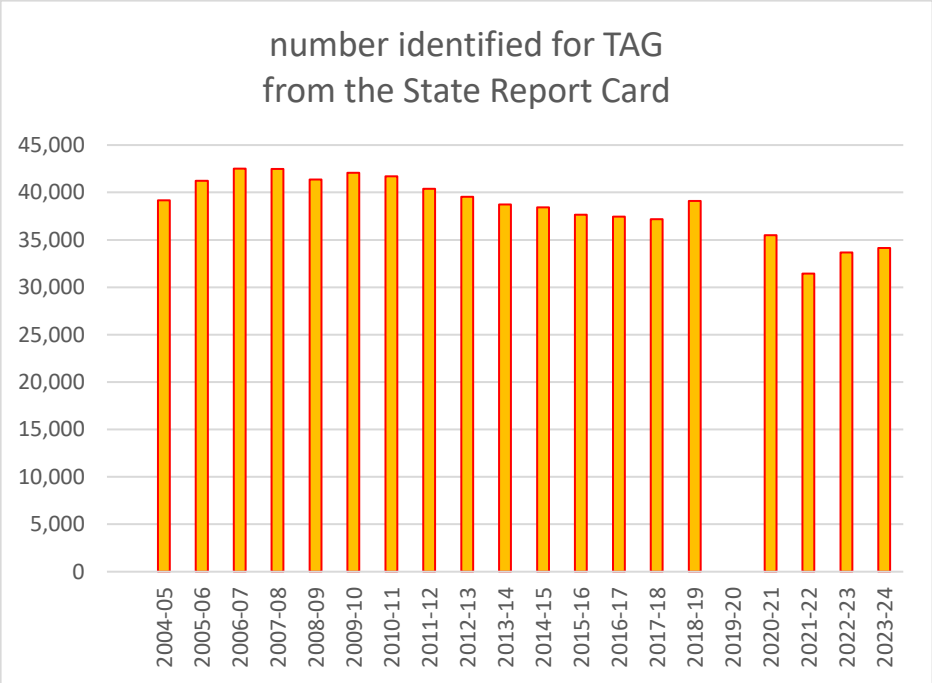
All students deserve instruction that meets their unique needs. Isn't it time we ensured that gifted and high-achieving learners are no exception?

Contents

1. Fewer TAG students are being identified today than 20 years ago:

In 2023-24 we had just 34,000 TAG students compared to 39,182 in 2004-5. (There was no report in 2019-20). (Solid counts began in 2004).

Year	number
2004-05	*39,182*
2005-06	*41,231*
2006-07	*42,517*
2007-08	*42,463*
2008-09	*41,374*
2009-10	*42,065*
2010-11	*41,698*
2011-12	*40,375*
2012-13	*39,534*
2013-14	*38,720*
2014-15	*38,417*
2015-16	*37,640*
2016-17	*37,462*
2017-18	*37,173*
2018-19	*39,097*
2019-20	*n/a*
2020-21	*35,509*
2021-22	*31,428*
2022-23	*33,660*
2023-24	*34,152*



2. Disparities in identification

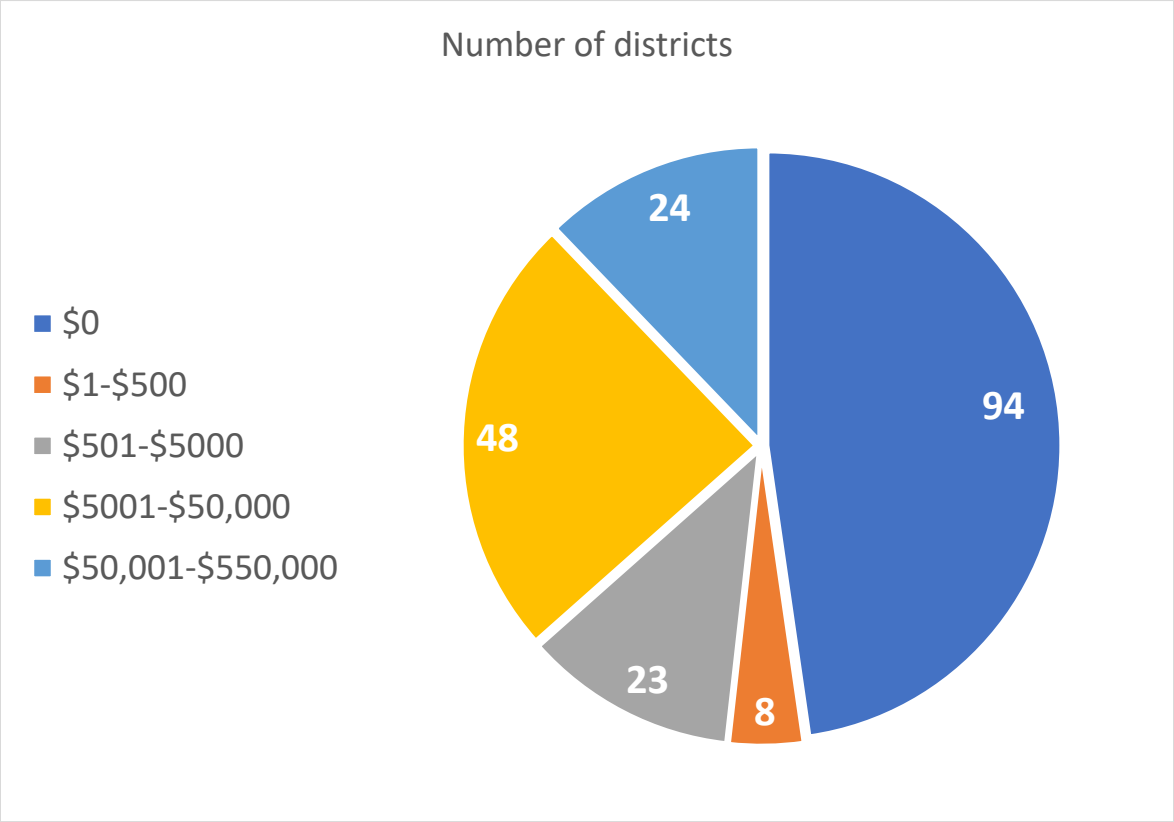
Student groups are disproportionately identified for TAG services

2023-24 Talented and Gifted Students

Student Group	Percent of All Students	Number of TAG Students	Percent of TAG Students	Percent of Student Group Identified as TAG
Total	100.0%	34,152	100.0%	6.3%
Female	48.0%	15,148	44.4%	5.8%
Male	51.4%	18,601	54.5%	6.7%
Non-Binary	0.5%	403	1.2%	13.9%
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.1%	118	0.3%	2.0%
Asian	4.1%	3,867	11.3%	17.2%
Black/African American	2.4%	416	1.2%	3.2%
Hispanic/Latino	26.1%	3,964	11.6%	2.8%
Multiracial	7.4%	3,359	9.8%	8.4%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.9%	95	0.3%	2.1%
White	58.0%	22,333	65.4%	7.1%
Students Experiencing Poverty	33.0%	3,406	10.0%	1.9%
Students Not Experiencing Poverty	67.0%	30,746	90.0%	8.5%
Special Education	16.0%	1,726	5.1%	2.0%
Not Special Education	84.0%	32,426	94.9%	7.1%

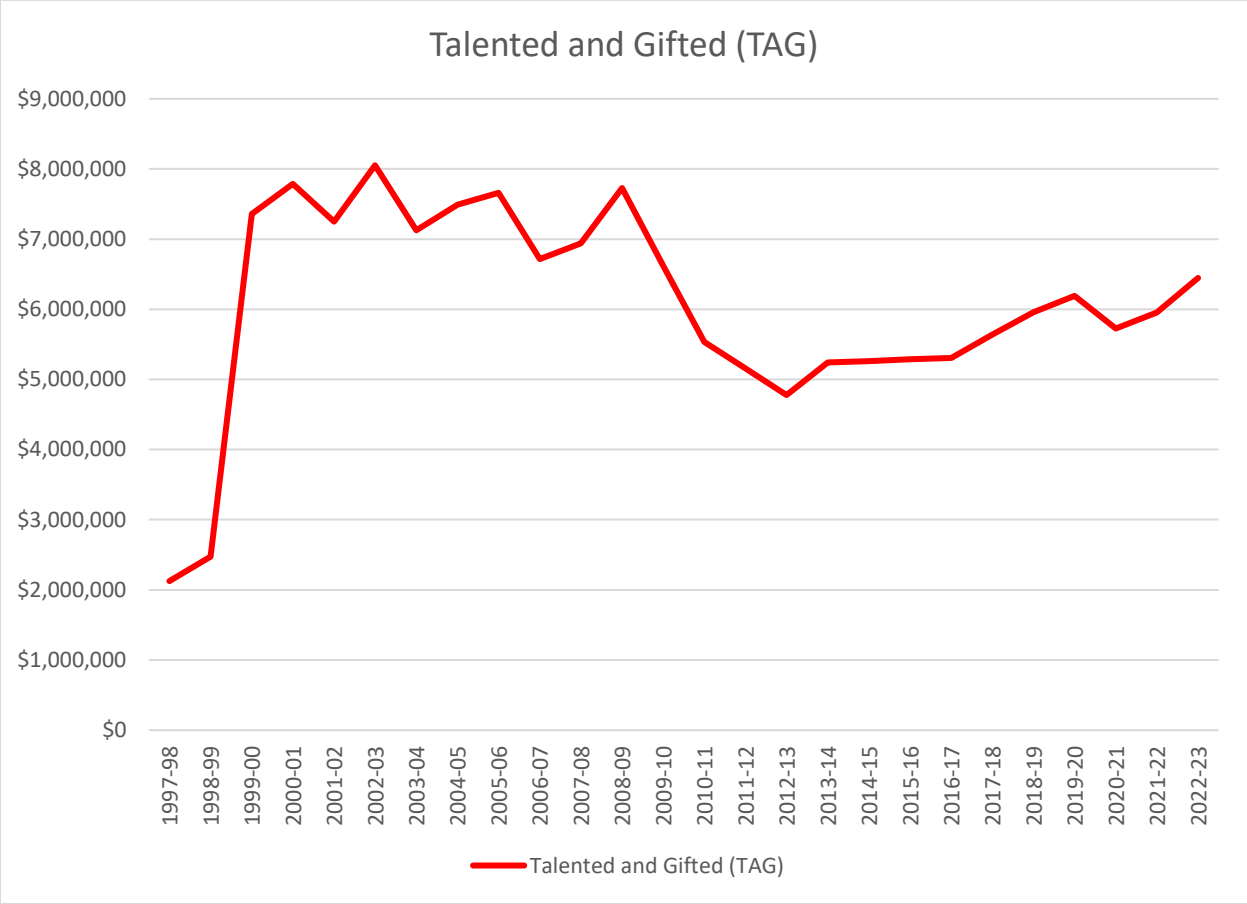
3. Disparities in access to resources

Nearly half of all Oregon districts reported no spending on Talented and Gifted services in 2022/3:

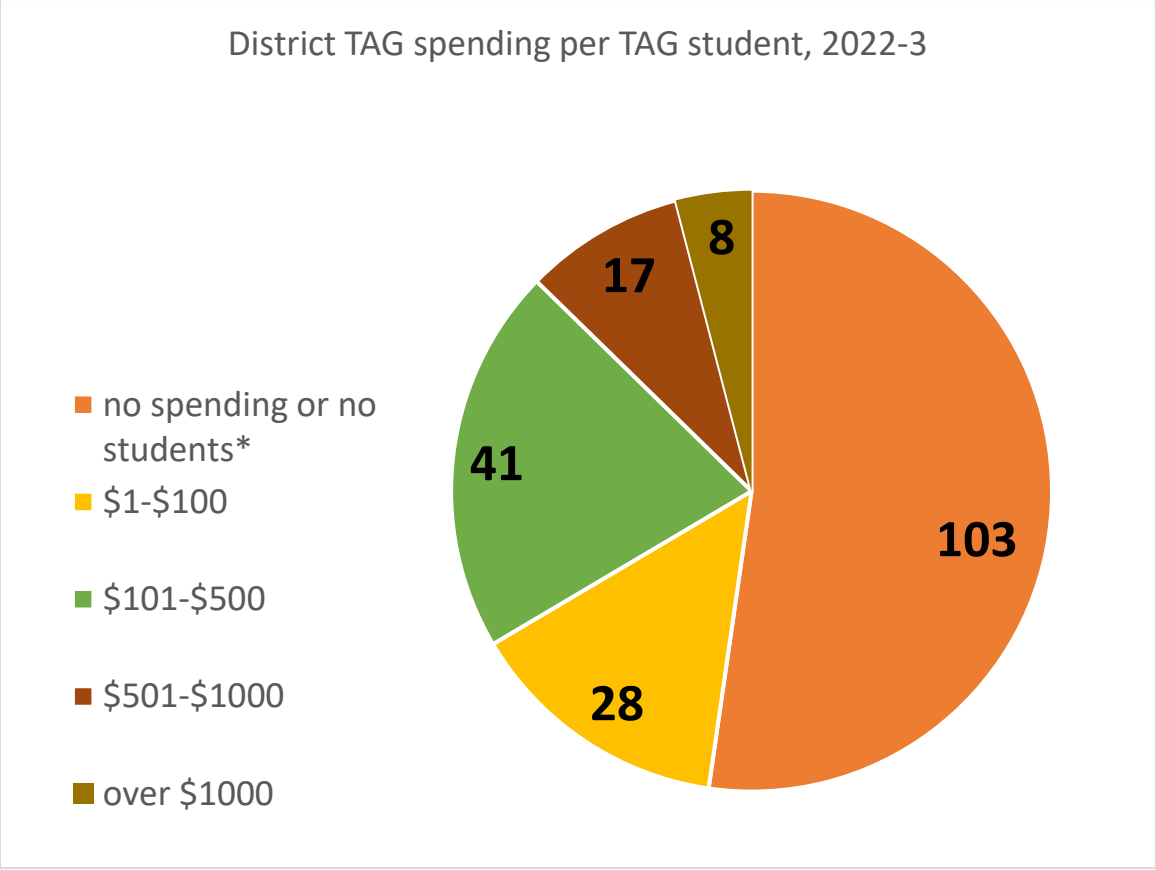


4. Overall TAG spending has fallen

In 2022/3 total TAG spending ($6.45 million in real dollars not adjusted for inflation) is lower than it was in 2010 and even in 2000

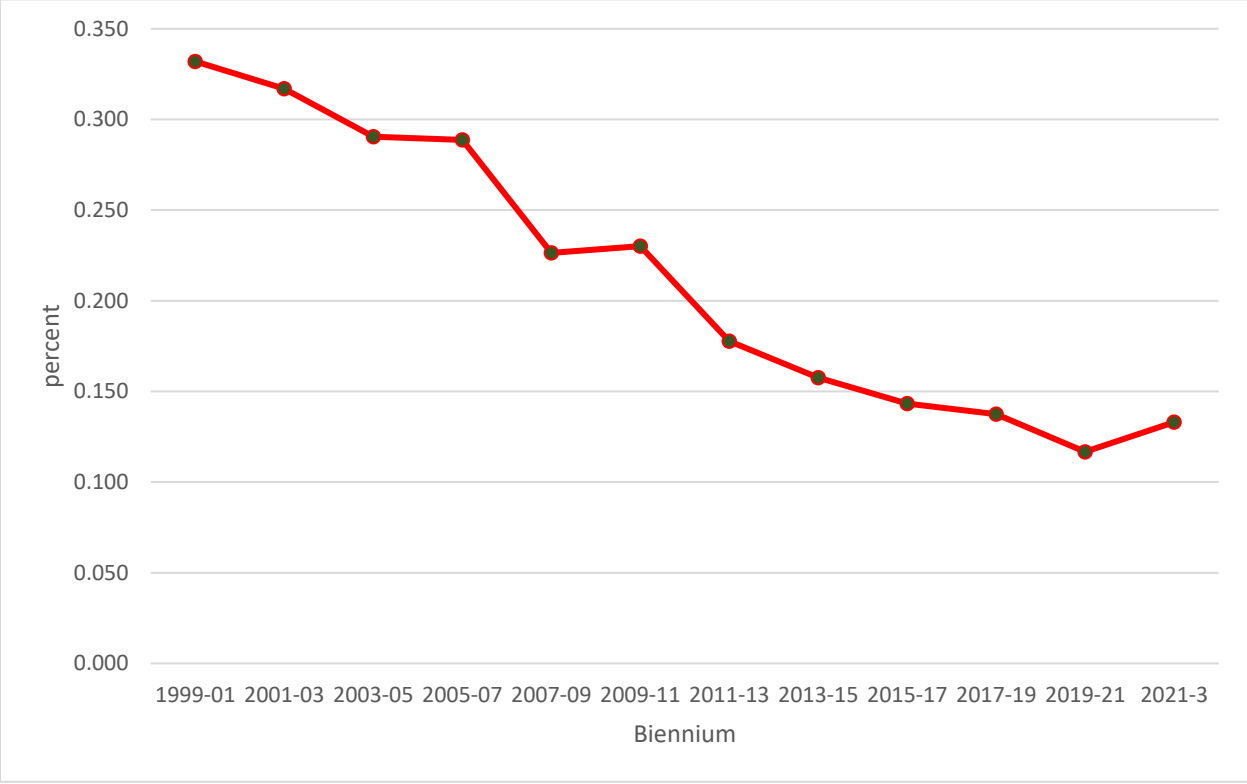


Per-capita spending varies greatly from district to district, causing inequities in services. More than half of all Oregon districts either do not identify TAG students or do not report any spending on services for them (A few districts report spending although they identified no students).

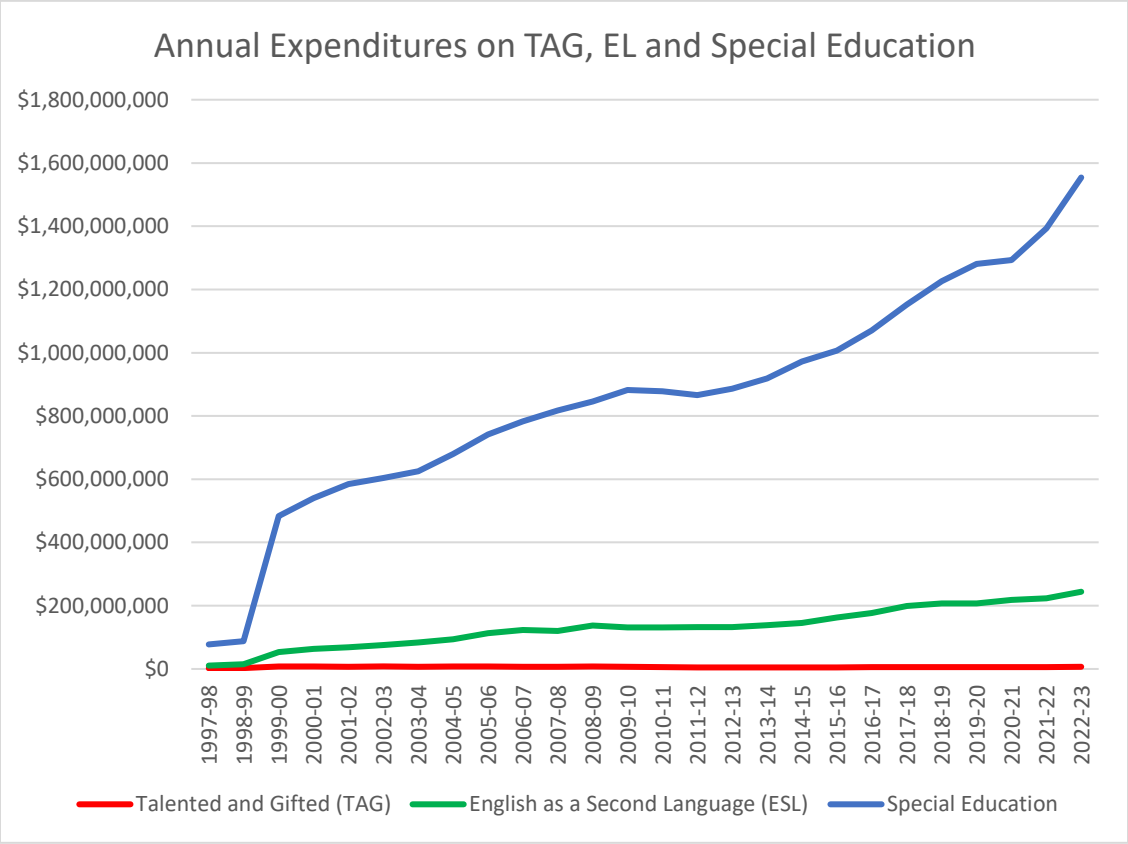


5. Support for TAG students has been falling for decades

TAG spending as a percentage of the entire state education budget has fallen steadily from about one-third of one percent in 2000 to about one-tenth of one percent today

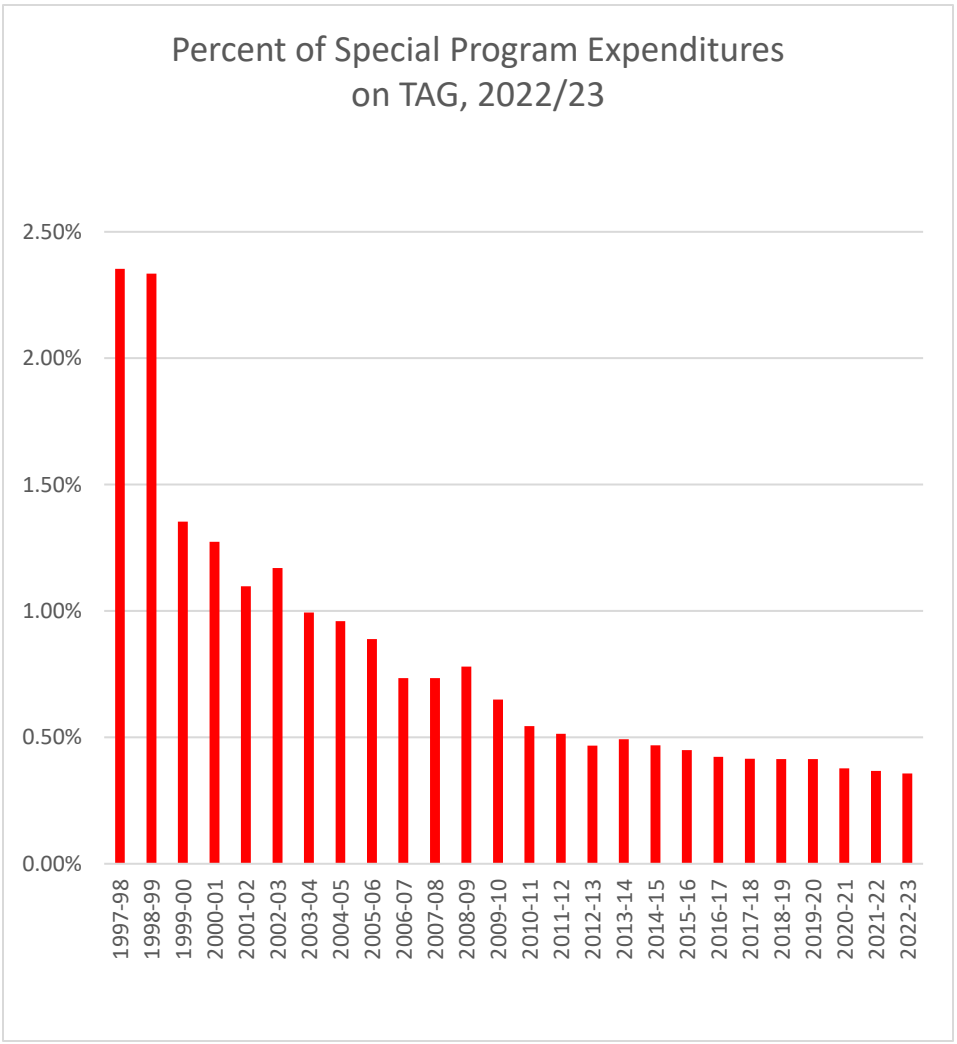


TAG spending as a portion of special population spending (TAG, ESL and Special Education) has plummeted, falling from 2.33% to 0.36% in 2022/3

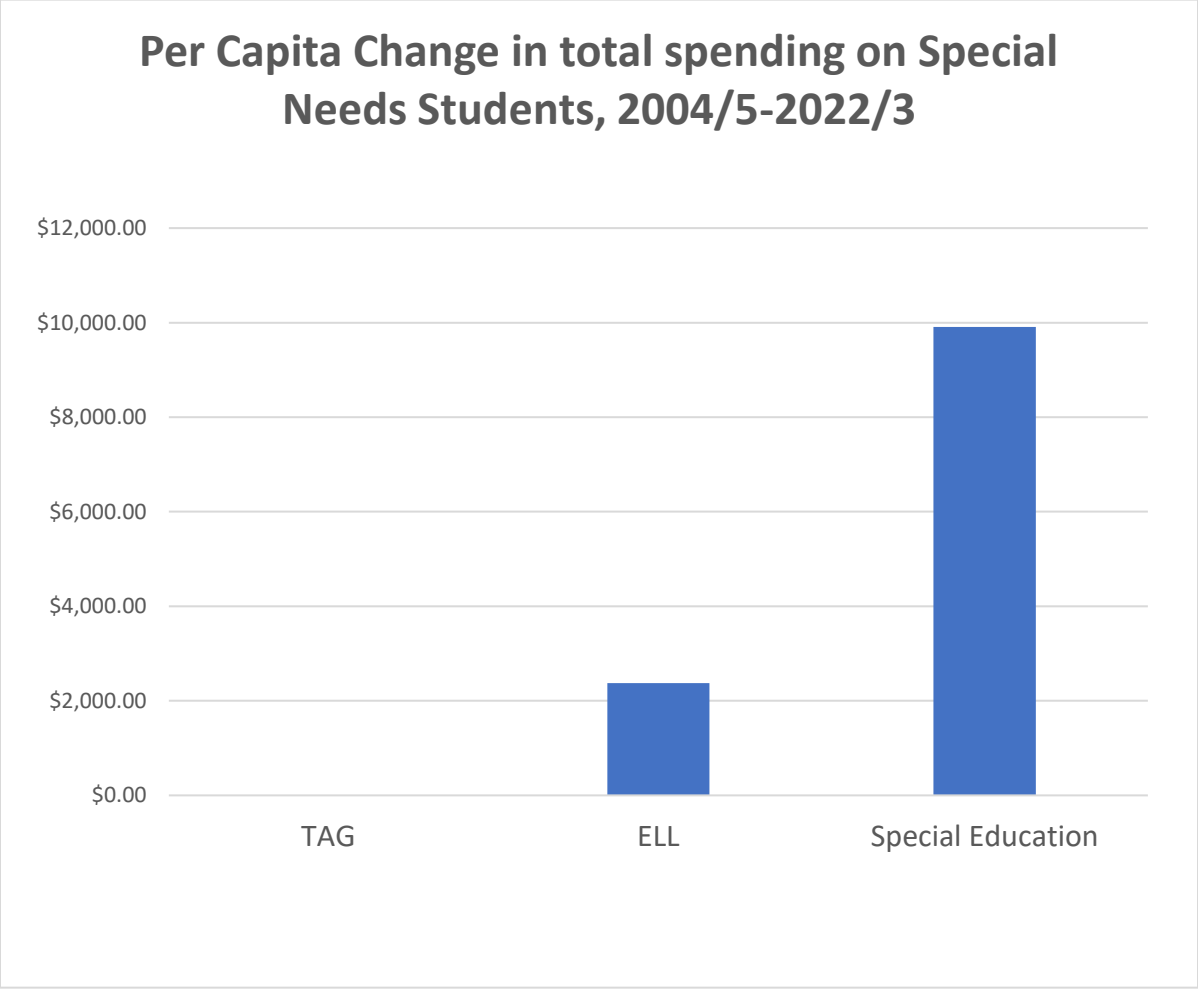


TAG spending data, graphs compiled from data supplied by the Oregon Department of Education, Dec. 19, 2024

School Year	Percent of Special Program Expenditures on TAG
1997-98	2.35%
1998-99	2.33%
1999-00	1.35%
2000-01	1.27%
2001-02	1.10%
2002-03	1.17%
2003-04	0.99%
2004-05	0.96%
2005-06	0.89%
2006-07	0.74%
2007-08	0.73%
2008-09	0.78%
2009-10	0.65%
2010-11	0.55%
2011-12	0.51%
2012-13	0.47%
2013-14	0.49%
2014-15	0.47%
2015-16	0.45%
2016-17	0.42%
2017-18	0.42%
2018-19	0.41%
2019-20	0.41%
2020-21	0.38%
2021-22	0.37%
2022-23	0.36%



Per Capita spending on TAG has remained level only because we are identifying fewer TAG students. Students identified for other special services have increased both in numbers and in *per capita* spending:



6. TAG and high-achieving students are often invisible

We do not include high-achieving students in our accountability systems. Schools assume they are “fine” without making an effort to ensure they are learning.

Most state accountability documents combine students who “meet” benchmarks and students who “exceed” benchmarks, for a single count of students who are “proficient.” This makes high-achieving students invisible.

These students were explicitly excluded from provisions of the Student Success Act when the State Board of Education on April 21, 2022 agreed that a *“Lack of access to programs for academically gifted and high-achieving students does not constitute facing academic disparities”*

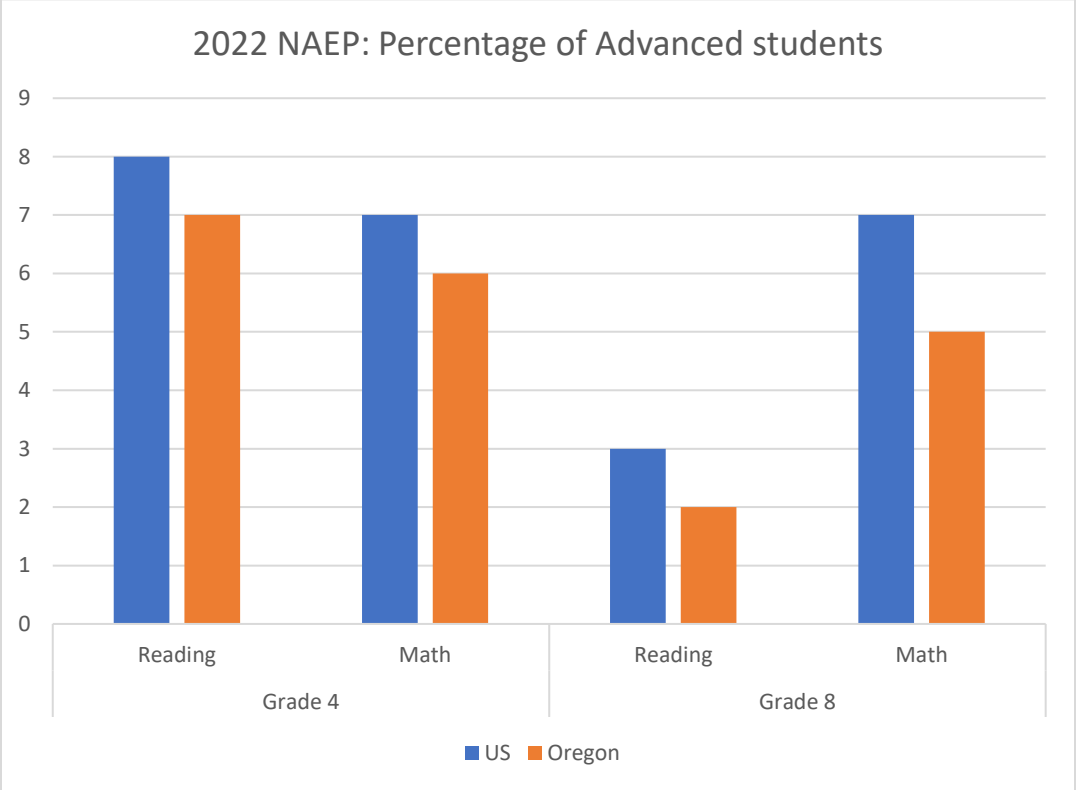
Because of this, these students are not included in “Metrics and Longitudinal Performance Growth Targets:" of the Student Success Act.

This declaration also has a downstream effect on other state reports and outreach efforts. In identifying education “stakeholders,” many ODE staff and contractors turn to “community-based organizations” that focus on the specific student groups called out in the SSA, overlooking the needs of high-achieving students. OATAG and/or TAG families seldom have opportunities to participate even when policies under consideration will affect these students directly.

The Quality Education Commission recommendation for 2025/7 (August, 2024, p. 61) also completely omitted TAG services even though they are mandated by state law.

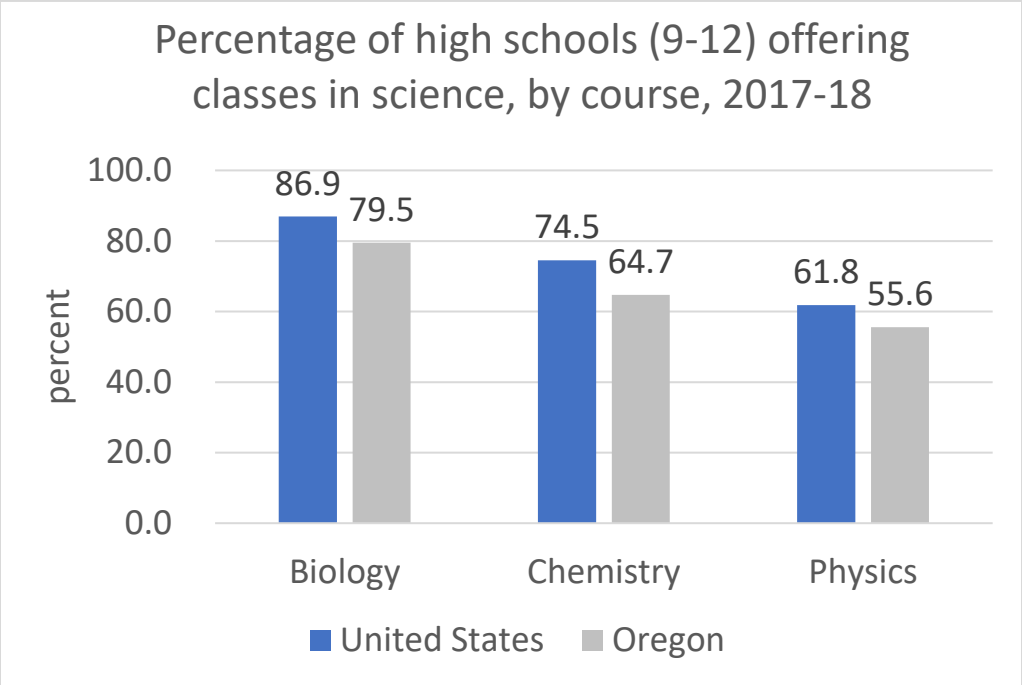
7. Disinvestment handicaps student achievement and reduces access to advanced classes for all students.

Results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show that Oregon trails the rest of the country in the percentage of advanced students



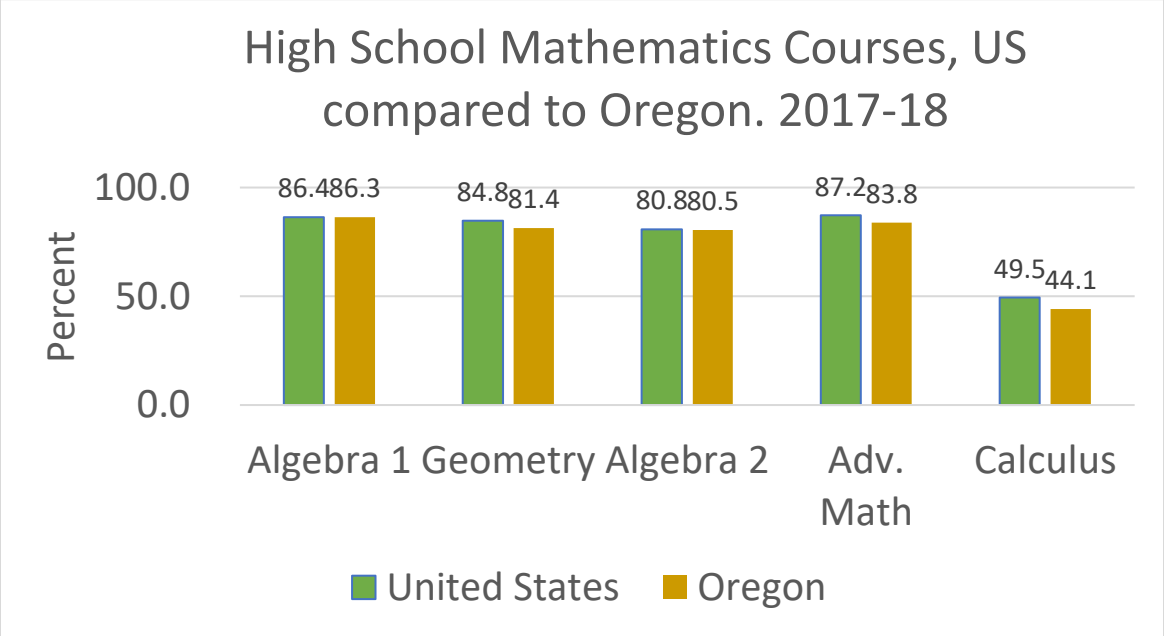
https://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/assessment/NAEP/Pages/NAEPResultsandSpecialStudies.aspx

In 2017-18, Oregon High Schools offered fewer science courses than those in in the rest of the US



NOTE: Table reads (for US Totals): Of all 47,796 public schools with any grade 9-12 (or ungraded), 22,597 (86.9%) offered biology classes.
Data reported in this table represent 100.0% of responding schools.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection, 2017-18, available at http://ocrdata.ed.gov.

Also In 2017-18, fewer Oregon high schools offered advanced mathematics and Calculus courses than the rest of the US. The current "math pathways" which further reduce Geometry and Algebra 2 requirements, seem likely to continue this decline and reduce access to advanced math.



[1] Advanced mathematics includes: trigonometry, trigonometry/algebra, trigonometry/analytic geometry, trigonometry/math analysis, analytic geometry, math analysis, math analysis/analytic geometry, probability and statistics, and precalculus.

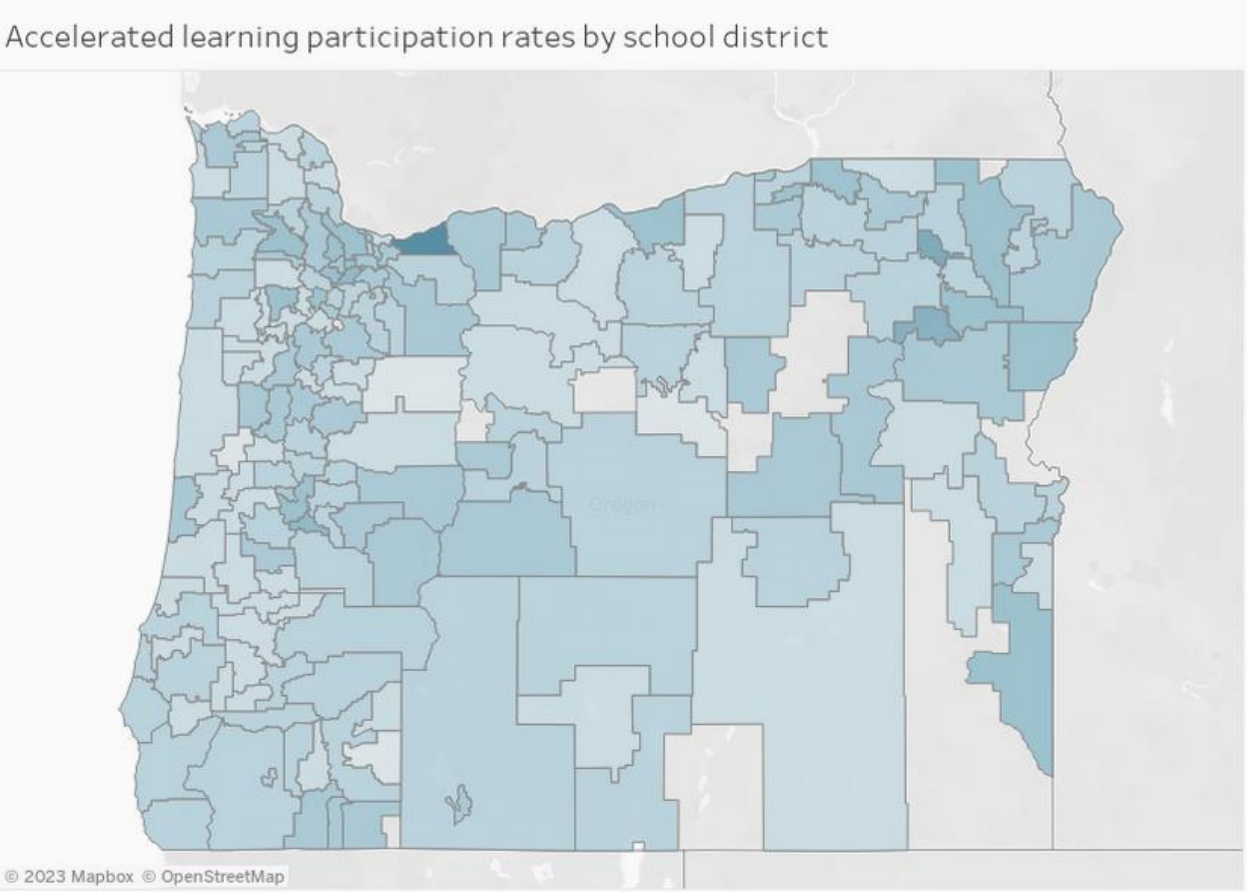
NOTE: Table reads (for US Totals): Of all 26,310 public schools with any grade 9-12 (or ungraded) reporting data, 22,644 (86.4%) offered Algebra I classes.

Data reported in this table represent 100.0% of responding schools.

Source: US Office of Civil Rights Civil Rights Data Collection 2017-18, available at http://ocrdata.ed.gov

Disparities in access to advanced instruction k-12 produce disparate educational opportunities, raise college costs for students, and reduce academic attainment.

There are Regional, Status, and Income-based Disparities in Access to all Accelerated Learning Opportunities



Caption: Map of Oregon showing participation in any type of accelerated learning (including Advanced Placement, direct enrollment, dual credit, and International Baccalaureate) by school district among students in grades 9–12 during academic years 2017/18 through 2019/21.

Education Northwest: Accelerated Learning and Career and Technical Education in Oregon May 2022 http://apps.educationnorthwest.org/or-accelerated-learning-dashboard/

8. The problem stars early and continues through graduation even though most parents support advanced classes

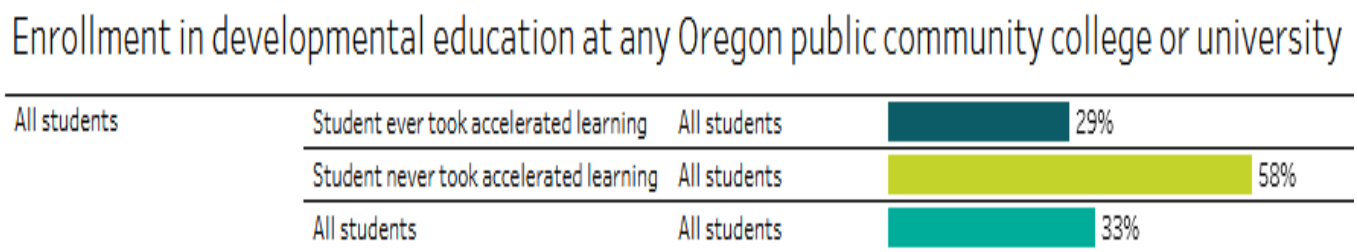
According to the Oregon Department of Education in 2024:

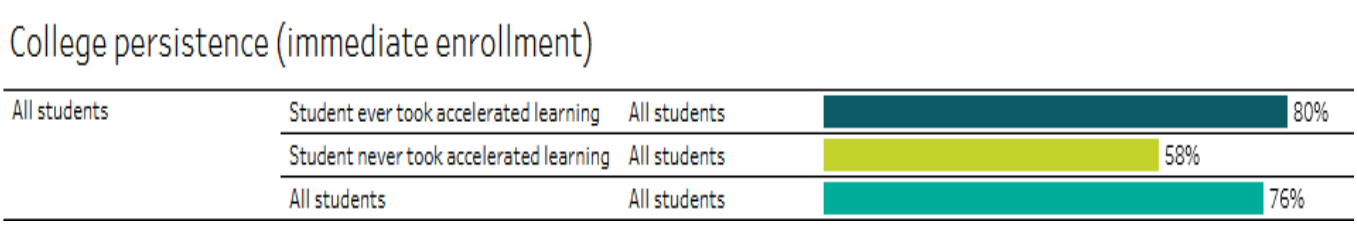
“[E]quitable access to accelerated learning programs begins with high leverage instructional practices for all students beginning in kindergarten. Merely offering the classes at the secondary level doesn't mean students were effectively and equitably prepared to be successful in advanced learning classes during their elementary and middle school years. The successful implementation of these early education initiatives has been hampered by a lack of adequate funding. It is crucial to secure sustainable funding sources to ensure equitable access to accelerated learning opportunities for all students.

Equitable access to accelerated learning programs is essential for supporting students' successful transition into post-secondary education and careers. These programs provide students with the academic rigor and skills necessary to excel in college and the workforce. Moreover, they can help close achievement gaps and create a more level playing field for all students. The benefits of accelerated learning programs are well-documented. Students in these programs typically achieve higher test scores, have higher college acceptance rates, and earn higher incomes than their peers. They are also more likely to graduate from college and pursue advanced degree.”

SB 736 Legislative Report Study *Identifying How to Increase Access to Advanced Instruction in the Public Schools of the State*, September 2024

Students who participate in accelerated classes are less likely to need “developmental” courses and more likely to graduate from college



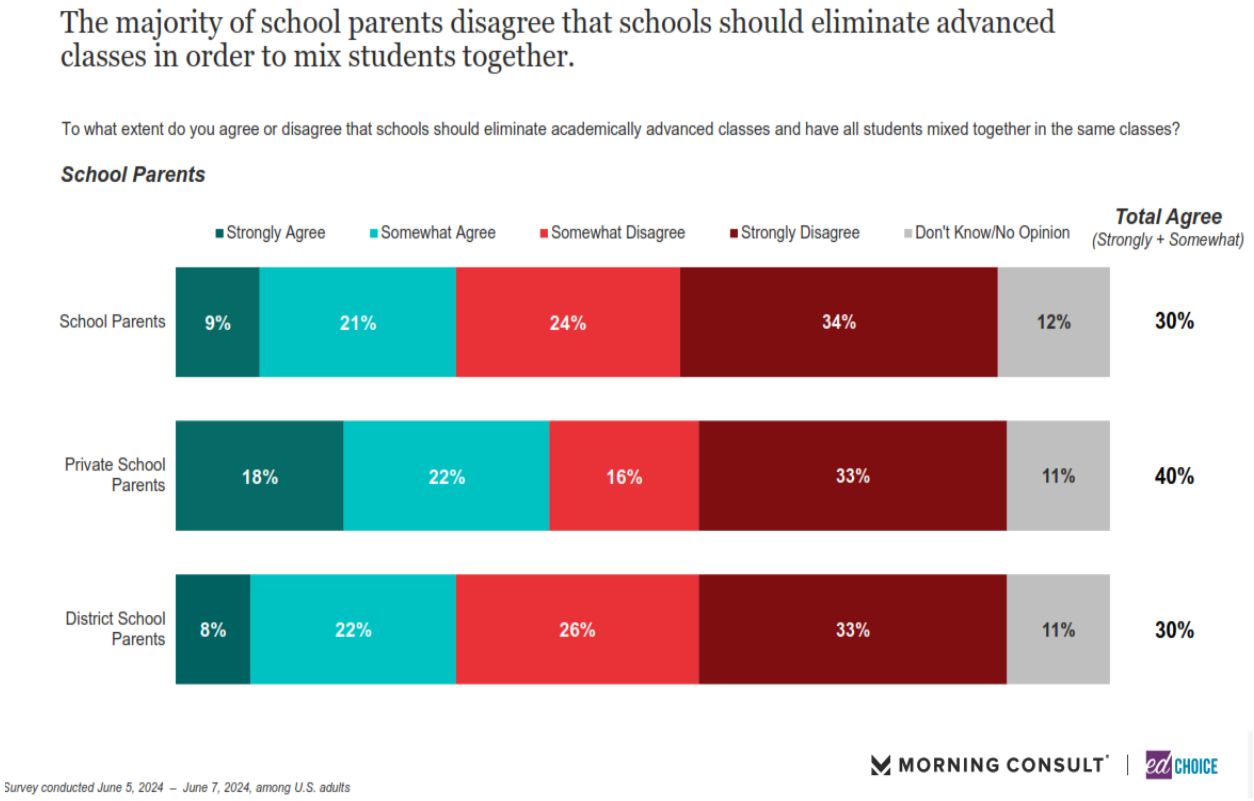


Students enrolled in 12 grade in 2015-16 and 2017-18

Source: http://apps.educationnorthwest.org/or-accelerated-learning-dashboard/

https://www.oregon.gov/highered/research/Documents/Reports/Accelerated-learning-report-IssueBrief-2019.pdf

Most parents think schools should offer advanced classes instead of mixing all students together.



poll conducted by the business intelligence group *Morning Consult* June 5-7 2024

https://www.edchoice.org/engage/gifted-education-important-to-parents-in-latest-monthly-poll/

9. Neglecting gifted and high-achieving students undermines our economy. This is unkind, unjust, and unwise.

State experts agree:

According to Future Ready Oregon in 2024:

"OED [Oregon Employment Division] estimates that one-third of all job openings in the next decade will require some post secondary education and/or training and 60 percent of all job openings will require education beyond high school to be competitive in the applicant pool. For jobs earning above-average wages, 93 percent recommend education and training beyond high school to be competitive….. In 2023, 56% of Oregonians ages 25 to 34 earned a postsecondary award."

Source: Amy G. Cox, Shanda Haluapo, and Alex Brunot, Office of Research and Data, Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission, December 2024.

According to the Higher Education Advancement Council in 2017:

"There is a strong connection between math course taking in college and the K-12 sector. Students who become math majors generally develop their identity as STEM or math students in middle school or high school. It is unusual for a student who struggles with math early in their education to become successful enough to attain a degree in math in college."

Source: Higher Education Coordinating Commission, Report to Oregon Legislature: Methods to Increase Math Degree Attainment at Oregon Public Universities (2017)

According to Education Northwest in 2015-16:

"Students who were economically disadvantaged were less likely to participate in accelerated learning compared to their peers who were not economically disadvantaged. Similarly, schools with a higher percentage of economically disadvantaged students had lower participation rates in accelerated learning."

"Predictors of participation in accelerated learning were the same as predictors of graduating from high school—and they can be traced to middle school. Specifically, malleable measures of achievement and engagement in middle school (assessment scores, attendance, discipline, and school mobility) were consistently related to accelerated learning participation."

"In the class of 2014/15, accelerated learning participants were 30 percentage points more likely to graduate from high school, 25 percentage points more likely to enroll in college, and 22

percentage points more likely to persist in college than similar peers who did not take accelerated learning in high school. Findings were consistent for Black, Latino/Hispanic, and American Indian/Alaska Native students."

"The positive association between accelerated learning and education outcomes varied in magnitude based on accelerated learning mode."

Source: "Supporting the Transition to College: Accelerated learning access, outcomes, and credit transfer in Oregon", November 2018, Michelle Hodara, Ashley Pierson

National experts agree:

"schooling-induced differences in cognitive skills are significantly related to economic growth….. both the basic-skill and the top-performing dimensions of educational performance appear separately important for growth…. a ten percentage point increase in the share of top-performing students [in a country] is associated with 1.3 percentage points higher annual growth. …the economic returns come only from policies that effectively improve student achievement and that thus add to the skills of the labor force – and not from ones that increase the length of schooling without improving achievement."

Source: Eric A. Hanushek and Ludger Woessmann, "Do Better Schools Lead to More Growth? Cognitive Skills, Economic Outcomes, and Causation," *Journal of Economic Growth* · February 2009 DOI: 10.1007/s10887-012-9081-x ·

"in the short run, participation [in a gifted program] is associated with a significant increase in math standardized test score performance. In the long run, participation is found to increase the probability a child takes Advanced Placement classes"

Source: Bhatt, R. R. (2009), "The impacts of gifted and talented education", *Andrew Young School of Policy Studies Research Paper Series*, (09-11).
https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1494334

"It Pays to Improve School Quality: States that boost student achievement could reap large economic gains,"

Source: Eric A. Hanushek, Jens Ruhose, Ludger Woessmann, *Education Next*, Summer, 2016.
https://hanushek.stanford.edu/publications/it-pays-improve-school-quality