

APPENDIX SECTION VI

DISTRICT INTERVIEWS FOR TAG REVIEW

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**PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS
TALENTED AND GIFTED SERVICES
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
FALL 2002**

1. What are some key words/phrases that you would use to describe the Talented and Gifted program in the Portland Public Schools?
2. What do you believe are the greatest attributes of the program?
3. Do you believe that the program is an integral part of the district's educational system/plan? Why/why not?
4. Describe your view of the student identification process for the program. Include comments on communication and equity of access.
5. How would you describe the curriculum and instruction for this program? How do you believe this is different than for other students?
6. What impact do you believe this program has on the students who participate? What about students who are not in the program?
7. What is the greatest support the district could provide staff who instruct in this program?
8. If you were to make one change in this program what would that be?
9. How does the district benefit from having a highly capable program?
10. How do you believe staff and community perceive the program?

Is there anything you had hoped to share that I didn't ask about?

**PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS
 REVIEW OF TAG SERVICES
 AGGREGATE OF INTERVIEWS, K-12
 (Parents, building staff, community members, board members)
 FALL 2002**

**indicates multiple responses were the same*

1. What are some key words/phrases that you would use to describe the Talented and Gifted Program in the Portland Public Schools?

| District | Services | Identification | Model | Students |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Exists* | Algebra, math | Paper work | Faster paced instruction; in-depth as compared to more** | Gifted Student Plans as requested by parents |
| Have to write plan to get dollars | Enriched materials | Perception that kids who have it will take care of selves, so identification unnecessary | Mandated | Desire services because students are TAG designated |
| District provides discounts for classes for TAG students | Parent driven | Communication is unclear; scores are incomplete and not well explained | Integrated services | Accelerated learning for students; obligated to meet students at appropriate level; designed to meet advanced rate of learning** |
| Continually improving; seeing some progress and change | Under funded; limited due to budget** | Obligated to meet mandated expectations | Extensions as part of regular services; built into district delivery, not a pullout* | Need to be qualified |

| Key words or phrases - continued | | | | |
|--|---|-----------------------|---|---|
| District | Services | Identification | Model | Students |
| Central TAG office is responsive and helpful, the school is absolute opposite; principal discourages TAG participation | TAG is an orphan in the district | | Decentralized | Appropriate level for understanding; reading and literature are more difficult – teaches more in depth skills |
| Lack of follow through by central office personnel | Convolutd | | An entitlement | There is an issue of TAG vs. bright |
| | Something for the upper income families; not viewed the same as other special programs e.g. Special Education; don't see need or challenges | | Rate and level | |
| | Do things differently with limited dollars/resources; extend as opposed to additional | | Parent involvement | |
| | Within the classroom school day and teacher can provide support | | It's like "Big Foot" – hear that it's there, but never see it; benign; no residual effect | |

| Key words or phrases - continued | | | | |
|---|---|-----------------------|---|-----------------|
| District | Services | Identification | Model | Students |
| | LEAP (but not happy with this service) | | Should be accessible as part of the structure of the district curriculum | |
| | Ideally – after school classes and resources for teachers | | Scripted, concrete (not authentic learning); not built in | |
| | Open-ended; opens the doors to learning at higher levels | | Astor – integrated and extended within the classroom; teach all students as TAG | |
| | Parents don't ask questions about TAG services | | Untracked – not a lock step application | |

2. What do you believe are the greatest attributes of the program?

| District | School | Identification | Model | Students |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| Advocates are more vocal at the district level | Challenge | Only track for top quartile of math students – those who are off the charts | Should be on social and emotional development | Appropriate students get appropriate materials |
| Not universal resistance to program now | Not a great deal of expertise at the building level for advanced level instruction | Helps match children with needs | Skills to deal with others | Receive more attention; keeps TAG students on track** |
| Central TAG Office has done miracles with nothing | Tabor has been best school child has been in – actually met and reviewed plan with staff; like guided problem solving for what is best for student | Test scores as an barometer not the sole indicator; may not allow for identifying students with “potential” | Would be very hard for parents to give up services; this seems like “all we have” | Troubleshoots individual students |
| Hard to find attributes; didn’t benefit from program until high school | The teaching staff is relatively competent, dedicated, motivated, has more tolerance for the moderately gifted child | Opportunities are there for anyone at the high school level; opens the doors for those who are interested | Kids continue to seek highest potential E.G. AP courses – creates a mechanism for kids to continue to be challenged and achieve; however not seen in all schools | Children get needed services; awareness of needs of talented and gifted* |
| It is part of the whole spectrum of services; raise the tide | Need more continuity and articulation at high school for access across the district | | That it is a mandated service; system needs to find ways to support and motivate | Opportunity for students to maximize growth through academic pursuits |

| Greatest program attributes - continued | | | | |
|---|--|-----------------------|--------------|--|
| District | School | Identification | Model | Students |
| Traditional middle school philosophy may not work to advantage of TAG students; high school is about academic preparation; middle level needs to prepare them; to engage students in a meaningful way | Team approach to teaching kids | | | Gives rights to the students and information to teachers |
| TAG services are in “name only”; no confidence in TAG | Use school level resources of teachers with expertise | | | May keep kids from falling through the cracks |
| | Teaching staff that works with kids and gets them where they need to be; wiliness to learn and work collaboratively; get out of their comfort zone | | | |
| | Raises the level of instruction; transfer of strategies to other classes | | | |
| | Allows for an honors contract for interested students; can do honors outside of honors designated class | | | |

3. Do you believe that the program is an integral part of the district's educational system/plan? Why/why not?

| Yes | No |
|---|---|
| District wide - definitely | Currently may be lack of specificity for what are adequate TAG services |
| Teacher development once a year; TAG committee at each school | No – more so than before; more in the regular program understand that this is a part of their job; still seen as an “add-on” |
| Identification is definitely in place; formal screening twice a year | No – treated as an add-on; state mandate has created some pressure; currently moving backward due to budget losses; some buildings have already lost TAG coordinator; middle level plans are gone; district cant' even provide appropriate education for all students, what can it do for TAG who have special needs? |
| Integral part of educational plan; instruction is dependent on teacher | No – no one takes it seriously; competing for dollars and interest in program at district level |
| Mixed classes with no tracking; collegial with staff cooperation | Should be – don't know if it is; it is given short shrift with no identifiable leadership; DTAC is too elitist and cause TAG to run into political problems |
| As a special interest group | Site based management sounds good, but no one is held accountable; requires capacity in the building and there has been no training on how to achieve this; decentralization isn't a bad idea, but what does it do for student achievement |
| Portland Public Schools is “responsive” to parent concerns and complaints | Accountability is insufficient; DOSAS don't hold building principals accountable; board doesn't hold the superintendent accountable; there is no capacity in the district |
| Yes – get “stuff” from the district office; don't hear from anyone outside the TAG office | No – system doesn't allow it to behave as part of the whole, but it should be; gifted kids should be allowed to associate with others of like ability and move at their pace toward mastery in areas of strength; they should be networked, allowed to challenge one another, be greater than they are |

| Program as an integral part of district - continued | |
|---|---|
| Yes | No |
| Part of the district mission statement/strategic plan; delivery is from TAG to school to teacher to students | Tag is perceived as controversial; creates a duality in delivery |
| Yes – become an integrated part of school delivery, part of school plan, supports the needs to cultivate the best and brightest | Not sure- don't know how intact the program is in other buildings; not a lot of equity in funding; based on number not need |
| Yes – but not always carried out; communication is the issue | No – see TAG as fragmented; throughout the district there is not direct service; no impact for students; not integral; no consistency –0 not taken seriously |
| Yes – strong learning plans to meet student needs; each school should offer a comprehensive curriculum, how it is done is up to the building; however need more directed professional development | No – hard to say integral due to cutbacks; integral in terms of compliance; appeases parents |
| Absolutely – extremely important to address needs; otherwise we could lose TAG students; good for teacher support; important to keep going | No – in theory, should be, but haven't seen this; teachers don't want to nominate students-creates more work; if a mandate of “absolutely must nominate” came down – then they might ask what to do |

4. Describe your view of the student identification process for the program. Include comments on communication and equity of access.

| Communication | Process | Access | District |
|--|----------------------------|--|---|
| Unfair communication to parents – unclear why in program | Too many are labeled TAG | Use additional materials: work samples, teacher recommendation; internal rating system | Central TAG Office helps keep things from moving up the ladder; solves problems at building level |
| Haven't had much communication | No exit process | Looking for more challenge for students, but hard to get through paper | Loss of budget has direct impact on disproportionate identification of students |
| DTAC helps with communication | Unfair paper load to staff | There is not equity of access for all students | Too dependent on schools for nominations |

| Student identification process - continued | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| Communication | Process | Access | District |
| Need better communication, training for parents and staff | Cumbersome and not very accurate* | Need work on training staff on how to identify under-represented populations | Staff at the building was unqualified and unprepared to assist |
| No guidance, communication from school level | Takes teachers' time | Would have like someone to work cooperatively with parent and family | Needs to revise so more user-friendly |
| At high school, unclear communication between the departments regarding what honors is | Find new way to identify students; criteria not always clear** | Many road blocks and barriers | |
| There is an issue between parent and teacher opinion | Form seems repetitive | Not enough ESL students are identified- easy to miss them; can identify as intellectually gifted, but work product is not there (a hole that no one seems to know how to fix) | |
| Don't look at enough different types of data | Need to move away from single scores to more inclusive view; the narrower the band of scores, the less range of reliability; an evaluation of the student that is more realistic needs to be in place | Teachers can spot kids; encourage identification of ELL | |

| Student identification process - continued | | | |
|---|---|--|-----------------|
| Communication | Process | Access | District |
| Could do a better job of communicating with parents- community doesn't push | Process works OK; equitable* | Parents need to operate as advocates to gain access | |
| Need better understanding of intended services, so can understand what identification means; very unclear; communication needs to improve | Takes too long; mid year before identified; change the cycle | Equity – race and cultural orientation. This is overlooked due to lack of appropriate understanding; don't know if assessment takes this into consideration; does district use and exclusive or inclusive model? | |
| | Method of identification doesn't see beyond the obvious; doesn't provide recognition for under utilized talents of kids | Complex for some parents (they have other things going on in their lives; too much writing; far too difficult for ELL | |
| | Identification needs to consider feeder schools; also consider learning styles of different ethnic groups | Twice exceptional students have access to program at our school | |
| | Pretty good- standardized scores, teacher observations; outside assessment is best* | Honors and Advanced Placement are open to all students at the high school level | |
| | Provides a continuum for success | Most students who apply are accepted; SES driven program; those not prepared at lower grades struggle | |

| Student identification process - continued | | | |
|---|----------------|--|-----------------|
| Communication | Process | Access | District |
| | | Nomination creates the need for TAG student Plans; teachers see this as more work rather than focusing on student learning needs | |

5. How would you describe the curriculum and instruction for this program? How do you believe this is different than for other students?

| Delivery | Training | Issues | Policy |
|---|---|--|--|
| Accelerated; vertical delivery | New teachers may not know what or how to teach TAG | Pullout wasn't successful – child didn't like being pulled away from class | TAG students are not very often a focus of concern at the building level |
| Instruction is not different; deeper thinking and more problem solving with complex thinking; open ended*** | TAG office readily provides resources | Not much different for students at middle school; very little at high school | Principal looks for differentiated instruction during observations |
| Excellent for the most part-some exceptions | Teachers host staff meetings and share best practices with colleagues | Students are designated, but nothing happens | Student plans are part of process, but decline- more paperwork for the teacher and think they would do it anyway |
| Don't think anything different happens** | Hope teacher will go the extra step anyway | Looking for a positive interaction for students | Has come a long way – didn't used to be able to teach out of grade level |

| Curriculum and Instruction - continued | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| Delivery | Training | Issues | Policy |
| Elementary really has a problem; hard due to the range of curriculum that has to be taught | One third of the principals have turned over, so have limited knowledge and not training; they need supervision and support | Grade skipping or accelerating a child creates a different peer group and creates another set of problem; wouldn't want to remove possibility, but needs to be done carefully | There is a lot of "hand wringing" about differentiation; elementary teacher tend to lack depth of knowledge; all teachers are unclear about how to differentiate TAG work |
| There has been a huge mis-match between what was promised and received | Woefully behind; incremental changes, not enough to make a difference | Central office does not provide support to make things happen; lack of knowing what to do makes them invent things | Even with training and desire, the current services are impossible to deliver; not seen as a priority |
| Didn't make any difference; only advanced math | For teachers, not lack of knowledge about what to do, but lack of time to implement | School personnel were very defensive and unhelpful; resentful | Same curriculum for everyone; options are currently "more of the same" |
| Inquiry based, research, allows for student choice; open-ended** | Math workshops for teachers are a single shot not connected; doesn't build the why of learning; there is no consistent articulation across the district | Using flexible grouping takes time; would be good to better balance the classrooms | Plans were half-heartedly implemented; any rules certainly weren't followed |
| Teachers are better at extensions, expectations are higher, using more research and creating a year long plan; mixed age classes, thematic units; more meeting time; thinking more flexibly about student learning | Staff needs to know how to work as a team for planning grade level benchmarks; need to understand cluster grouping/flexible grouping; too difficult to apply | Math Investigation teaches the way; need better strategies and resources for continuation of skills for TAG; need to group for math ability; too theory based, not practical, hard to apply | Books come from building budget and are expensive; needs consideration |

| Curriculum and Instruction - continued | | | |
|--|--|--|---------------|
| Delivery | Training | Issues | Policy |
| Teaching is based on authentic learning; use student work to determine instructional needs | Teachers understand differentiation and integration, but haven't been specifically trained | For reading, need to have students think about reading as readers; the how and why | |
| Establishes high expectations for all students; adds research, projects | Don't want outside experts; needs to be useful, applicable tomorrow; have grade level study groups already | TAG kids too often end up as teachers' helpers | |
| Reading and literature are open-ended; go for depth; use teacher observations and assessments; it's a custom fit | Limited funding for AP and IB training workshops; don't have the release time; should be part of building budget | Cost of textbooks for high school classes is an issue | |
| Some grouping and exchanges between classes at a grade level | | | |
| Builds on student responses, curiosity; supports them to achieve | | | |
| Activities should be beyond the classroom | | | |

6. What impact do you believe this program has on the students who participate? What about students who are not in the program?

| TAG identified | Regular program |
|--|---|
| Highest impact on math students | Others may see themselves as "have nots" |
| Creates a fast track to high school and eligibility for advanced classes | Kids seem to know who is and who isn't TAG, but seem relatively neutral |
| Recommendations effect placement options | Schools have the autonomy to create delivery system at the site, so can lessen impact on all students |
| Elitism happens before middle school; eventually kids try to hide label at middle school | Inflexibility for all students is a crime |

| Impact on students - continued | |
|---|--|
| TAG identified | Regular program |
| Extra curriculum in classes – maybe (?) | Keeps the focus on teaching and learning for all students; how to handle a wide spectrum of kids** |
| Need extra classes for TAG options; scheduling seems to be problem | |
| As long as you get it right – it's OK; fine as long as kid is learning, but hard to do when child is isolated; don't put in wrong environment, but provide support; be flexible so child is not sitting in an inappropriate class | |
| Some how managed to get a decent education, in spite of staff attitude | |
| TAG student achievement is still rising | |
| Get something they wouldn't get otherwise | |
| Know they are TAG; parent have higher expectations – family is where real expectations are set | |
| Hope it is positive for those involved in the program – needs to be flexible so that students can find appropriate instructional level | |
| No special impact on kids in or out of program | |
| Some see this as a badge (parents); most students don't see themselves as different; label doesn't do much | |
| Students have educational skills to be successful; mostly satisfied; forces them to tap into prior knowledge; see limitations; pushes them a bit | |

7. What is the greatest support the district could provide staff who instruct in this program?

| Building | Teachers | Students |
|--|--|--|
| Professional development is a building level focus | Ideas on how to enhance without a huge amount of work | Reduce GSP at middle school |
| Can use assessment data to inform instructional plan – What should happen in the classroom? What changes would you make in your teaching? | Provide a framework for curriculum development; how to implement differentiation; what about differential grading** | Students need guided problem solving as part of curriculum and instruction; consultation as part of regular learning process; move away from work specific issues and concentrate on application of learning |
| Autonomy at building level to create and delivery services | Compensate teachers for time put in on TAG meetings | More dollars for after school programs for TAG students |
| Make the principal accountable for what happens in the building for student learning; provide or find expertise that is needed | Time; support to attend workshops; paid summer planning**** | Workable class size (no more than 28-30); good scheduling of students |
| Need to have follow through | Professional development – create quality control in the field (hire, train, evaluate etc); all levels –all personnel; need to know what to do with TAG kids** | |
| Resources: textbooks, supplementary material, advanced resources; staff needs to be able to count on advanced material to keep classes going | Current funding resources are not realistic enough to expect anything will happen- teachers need support, resources and training to do the job; teachers need to be able to work as a team (co-teaching and cooperative instruction to that they compliment one another) | |

| Greatest support for staff - continued | | |
|--|--|-----------------|
| Building | Teachers | Students |
| District shouldn't micro manage | Need TAG specialist in the schools; create collaborative model – this will improve teaching and learning* | |
| More opportunity for kids needed – need dollars; need specific resources; more equity across the district for program services | Provide staff with short suggestions, resources, articles – don't overwhelm; a "tip of the week"; make TAG a part of all professional development* | |
| Provide resources in the field; resource person to provide demonstrations and work in the classroom | More training needed on how to meet expectation of parents and needs of TAG students | |
| | More opportunity for resources and classes that fit their needs; bring classes to the schools; alternate use of meeting time at buildings** | |

8. If you were to make one change in this program what would that be?

| Services | Building | Parents | Students |
|---|---|---|--|
| Base services on social and emotional needs and back off on educational demands | Compliance between district policy and school services for TAG | Educate parents on student needs | Screen out at elementary if not appropriate for TAG |
| Don't know – might not make any changes – assume they have resources already | Train staff; have articulated staff development; include the problem solving strategies; grouping strategies; level the training opportunities (beginning to peer coaching)** | Partner with parents (teachers) | Don't bring the label forward to middle level |
| Program accountability at classroom level | Be proactive not reactive | Core groups of parents have stepped in as partners to help; positive influence for school, staff and students | Focus needs to be on social and emotional development at middle level; back off on academics |

| One change - continued | | | |
|--|--|----------------|---|
| Services | Building | Parents | Students |
| Ability groups, flexible grouping; provide a spectrum of options – different kids have different needs; provide appropriate interventions based on assessment (as mandated by state law) | To make the program services a reality, the central and building administration must be supportive; all educators need to be educated; currently there is a variety of receptiveness toward TAG services | | Use case studies to help identify students |
| Program needs more funding; needs to be recognized for service it provides; district need to attach importance to it | Make it a best practice for instructional services | | Teachers don't regard TAG students as needing services-district leadership could change this |
| Create a system where TAG is a priority, not a luxury | Staff are being trained to implement state standards, but this is not particularly beneficial to TAG students | | Need an IEP for gifted; assessments that are kept in the classroom grade book; opportunity for teacher to always change the pace for a student; a way to monitor the instruction that is provided |
| Collaboration and cooperation across the board – district, building, parents and students | More support is needed at the building level; put workshops at the buildings; make resources available; specialist at the building to provide resources, ideas, services | | Acknowledge kids and their learning-the program helps justify quirky kids |

| One change - continued | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|----------------|--|
| Services | Building | Parents | Students |
| | Administration needs to stress accountability for requirements | | Time for TAG students to work together during the school day |
| | Resources to support advanced level program | | Allow students to migrate to level of academics they are ready for; proper level of challenge; support from instructor, but flexibility to stretch |
| | Put nothing more on the school plate; creates fragmentation | | Identification of students; greatest challenge is to re-tool the system with strategies and curriculum to meet the needs of all students |
| | Small schools should consider pooling their resources; could be more effective and efficient for students | | Articulation 9-12 for good communication about student needs |
| | | | Need adequate choices for all students (e.g. good science classes every year for students) |
| | | | Identify students differently; be more specific about students' abilities |

9. How does the district benefit from having a highly capable program?

| District | Schools | Students | Community |
|--|---|--|---|
| District doesn't benefit* | May hold students in the schools | Kids are supposed to benefit; if it weren't there would that be fair to TAG kids? | Retains families in the community and school system |
| Can say a program for TAG exists | Spreads the burden of education through off campus classes for secondary students | Creates an acceptance of differences, TAG are as different as some other special needs populations | Parents as part of the system |
| Don't know if they do or not* | Increase the number of resources available | More inclusion of students; incentives for maximum academic growth; provides students the opportunity to excel | Net result will be a better community |
| 90% of students in Portland catchments are stay in public schools | No benefit to school | | Parents and community are given a reason to challenge students to do better; enroll in more challenging classes |
| Just there | Need options such as ACCESS; pullouts; know what is and isn't TAG | | Unless active in TAG, don't know about it |
| Good for Portland; creates a balance; involves entities outside of the district; still needs better alignment with business and industry | | | |

| District benefit -continued | | | |
|--|----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| District | Schools | Students | Community |
| See TAG as necessary (same as special education); not consistently feasible to deliver services to all kids in the classroom; aware of TAG kids, but concerned about how to reach them effectively | | | |

10. How do you believe staff and community perceive the program?

| Staff/District | Community/Parents |
|--|---|
| Paperwork is seen as a burden | Want children to be in TAG class |
| TAG is an elitist add-on; not really necessary; teachers do this anyway even without a mandate | Some parents need the status label; while others would prefer no label; don't talk a lot with other parents about TAG |
| Elite – some staff yes and some no*** | “All learning for all kids” |
| Eliminate label and have less stratification | Should have less stratification |
| Teacher are probably doing the best they can under the circumstances | Parents are focused on child's needs |
| Those in the program see it as more positive; those not in, see it as a waste of resources | Those with children in TAG may see it as a positive; those who don't may see it as a waste of money |
| Standard curriculum underestimates all kids and provides curriculum they (students) don't need | Students do get served who might not otherwise have the opportunity, but the statistics are sad |
| TAG is a value laden term that creates resentment | The program has gotten better |
| Middle and high school focus on the subject area and have a different intellectual orientation; can connect intellectually with kids | View district TAG office as beneficial. Helpful |
| Wish for more support from other central office administrators; difficult to make changes without resources and support | Limited services so little impact |

| Staff and community perception - continued | |
|--|--------------------------|
| Staff/District | Community/Parents |
| There is a huge split between what the TAG Office perceives should happen and what occurs at the building level – need to find out what is really happening. Who is in charge? | |
| Understand the need to nurture; leadership potential of some TAG students | |
| Need to use dollars differently; meetings are expensive; make better use of specialist time; customize to building need | |

Is there anything you had hoped to share that I didn't ask about?

- *So much is spent on so few at both ends of the spectrum – what about those in the middle?
- *Some inequity – resources go to the ends
- *Pullout was focused on “fun activities” – all children deserve enrichment
- *TAG should be challenging
- *Serving TAG is a balancing act, can't be at the expense of others
- *Reduce multiple mailings to same family
- *Reduce paper load so teacher can focus on students with special needs
- *Student learning plans may be inappropriate use of time
- *Parent meeting held by TAG office may be less useful than classes and trainings for teachers
- *Barriers and lack of mutual respect and harm children; program staff tends to discount parents
- *Staff needs to own the problem, too – TAG staff help build this bridge; work on what's best for kids
- *The “man on the street” does not have a clue about PPS and education; only one fifth of the population has students in school
- *There is a great deal on mis-understanding which has lead to ill will
- *Only reason some people don't leave is due to limited options in private school
- *Home school population is large and growing, but those in the worst situations are those who do not have the resources to have a choice outside of the system
- *PPS needs high standards for all students
- *Push up the agenda; layers with suggestions with dollars, same dollars, no dollars

**Is there anything you had hoped to share that I didn't ask about?
continued**

- *Don't let this be one more thing "on the shelf" because there are too many other things to be done
- *Support the staff in a positive way
- *Work on a system that provides more time to work with the children
- *Continue to emphasize TAG as an integral part of the school day
- *Identification needs to be honed; revised
- *Work with principals and teachers on how to integrate not create one more layer
- *TAG plans need to continue to happen for accountability; teachers are paid to do this; don't celebrate the waivers; keep everyone involved and accountable
- *Make change through: direct services to the schools; better communication for nominations (identification is currently too tight); reallocate dollars; provide professional development that focuses on a differentiated service model
- *Assessment that looks at demographics of students and buildings
- *Use different instruments – look at how students construct knowledge; think dimensionally; find those who show potential
- *Not enough time with new teachers
- *Look for successful models outside the district and replicate here
- *Be willing to take mind leaps to try new things; take risks to improve the services
- *Remain optional at high school and consider making it optional at all levels
- *Make Identification more efficient; drags on too long; use resources available
- *With all of the constraints, will TAG continue to be a priority; will classroom teachers be required to serve TAG; what will the district do for kids??

**Portland Public Schools
Administrative Interviews
TAG Review
Fall 2002**

1. What is your role related to TAG services in the Portland Public Schools?

- Central Office Administrator
- Skills don't rest with one person, effective leadership is the compilation of skills from all
- The team needs to effectively manage the district
- Responsible to meet state expectations and hold others accountable
- TAG is one way to help close the gap educationally
- State clear expectations and support people to meet these
- Encourage principals to understand their roles and how to use resources
- Help the team look at data, state standards, demographics, classroom based data
- Need to cultivate and grow mentality of knowing standards; be able to examine progress
- Help district look at instruction for all kids
- Involve others and allow for input
- District needs a blueprint that allows it to lead and guide parents

2. Do you believe that TAG is an integral part of the district's educational system/plan? Why/Why not?

- Clearly part, consider the Strategic Plan where "100% of the students are expected to achieve to capacity"
- TAG or not, these expectations should be integral to the system
- If the state thinks of TAG as an "add on" then that segregates it from the continuum of services in the system
- If it is integral, then we should assess all students and serve them
- The goal is to offer the opportunity- we have the responsibility for learning for all students
- Teachers haven't learned how to teach all kids; principals haven't learned how to manage and hold accountable and district hasn't learned how to assess
- Valued as an important part of what we do

- Conversation needs to be around benchmarks and standards; some view services to the high end as another plan, something different rather than as a part of the whole
 - Yes, philosophy of “all” means “all”; appropriate challenges for high, medium or low
- 3. How do you believe staff and community (including parents) perceive TAG services?**
- Most staff need to do a better job with TAG; they need to believe in the need
 - Community perceives the district getting by with the minimum
 - Community believes they need to advocate strongly for what they need, but they are slowly understanding the resources deficit; need to be a collaborative force
 - Need to demystify the conversation regarding student performance
 - Surveys show the extremes on how the community stratified and perceives services
 - Mixed responses; teachers believe they are doing the appropriate thing; they need guidance and support to understand how a continuum of services is delivered
- 4. What are the benefits of having TAG services in the district? What about barriers?**
- TAG has become a loaded issue. Teachers and principals are not able to relax and focus on profession; can’t escape the pressure; openly judgmental process; and, this may not be related to teaching practices
- 5. If you were to make one change what would that be?**
- One change would definitely be resources; dollar doesn’t go as far as it did four years ago
 - Performance plus progress; student learning plans; create an intentionality of asking questions
 - Collaboration and team work; opportunity to use students work to guide instruction
 - Be able to look at the “big plan”
 - Identify the “hidden children”
 - Provide support for ACCESS concept
 - Cluster group a lot at the low end; may be a lot of groups; these may be based on rate and level; mainly Language Arts, but some math
 - Professional development – ask teachers if they are getting what they want; encourage them to think differently; disaggregate the data; downfall is that it doesn’t show if student needs are being met
 - Bring parents on-board with intentionality and communication

6. What would be your desired outcome for this review?

- A continuum: start some movement in the right direction; base it on dollars available; help with state requests
- Clear strategy to improve (expectations, options, choices); changes that will make things better; how to meet expectations
- Honest and respectful summary to help us learn, drive a sustainable effort over time
- Deal with the substantive issues; if it resonates with teachers, it matters to me too
- Start asking the questions and hold to the expectations
- Professional development that is on the cutting edge
- Report should be realistic
- Create a more collaborative system that better meets the needs of the high end
- Guidance, a status report, recommendations on how to change the process, educate the organization, on-going updates and recommendations on how to proceed
- Change with a perspective on effectiveness and specific issues to address
- Specific approaches to rate and level service
- Strong, concrete recommendations versus structure
- Look at the restructuring of TAG all the way through the program
- Concrete recommendations regarding assessment, entrance and exit procedures
- How to keep evaluation an on-going practice

Is there anything else you would like to share regarding TAG services?

- * Reality is, individual schools are better than most believe
- * There is probably a profoundly gifted TAG student who needs support
- * Equity is not so much a result of change in demographics, but the reality is low expectations for low SES and under-represented populations; enrollment in TAG is one of the consequences
- * Do an internal audit of the schools and then provide guidance based on knowledge and information
- * Where is the connector for the entire process
- * Professional development needs to be a key component

**TAG STUDENT INTERVIEWS
PORTLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT
FALL 2002**

- *What do you like best about school?
- *What do you like best to learn in school?
- *How do you like to learn about things in school?
- *What do you tell others about TAG?
- *What is the best thing about TAG?
- *How is school different for you because of TAG?
- *If you could change something about TAG, what might that be?
- *Are there some things you don't like about being a TAG student? What might those be?
- *What words best describe TAG?
- *What else would you like to tell me about TAG?

TAG REVIEW
PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS
AGGREGATE OF STUDENT INTERVIEWS
FALL 2002

The comments are an aggregate of the interviews held with students grades 3-12 who have been TAG identified. The majority of children expressed lack of challenge in the program; lack of anything different in the classroom, and general frustration with the services provided. They would generally prefer a separate class, at least part of the day.

Is it ever difficult to be TAG identified?

- Call you smart*
- Not hard to be TAG*
- Treated as a basic individual
- Sometimes you get compliments for knowing things
- Teachers may say, “TAG students should be doing...”
- Assignments are random from teachers
- Not supposed to tell because others are not supposed to know
- Sometimes like a “putdown” because you are not supposed to be smarter than anyone else
- When you are supposed to help everyone else; especially kids who need extra help; they look to you to solve problems for them

What do you like about school?

- Being around others
- Easy access to the library
- Used to like science, but it’s boring – already know the material; teacher is not into the material and doesn’t have any enthusiasm for teaching; do labs on occasion
- Designing investigations
- Writing – creative, persuasive
- Math – statistics and graphing
- School is easier for you
- Sometimes there are different things to do

How do you most like to learn?

- With partners if others aren’t annoying and don’t want to work; then it’s not fun
- By myself then I can do what I want
- Independent study
- No busy work – needs to be related to learning something new and interesting
-

How do you most like to learn? (continued)

- Reading and listening to opinions of others; taking notes
- Extra things during school
- Doing experiments and learning why things happen at the end
- The process of Writer's Workshop
- Have someone tell me what to learn; read to me about what I'm going to learn, go to the library and learn more
- Like to read for information
- Like to learn visually
- Like to have discussions
- Hands-on learning
- Involved and engaged in my learning
- Demonstrations and lectures
- Without repetition

How does TAG make school different?

- There is not difference at middle schools because of TAG
- TAG doesn't do anything; there's no much involvement
- It's supposed to be harder
- Take extra classes to stay busy
- There should be more; what happened to the special classes?
- Budget cuts took the classes away
- They cut the program so nothing happens
- Go and get challenged more
- Learn more than you already know
- The program is for people who are not really challenged in class
- Teachers can recognize above average students
- TAG should be open to anyone who wants to work that hard; they could probably make it if they wanted to
- Would be nice to have science classes that explained things in more detail; don't get answers even if you ask
- Maybe we should have a special room with a tutor who could guide us and we could learn what ever we wanted to learn; we could do inventions
- We need less worksheets
- Expected to do more pages
- It depends on the teachers
- Lots of self-instruction
- Don't see where it makes any difference
- Middle school TAG is non-existent, anyway
- High school classes have improved

What would you change?

- Not so many grades higher in math – gets too challenging; not too, but somewhat
- Go back to when we had extra classes
- Provide more subjects to learn
- Have just TAG students in a class
- Learn in your area of strength
- Provide some challenge with instruction; more challenge for everyone
- Something besides math!
- Provide half day classes
- Have classes so they don't tease you
- Do an interview to get into TAG
- Fewer worksheets
- Special TAG days, classes, program
- Would be fun to have a school for TAG
- Make things more our level
- Classes should be during the school day, not after
- Instruction needs to change. There is no lucid delivery of education – it is ineffective. Teachers are unclear about expectations and students get frustrated. Basically, teachers are not performing; not delivering or modeling what they want us to do
- Some standards in classes are very low and allow for lots of student procrastination
- Teachers need to not waste our class time. They use them for busy work, worksheets, random reading. We need more long term assignments, independent projects, discussions and lectures
- IB separates out kids because those in the middle can't afford to pay for the class fees or tests; don't qualify for scholarships; not a fair system; district and school need to look at this

Principal Workshop
Portland Public Schools
November 12, 2002

Welcome and Introductions

One thing you do to support your teachers who work with TAG students”

Brainstorm and Share

What are Best Practices for effective education of TAG students?

- Describe key components of TAG instruction in your building 50 min
- Describe ways in which you know students are learning at their rate and level in your building.
- Describe ways in which you document effective learning practices for TAG students in your building

Group activity:
list, post, and share

Break

15 min

What is the role of the principal?
IF - Protocols and agreements
THEN - Best Practices in Observation and Evaluation

- What support do you need as a principal to be effective?
- What support does staff need to be most effective?

Group Activity 50 min
List, pair, share

Survey

Wrap Up

Synopsis of general interviews
Portland PS
Fall 2002
BGMaurer

RESPONSES FROM PRINCIPAL MEETINGS

TAG support:

- *Use TAG as resource for staff development with parents and teachers.
- *Multi-level resources throughout the district
- *Specialist in the building would help a lot; AM TAG; PM enrichment for all students
- *Time is the issue; how to serve all student needs
- *Math curriculum – especially math; extensions are not always practical; too much set up; teachers are not trained enough; need strategies and units.
- *A math textbook specifically for TAG would be good
- *Train more parents as volunteers – especially for math
- *Need a better fiscal foundation; find some grants
- *Educate the board
- *Expand the definition for TAG applications
- *Provide AP materials

Reporting Rate and Level for TAG:

- *Pre-assessments are on-going
- *Quarterly reports for each child in math and literature
- *Individually planned interventions
- *DRA is available for reading; need something comparable for math
- *Reading and math classes are leveled; cross-grade
- *Teachers assess students for skill levels
- *Teachers meet weekly for planning and support
- *Provide flexible movement for students, as needed

Effective practices to serve TAG:

- *Balance the number of TAG students in a building
- *Cluster group TAG students
- *Lower the class size
- *Provide additional time for staff development for staff
- *Create more sustained efforts for training
- *Deal with the hot spots and don't bring them to the building level
- *Put inservice in the buildings: differentiation; multiple intelligences; holistic view
- *Integrate program services: TAG, ELL, Special Education
- *Increase the understanding of TAG students and their needs
- *Buy materials at the district level
- *Create a comprehensive honors program that is within and part of the curriculum
- *Parallel other roles of special service departments
- *Teachers are noticing that not all instruction is getting to all students
- *Design an individualized program for area(s) of strength for students

Staff support:

- *Provide an alternative plan for staff development
- *Veterans need to do book studies, share, and work at a different level
- *New staff need lots of training and focus
- *Advanced classes should be part of the continuum of support for staff
- *More support to work in grade level/subject area teams to close the gap for student learning
- *Help staff understand what are the expected student growth increments
- *Help staff re-think strategies; provide more skill building ideas; need to understand how to modify lessons for all student needs
- *High school staff is not prepared to teach different levels of instruction
- *What is the difference between college level methodology and Honors or AP instruction and expectations?
- *Understand the difference between acceleration and depth and breadth of instruction
- *Permission to do something different; how to use time creatively; use community resources to assist with classroom
- *Provide common planning times

Principals Needs:

- *Time
- *Want to be part of the staff department meetings; to understand what is being planned for all students
- *How to balance observations vs. evaluations; teacher have a lot to share; what to support their learning
- *Use counselor effective to handle TAG applications
- *How to support/recruit under represented populations
- *How to share information with staff on how to recognize other types of giftedness; different students attributes
- *Help with setting standards and expectations
- *How to support parents with identification and curriculum of TAG