

March 15, 2016

TO: Superintendent Carole Smith, superintendent@pps.net
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FROM: The Talented and Gifted parent Advisory Council (TAGAC)
Scholle McFarland, Chair, scholle.tagac@gmail.com

CC: Andrew Johnson, Talented and Gifted Program Director, wjohnson1@pps.net

TAGAC Recommendations for 2016-2017 TAG Department Budget and Support

Currently, Portland Public Schools' Department for Talented and Gifted (TAG) spends most of its time and resources on identification testing instead of providing state-mandated TAG services. Bringing PPS into compliance with Oregon's TAG law—and providing educational services that approach national standards—requires change. This memo serves to document TAGAC's recommendations for the 2016-17 TAG Department budget as well as requests for support from other departments.

Current Staffing (2015-2016): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Program director• 3 TOSAs• 1 Administrative support	TAGAC's Request for Staffing: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Program director• 7-8 TOSAs (one per cluster)• 2 Administrative supports
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TAGAC Recommendation #1:

Change Proctoring of Universal Second-grade TAG Testing

Currently, identification testing consumes most of the TAG department's time from November through March. In the 2015-2016 school year, it tested nearly 6,000 students. Department members manage and proctor testing with the help of additional proctors paid out of the TAG budget. During second-grade universal TAG testing alone, TAG department members fanned out to 59 elementary and K-8 schools to test all of the district's roughly 3,600 second-graders.

Oregon's TAG mandate requires educational services for students, not just identification of eligible students. To free up time for TAG teachers on special assignment (TOSAs) to focus on professional development for teachers and services for students, TAGAC recommends that from 2016-17 onwards second-grade teachers proctor universal TAG testing, as they do SBAC testing. *This change may require explicit language in the PAT contract.*

TAGAC Recommendation #2:

Significantly Increase Professional Development for TAG Education

The TAG department has requested one additional TOSA for 2016-2017. If this request is granted, the department estimates it can provide professional development to 75 teachers next year. *At this rate, it will take more than 26 years to train the districts' roughly 2,000 K-8 teachers, not accounting for teacher turnover or changes in best practices.*

Professional development is critical because PPS has chosen to emphasize differentiation within the mainstream classroom as its primary strategy to meet TAG students' rate and level of learning. Without professional development for every classroom teacher—particularly those teaching elementary and middle-grade students—the strategy will fail. It is also notable that the professional development provided by the TAG department is based on understanding and differentiating with depth and complexity; this enhances differentiation across all levels of ability and achievement, improving instruction for all students.

TAGAC recommends the addition of 4-5 TAG TOSAs, with a goal of one TOSA per cluster, so that professional development through the TAG department's Scholars' Program can be rolled out more quickly, with a target of reaching *all* K-8 teachers within the next 3-5 years. (See Appendix 1 and 2 for detailed suggestions for professional development rollout and effective use of TOSA time.)

TAGAC Recommendation #3:

Provide Central Support for Implementing the Single Subject Acceleration for Mathematics Policy

Previous Oregon Department of Education Corrective Actions have repeatedly stated that PPS must provide pathways to acceleration for TAG students as part of the Oregon TAG mandate. The TAG Department's revised Single Subject Acceleration for Mathematics policy, due out this week, will clarify for parents and schools the process through which accelerated students, TAG identified or not, can qualify to skip one year of math instruction.

This is a step forward. However the policy does not provide any support or guidance to elementary or middle schools about how to implement the policy. *Providing structure, planning, and support so that this policy is supported uniformly throughout the district is a critical equity issue.* Schools need cluster-wide solutions to the challenges of implementing the policy with fidelity. Schools cannot default, as most have in the past, to saying the only way Single Subject Acceleration can work is if parents are willing to transport their elementary student to and from the local middle school every day for class.

TAGAC recommends that the District-wide Middle School Planning team (announced by Superintendent Smith on 3/10/16) be tasked with implementation of the Single Subject Acceleration for Mathematics policy at its most difficult transition points: when a 5th grader needs to take middle-school math and when a middle schooler needs to take high-school math. *Solutions—for example, itinerant teachers assigned to each cluster to teach higher-level math*

or transportation for students to cluster middle or high schools—are likely to require budgetary support. Implementation of this policy should be considered in tandem with guarantees to provide access to compacted math at every school that has middle-grade students, as both issues may require common solutions.

TAGAC Recommendation #4:

Support K-8 Teachers with Curriculum Extensions for Accelerated Learners

Teachers should not be expected to develop advanced curriculum from scratch for accelerated learners. It is also neither appropriate nor practical to expect the TAG Department to provide extensions for every subject in every grade, K-8. To ensure continuity throughout the district as well as equitable access to curriculum extensions at every school K-8, the district must require that all curriculum purchases include extensions for accelerated learners. If curriculum does not include appropriate extensions, the district must buy or develop extensions as soon as possible. TAGAC also recommends that district subject matter experts, in collaboration with the TAG Department, develop a central resource where all teachers can easily access available resources for accelerated learners. *This will require an administrative rule change as well as ongoing budgetary support.*

The members of TAGAC approved these recommendations by a vote of 7 to 1 on March 15, 2016.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scholle McFarland". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and "M".

Scholle McFarland
TAGAC Chair

Appendix 1: Sample Rollout Plan for TAG Professional Development

Assumptions

- 2nd Grade teachers proctor universal TAG cognitive testing from 2016-17 onwards, freeing up significant time for TOSAs to be an active presence in buildings. *This may require explicit language in the PAT contract.*
- Scholars' Program will become a required TAG program at every K-5, K-8, and 6-8 campus by 2018-2019.
 - 3 year (post-pilot) rollout with active maintenance for another 2 years.
 - Need to target 18-20 schools a year

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Pilot - 6 schools	Initial PD	Maintain	Maintain			
Wave I - 20 Schools		Initial PD	Maintain	Maintain		
Wave II -20 Schools			Initial PD	Maintain	Maintain	
Wave III -20 Schools				Initial PD	Maintain	Maintain

- Each school receives an intensive one-year professional development series as is currently being provided in the Scholars' Program.
 - Summer or other intensive training for schools' TAG Coordinators.
 - At least two all-staff professional development meetings (introduction to concepts, mid-year check in) with an end of the year reflection preferable.
 - Monthly follow-up in the schools with the principal and TAG facilitator in the building
 - Twice-monthly classroom observation and/or modeling of TAG strategies (rotating among grade level teams as appropriate)
- This is followed by a second and third year of maintenance consisting of twice yearly all-staff check-ins with the TAG department.

Appendix 2: Effective Use of TOSA Time

TOSA Assignments

Additional TOSAs could be

- Assigned by cluster to provide
 - consistency for the cluster
 - deep relationships within specific buildings
 - help smoothing transitions between 5th and 6th grades, 8th and 9th grades
- Assigned by grade level (K-2, 3-5, 6-8, HS) to provide
 - expertise in age appropriate strategies
 - continuity across the district
- Assigned by academic specialty to provide
 - expertise and ability to develop subject-specific materials

TAGAC recommends 1 TOSA per cluster with targeted hiring for variation in grade level and academic/subject expertise. This would require the hiring of an additional 4-5 TOSAs.

TOSA Roles

- Lead professional development required for the Scholars' Program
- Document emerging best practices
- Develop professional development and curricular materials
- Support appropriate building level TAG plans
- Support and/or lead TAG information nights
- Support individual TAG level meetings as appropriate
- Coordinate the identification cycle process
- Support Response to Intervention (RTI) meetings as appropriate, including mid-year identification testing
- Support the Single Subject Acceleration (SSA) process by advertising and facilitating testing at least twice yearly for all schools.

Sample Schedule of TOSA Duties During the Academic Year

	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Scholars' Program										
Building Staff Meeting Phase I	2-3 schools				2-3 Schools				2-3 schools	
Phase I Classroom demos/obs		4-6 days (2 days per Phase I school) per month, Oct-May								
Building Staff Meeting Phase II	5-6 schools		Maintain Contact as Needed				5-6 schools			
Document	Best Practices and Materials for Curricular Differentiation/Extension									

TAG Plans										
Building	X									
Individual		X	X							
TAG Parent Information Nights	For parents of already identified students						For parents of newly identified students			
Coordinating the Identification Process										
Nomination		X								
Testing			X	X						
Results					X	X				
Response to Intervention	As Needed									
Single Subject Acceleration										
SSA Placement/ Support	X									X
SSA Testing	X							X	X	X