



OREGON DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
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May 31, 2011

Carole Smith, Superintendent  
Portland Public Schools  
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Dear Superintendent Smith:

The purpose of this letter is to provide an update on the review of the remaining Portland Public School Corrective Action Items concerning Talented and Gifted Education.

**Background:** On June 17, 2010, The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) communicated with Portland Public Schools concerning the ongoing Talented and Gifted Education Corrective Action. In that letter, ODE released Portland Public Schools (PPS) from seven of the ten items which were the basis for ODE placing PPS on corrective action. Subsequently, three corrective action items remained as outlined below:

- Corrective Action # 6: Instruction for TAG students in the general education classroom which demonstrates that identified TAG students are receiving instruction at the TAG students' appropriate Rate and Level.
- Corrective Action # 7: Systemization of accelerated learning opportunities for TAG students and access to information about accelerated learning opportunities.
- Corrective Action # 8: TAG Professional Development implementation at a regular and sustained level.

Department staff analyzed the information submitted to ODE on each corrective action item to determine the sufficiency and acceptability level of each submission. Each corrective action item required a variety of due dates and compliance evidence from multiple PPS schools. PPS complied with each due date requirement.

**Scope of the Investigation:** The scope of this investigation was based on the initial concerns expressed in 1997. ODE placed PPS on corrective action in an attempt to magnify the ongoing need for improved Talented and Gifted Education in PPS. The

current corrective action has been in place since February 2008. The remaining three corrective action items have been in the process of review and clarification since June 2010. Each exchange of information has included documentation from multiple PPS schools at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. The most recent ODE monitoring requirements for Corrective Action Items 6, 7, and 8 have been coupled with offers of technical assistance from ODE.

**Commendations:** Portland Public School's Talented and Gifted Office has submitted all required documents to ODE in a timely manner. In addition, Pat Thompson, PPS Talented and Gifted Program Administrator, has been collaborative in complying with requests from ODE and in keeping ODE informed of changes and updates concerning Talented and Gifted Education in PPS.

#### **I. Corrective Action # 6: TAG Lesson Planning**

**A. Items Requested:** The items listed below were due to ODE on October 1, 2010:

1. TAG Lesson Planning Template with "Rate" and "Level"
2. Blank Lesson Planning Templates as collaboratively designed with ODE
3. A Dissemination Plan
4. Evidence of use of TAG Lesson Planning Template with embedded TAG lessons from 17 schools from any two of the cores areas of instruction in math, science, language arts, or social studies. The 17 schools required to submit two lesson plans were schools that had not previously provided evidence of differentiated instruction through either lesson plans and/or course syllabi.
5. Recommended: An administrators' observation tool to evaluate classroom differentiated instruction.

**B. Items Reviewed by ODE:**

1. TAG Lesson Planning Template including:
  - a) Framework for Differentiated Instruction
  - b) Expanded Lesson/Unit Plan for Differentiated Instruction for TAG Students
2. Blank Lesson Planning Templates in four formats

3. Dissemination Plan: Not received, but covered in a meeting with Pat Thompson, PPS TAG Program Administrator, and administrators of concerned schools
4. Evidence of use of TAG Lesson Planning Template with embedded TAG lessons from 17 schools, two from each school:
  - ODE required: 34, PPS submitted: 81
  - ODE reviewed: 34 randomly selected lesson plans
  - ODE read 81 plans
5. Administrators' evaluation tool to evaluate classroom differentiated instruction

**C. Evaluation of Items Reviewed:** TAG Lesson Plans were reviewed and scored according to a scale which noted strong and weak attributes of each lesson. The PPS lessons plans were completed on the four differentiation forms previously approved; the plans included all four core academic areas. The sufficiency level of the TAG Lesson Plans focused on the concept of an "embedded TAG lesson" which specifically addressed differentiated instruction for TAG students.

- Of the 81 lesson plans submitted, 9 specifically addressed an embedded TAG lesson; 9 out of 34 reviewed = 26.4% compliance rate.
- Of the 9 lesson plans that adequately addressed an embedded TAG lesson for identified TAG students, two lessons were from Access at Sabin, an alternative TAG program where the student population is comprised of students who score at the 99%tile
- Among all lesson plans reviewed, there is little demonstrated understanding of appropriate TAG instruction as outlined in OAR 581-022-1330(2), "The instruction provided to identified students shall be designed to accommodate their assessed levels of learning and accelerated rates of learning." Teachers sometimes wrote: "Students will work at their own rate and level." This statement disregards the teacher's role in assessing the individual TAG student's rate (pace) and level of instruction. While teachers' terminology usage is in place, the demonstration through lesson planning does not address the implementation of knowledgeable instruction concerning the needs of TAG students.
- Most instruction as outlined in the lesson plans was "whole group" instruction without accommodations for TAG students.

- Pre-assessment was in place in many lesson plans, but whole group instruction continued. Therefore, pre-assessment appeared not to drive instruction for TAG students.
- Two teachers completed the “Administrator Observation Tool” as their lesson planning document. The successful implementation of the lesson plan was difficult to evaluate.
- Lesson plans based on kindergarten level TAG instruction were not reviewed because there are few TAG identified students at the kindergarten level.

**D. ODE Staff Determination of Corrective Action # 6: Portland Public Schools is not released from Corrective Action # 6.**

The lesson plans submitted do not meet an appropriate level of sufficiency. It is apparent that teachers have acquired the “terminology” of gifted education instruction, but true implementation of the terminology of accelerated learning opportunities, instruction at the appropriate rate and level, TAG grouping strategies, and TAG instructional concepts are not consistently implemented in the correct context, despite specific lesson plans designed to address TAG instruction.

- E. Continuation of Corrective Action # 6:** In order to determine if PPS implemented the corrective action plan regarding Corrective Action # 6 which calls for classroom instruction to be provided at the TAG students’ appropriate rate and level, ODE evaluated 34 lesson plans from each of the 17 primary schools that were previously identified as deficient. ODE randomly selected two lesson plans from each of the 17 schools and found that only 26% were compliant with the appropriate TAG embedded lesson planning. While the ODE assessment of compliance through this device is not intended as a precise measure of PPS’s performance on this metric, ODE nonetheless finds it useful in determining whether the TAG requirements are being systematically implemented as called for. If the compliance rate were significantly higher, meaning at or near the 80% rate, ODE would consider this satisfactory implementation of Corrective Action Item # 6. Therefore, until the compliance rate attains 80% plus or minus 5% owing to the small sampling, PPS will continue to be deficient in this metric.

Because the ODE sampling was small and the stakes so high, ODE is open to other evaluative devices to determine the actual rate of success in implementing Corrective Action # 6. If PPS desires to submit an alternative assessment of this

critical component, please discuss it with Rebecca Blocher promptly. Even if an alternative is suggested by PPS and accepted by ODE, Rebecca Blocher will provide PPS with up to two days of required technical assistance to be sure the basis upon which the success or failure of Corrective Action # 6 is measured is meaningful. Rebecca will contact Pat Thompson, PPS TAG Program Administrator, to discuss the strategy to assist PPS in meeting the requirements of Corrective Action # 6.

## **II. Corrective Action # 7: Accelerated Learning Opportunities**

### **A. Items Requested:**

- 1) Proof of systemization of accelerated learning opportunities, especially postsecondary options available to TAG students at all PPS high schools and definitions of content acceleration and postsecondary options via dual enrollment. Essentially, the goal of defining this item was to answer the question: "How might students gain access to accelerated programs when those programs are not available in the student's own school?"
- 2) PPS was directed to write and widely disseminate through each high school's website information about accelerated learning opportunities within PPS.
- 3) Each PPS high school was directed to explain on the high school's website accelerated learning opportunities with continuity from one high school to another.
- 4) ODE defined the content of postsecondary options for each high school website to include the following:
  - The definition of the district's offerings of Accelerated Learning Opportunities
  - The definition of content acceleration
  - The definition of postsecondary option acceleration which may include but is not limited to: dual credit, credit by examination, college enrollment options including middle college options
  - "How" and "When" a TAG identified student may qualify for any of these forms of acceleration
  - A clarification of how course grades are noted on the student's high school and college transcripts
  - A clarification of how student enrollment in local colleges is funded/supported by the district high schools

- A clarification of how TAG identified 8<sup>th</sup> graders may plan to access accelerated learning opportunities in the form of content acceleration and post secondary options during their high school career
- B. Items Reviewed by ODE:** High school websites were reviewed online by ODE personnel; PPS did not submit items for review. The PPS District Talented and Gifted Office website was reviewed online. A PPS Administrative Directive was reviewed. It was noted that the PPS TAG Department website concerning “accelerated learning opportunities” is “*under construction.*”
- C. Evaluation of Items Reviewed:** High school websites were reviewed online on 11/22/2010 and again on 2/2/2011. ODE staff reviewed the PPS high school websites according to the rating scale outlined below. The following PPS high school websites were reviewed and determined to fall within the following categories:
- Exemplary Rating: Cleveland and Wilson High Schools
  - Adequate Rating: Grant and Benson High Schools
  - Inadequate Rating: Franklin, Jefferson, Lincoln, Madison, Biz Tech, Pauling Academy, Renaissance Arts Academy, Metropolitan Learning Community School, and Roosevelt
- D. ODE Staff Determination of Corrective Action # 7:** Portland Public Schools is not released from Corrective Action # 7.

The original basis for Corrective Action # 7 was to inform parents and students of accelerated learning opportunities, postsecondary options, and dual credit options. Of the 13 high school websites that were reviewed, two high schools, Cleveland and Wilson, met a level of sufficiency that has been determined as “Exemplary.” Two others, Grant and Benson High Schools, met the level of “Adequate.”

The deficiencies in the remaining nine high schools were linked to substituting building TAG plans on the school’s website rather than specifically defining accelerated learning opportunities. The building TAG plan is not a substitute for clear communication with parents and students about accelerated learning opportunities. In comparison to the clearly articulated websites which Wilson and Cleveland High Schools created, posting the school TAG Plan is an insufficient level of communication with the public. It should also be noted that some schools simply included a link back to the PPS TAG Department website. These

actions do not reach a level of sufficiency as outlined in the original corrective action requirements.

**E. Continuation of Corrective Action # 7:**

The following high schools are directed to clearly define accelerated learning opportunities for high school TAG students and to post *immediately* the information on the school's website in order to be in compliance with the original Corrective Action #7 as outlined in the June 17, 2010 letter:

- Franklin, Jefferson, Lincoln, Madison, Metropolitan Learning Community, and Roosevelt
- The Marshall Schools, Biz Tech, Pauling Academy, and Renaissance Arts Academy are exempt because they are closing in June, 2011.

**III. Corrective Action # 8: TAG Building Plans and TAG Professional Development Plans**

**A. Items Requested:**

1) Specific schools were required to submit their TAG building plans:

- The following schools were required to submit their building TAG Plans: Abernethy, Astor, Beverly Cleary 2-8, Capitol Hill, Creston, Faubion, Humboldt, Lane, Maplewood, Mt. Tabor, Rigler, Sellwood, Vestal, Woodlawn, Cleveland, and Grant

2) All schools complied with the request.

**B. Items Requested:**

1) PPS TAG Department and specific schools were required to submit their TAG Professional Development Plans.

- The Three-Year TAG Professional Development Plan developed by the PPS TAG Office for fall 2010 through spring 2013.
- The following schools were required to submit their professional development plans: Access at Sabin, Buckman, Capitol Hill, Cleveland

High School, Grout, Odyssey at Hayhurst, Hosford, Jackson, James John, Lewis, Llewellyn, Peninsula, Rieke, Rosa Parks, Wilson High School, Alameda, Beaumont, Bridger, Grant High School, Kelly, Madison, Marysville, Scott, Whitman, Woodmere, Ainsworth, Beach, Bridlemile, Chief Joseph, Forest Park, Franklin High School, Glencoe, King, Metropolitan Learning Community, and Vernon.

2) All schools complied with the request.

**C: Evaluation of Items Reviewed:**

- 1) The building TAG plans submitted demonstrated a level of sufficient planning to determine ongoing improvement in successful planning for TAG Program development and implementation.
- 2) The professional staff development plans and categories for professional staff development included multiple offerings concerning the identification and instruction for TAG students.
- 3) The following are frequently occurring categories for TAG Staff Development: questioning strategies, tiered lessons, TAG learner characteristics, pre-assessment, curriculum compacting, and differentiation templates.

**D. ODE Staff Determination of Corrective Action # 8: Portland Public Schools is released from Corrective Action # 8.**

The items submitted from individual schools strongly indicate that the staffs of these schools are frequently engaged in learning about the specific needs of high ability, TAG students. Across a broad spectrum, each school is making commendable progress in prioritizing the needs of TAG students through professional development.

There is, however, one essential caution. The elements of Corrective Action # 8 are also contained within Corrective Action # 6 concerning instruction for TAG identified students. Teachers should continue to receive professional development concerning rate and level for TAG students. In addition, teachers should continue to be informed about the PPS K-12 TAG identification process, K-12 acceleration opportunities, and the characteristics, nature, and needs of gifted learners.



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**IV: Summary Statement:** The State Superintendent of Public Instruction determines that Portland Public Schools will remain “conditionally standard.” Currently, PPS remains under Corrective Action for two of the three remaining corrective action items. Instruction for TAG students continues to be problematic. Corrective Action # 6 can be supported through technical assistance from ODE. Additionally, the remedies for Corrective Action # 7 appear to be very explicit, direct, and fixable. In consideration to the offer of technical assistance and the ongoing nature of corrective action within PPS TAG, ODE is setting a firm completion date for Corrective Action # 6 and Corrective Action # 7 as on or before June 30, 2011.

Before taking further action, ODE is willing to provide technical assistance to the PPS TAG program administration. However, the requirements of Corrective Action Items #6 and #7 must be met by June 30, 2011. If the requirements of Corrective Action Items #6 and #7 are not met by June 30, 2011, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction will withhold 1% of State School Fund moneys allocated to the school district for operating expenses until all of the noted deficiencies are corrected. The current estimated withholding amount is \$118,733 per month. The July State School Fund payment is doubled, so 1% withholding would also be doubled.

Should Portland Public Schools not comply with the required action on or before the due date prescribed, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction will declare the Portland Public Schools a “non-standard” district.

If there are questions concerning this letter, please contact Rebecca Blocher, ODE TAG Specialist at 503-947-5931, or at [rebecca.blocher@state.or.us](mailto:rebecca.blocher@state.or.us).

Sincerely,



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cc: Rebecca Blocher, ODE TAG Specialist  
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Carla Randall, Chief Academic Officer, Portland Public Schools  
Pat Thompson, TAG Program Administrator, Portland Public Schools