

**Program Review
Portland Public Schools
Services for Talented and Gifted
February 2003**

The charge for this review was to conduct a comprehensive review of the services for identified talented and gifted students in the Portland Public Schools, K-12.

Focus areas included:

- *student achievement,
- *equity of access to educational options, and
- *action steps at the building level to deliver services for gifted students.

The expected outcomes include:

- Written report of findings based on best practices and national standards
- Recommendations and strategies for next steps
- Commendations of successes
- Appendix with summaries of all activities and sample documents as documented in written report
- Report from the Portland Public Schools Task Force on Talented and Gifted regarding next steps for modification and revision of the services.

The review process included interviews, forums, meetings with a District Task Force, a paper review of TAG documents, and surveys of constituent groups. This process was conducted by Barbara Maurer, Consultant, who developed a set of essential questions that guided the project. A copy of these questions is located in the *Appendix Section IX*.

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- Report from the Portland Public Schools Task Force on Talented and Gifted regarding next steps for modification and revision of the services.

The intent is to provide the Portland Public Schools with findings and recommendation regarding the current program activities for identified talented and gifted students. The report will be based on data collected, available reports and documents, and information shared by members of the Portland Public Schools community and will be framed based on national best practices and standards for gifted education and Oregon State guidelines for the education of gifted students.

OVERVIEW AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Review Framework: National Standards

The findings are aligned with the National Standards for Gifted Education as developed by the National Association for Gifted, 1998. National standards addressed in this report include: Curriculum and Instruction; Program Administration and Management; Program Design; Professional Development; and Student Identification. The items identified within the charge from Portland Public School officials and the Administrative rules of the State of Oregon will be subsumed within these areas and highlighted as they are addressed.

The National Standards for Gifted Education are integral to the body of this report, consequently it is important to understand the underpinnings of the standards. Those who developed the organizing principles for the National Standards for Gifted used specific guiding principles and these allow the standards to serve as benchmarks for measuring program effectiveness. The standards provide both requisite and exemplary levels with a range for performance embedded within them. Thus, they serve as an excellent tool for measuring and evaluating a district program for Talented and Gifted Students. The standards have established a level of performance to which all educational districts should aspire when serving their gifted students. The standards also represent professional consensus on critical practices in gifted education.

For the purposes of this review the following definitions will apply (*as stated in the Nation Standards for Gifted Education 1998*).

Gifted Education Programming is a coordinated and comprehensive structure of informal and formal services provided on a continuing basis intended to effectively nurture gifted learners.

A standard is a designated level of performance that programming must achieve for the criteria to be deemed a success (*Worthen, Sanders, & Fitzpatrick, 1997*).

Gifted learners are 'children and youth with outstanding talent who perform or show potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment' (*U.S. Department of Education, 1993, p.3*).

Minimum standards include requisite conditions for acceptable gifted education programming practice.

Exemplary standards designate desirable and visionary conditions for excellence in gifted education programming practices.

Current Status

Services for Talented and Gifted have been in place in the Portland Public Schools for 29 years. These services are dependent on the existence of district funding, since no state funding is provided, even though Oregon law mandates service for gifted students. Change in the district central management organization has had an impact on the offerings and structure of the TAG services. In addition, reduced budget and resources have decreased TAG district services and options. The intent of the Portland Public Schools is to provide service for talented and gifted students, K-12, that is in compliance with Oregon Administrative Rules for serving Talented and Gifted, meets the District Board Policy, and aligns with the Portland Public School District Strategic Plan. Issues relative to this review are indicated below.

Oregon Administrative Rules for Talented and Gifted (ORS 343.395):

- Students who score in the 97th percentile on a nationally standardized test of mental ability, or those who score at or above the 97th percentile on a standardized test of reading or math achievement, or those students who have potential to score at these levels;
- Multiple criteria including social and behavioral data, academic history, classroom achievement, student interest, style, and learning preferences information, and other measures determined by the school district to be relevant;
- No single test or criteria is to be used as the sole determiner for (*giftedness*) gifted education.

Portland Public Schools Board Policy (6.10.015, June 1998):

- Commitment to an educational program that recognizes the unique value, needs and talents of the individual student;
- Curriculum and instruction designed to meet the rate and level of learning of gifted and talented students;
- Provision of classroom or school program designed to promote educational opportunity for talented and gifted students, commensurate with their ability.

Portland Public Schools Strategic Plan (6-2000):

- Support all students in achieving their very highest educational and personal potential;
- With equitable and just access to opportunities....they can reach their full potential;
- Adopt system-wide standards for students' achievement of strategic objectives and the means to assess them.

Summary of findings

The table below summarizes the major findings in each category of the five areas of the national standards that were the focus of this review. Details are on pages 10 to 23 of this report

**Gifted Education Program Criterion
National Association for Gifted Children, 1998**

| NATIONAL STANDARD | MINIMUM STANDARDS | IN PROCESS |
|--|---|--|
| CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION | PORTLAND MEETS SOME OF THE MINIMUM STANDARDS | |
| <i>Differentiated Curriculum</i> | <i>Minimum standard not met:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No curriculum manual for Gifted Education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some indicators of meaningful differentiation in instruction |
| <i>Modification of general education curriculum for TAG students</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modifications and accommodations available throughout the district • Student plans vary in depth and effectiveness. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual student plans part of elementary TAG services • Some differentiation evident in classrooms |
| <i>Instructional pace</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pace does not always take into account readiness levels. • Acceleration varies between buildings, teachers, and content areas. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pace is generally accelerated for TAG students • Some exemplary teaching |
| <i>Curriculum</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal budget for advanced level materials | |
| <i>Subject and grade skipping</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some evidence of acceleration at all levels | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More widely practiced at Middle and High School |

| NATIONAL STANDARD | MINIMUM STANDARDS | IN PROCESS |
|---|---|---|
| IDENTIFICATION PROCEDURES | PORTLAND MEETS SOME OF THE MINIMUM STANDARDS | |
| <i>Continuum of options, approaches and resources</i> | <p>Minimum standard not met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No identified model or planned continuum of learning • No consistency across district | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some variety (i.e., services in regular classrooms and after school enrichment) |
| <i>Learner outcomes</i> | <p>Minimum standard not met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific learner outcomes for TAG students • Learner outcomes are the same as state and district expectations for all students. • No evaluation of impact of TAG instruction. • No student indicators for depth and breadth of study. | |

| IDENTIFICATION PROCEDURES continued | PORTLAND MEETS SOME OF THE MINIMUM STANDARDS | |
|--|---|---|
| <i>Student Achievement</i> | <p>Minimum standard not met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The question of academic growth as a result of services could not be answered. Data insufficient to identify students meeting or exceeding standards as TAG students. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards and achievement are part of the district policy related to maximizing students’ potential |
| <i>Student nomination process</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some evidence of measures to identify underrepresented populations <p>Minimum standard not met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pool of identified students does not reflect district demographics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procedures align with intent of the Oregon Administrative Rules for Talented and Gifted. Some alignment between assessment and service model |
| <i>Appropriate assessments</i> | <p>Minimum standard not met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inconsistency across district. Limited provisions for alternative assessments (especially MS and HS). Assessments do not include “area of potential” as per Oregon codes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessments for “area of potential” needs to continue development as per Oregon codes. |
| <i>Written procedures for assessment</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appeals process not clear <p>Minimum standard not met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No exit procedures Inconsistent in actual practice at building level | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Handbook describes district plan and procedures for student assessment. |

| NATIONAL STANDARD | MINIMUM STANDARDS | IN PROCESS |
|--|---|--|
| PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT | PORTLAND MEETS SOME OF THE MINIMAL STANDARDS | |
| <i>Comprehensive plan</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate professional development to support staff in delivering differentiated instruction • Delivery not consistent across grade levels <p>Minimum Standard not met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional development not integrated with district plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAG office developed a plan. Low enrollment forced cancellation of many offerings. |
| <i>Professional development specifically related to TAG students</i> | <p>Minimum Standard not met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of consistency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some targeted staff development through TAG office. |
| <i>Time and resources for program development</i> | <p>Minimum Standard not met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No time for all district planning/for classroom teachers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building coordinators have some time to meet • District interested in supporting teachers |

| NATIONAL STANDARD | MINIMUM STANDARDS | IN PROCESS |
|--|--|--|
| PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT | PORTLAND MEETS SOME MINIMUM STANDARDS | |
| <i>Integration with general education</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disparity in perception of degree to which TAG services are part of general education. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aligned with Board goal of educating all students |
| <i>Positive working relationships</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job descriptions for specialists meet some, but not all duties of other staff working with special needs students. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specialists provide services as requested Parent advisory supportive and interested Other constituents (e.g. ELL and Special Education) have some involvement in dialogue. |
| <i>Requisite resources</i> | <p><i>Minimum Standard not met:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advanced materials not part of adoption process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some initial steps made to support materials acquisition |

| NATIONAL STANDARD | MINIMUM STANDARDS | IN PROCESS |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| PROGRAM DESIGN | PORTLAND MEETS SOME MINIMUM STANDARDS | |
| <i>Continuum of services</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disparity in quality and quantity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> K-12 services exist |
| <i>Adequate funding</i> | Does not provide adequate professional development or materials from district budget. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All funding from district dollars |
| <i>Comprehensive, research base</i> | <p><i>Minimum Standard not met:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No evidence to support current model | |
| <i>Integral part of school day</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All levels are within class as well as outside | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service generally during school day Some outside of class extensions available |
| <i>Flexible grouping</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Groups not always designed to meet learning styles and readiness levels. | |
| <i>Policy provisions</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TAG services referenced in board policy and strategic plan | |

FINDINGS

I. CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

National Standard: "Gifted education services must include curricular and instructional opportunities directed to the unique needs of the gifted child."

Credits:

- Some fiscal resources are allocated from the central office gifted budget to schools for purchase of advanced level materials at the building level.
Evidence: Paper review of budget
- Some parents and students indicated satisfaction with the level of instruction in some content areas and at some grades levels.
Evidence: Forums, surveys
- Some staff indicated the use of cluster grouping, flexible grouping and advanced subject placement to meet the learning needs of identified TAG students.
Evidence: Forums, surveys
- Portland Public Schools board policy and the mission statement from the District Strategic Plan support education for advanced learners. (*Portland Public Schools Board Policy 6.10.015, June 1998 and Portland Public Schools Strategic Plan 6-2000*)
Evidence: Paper review

Recommendations:

- Curriculum and instruction should be further modified to recognize the unique learning needs of identified and potential TAG students.
- Curriculum and instruction should be further developed so that there is adequate flexibility to allow for the accelerated rate of learning for the extreme needs of some TAG students. (*Portland Public Schools Board Policy 6.10.015, June 1998*)
- Staff and administrators should develop a continuum of differentiated curriculum that is systematically different from the regular curriculum and is consistent across grades and schools.
- Staff and administration should be provided additional in-depth professional development and networking opportunities in order to enable them to deliver quality instruction for TAG students.
- Flexible instructional opportunities should be systematically available to meet the needs of identified TAG students, as well as a diverse group of potentially eligible students.
- Every classroom should provide means by which students can demonstrate proficiency in the core curriculum. This practice should be consistent throughout the system.
- Gifted students plans should be further refined as an integral part of classroom instruction, provide an appropriate course of study for each identified TAG student, and align with the identified strengths of the student as defined by district

and state policies. (*Oregon Administrative Rules for Talented and Gifted ORS 343.395, and Portland Public Schools Board Policy 6.10.015, June 1998*)

- Advanced curriculum and instruction in specific subject areas should be delivered within the regular school day and during the time that the specific academic subject is scheduled.
- Differentiated instruction for gifted learners must be integrated and articulated throughout the district.
- Inclusion of additional advanced classes at the high school level would enhance the services for students.

Implementation Strategies for Change:

Strategy I

- Curriculum considerations for TAG students should be an integral part of the district processes and procedures.
 - ◆ All adoptions should provide for the continuum of learners within the district, including talented and gifted. If core materials do not meet the needs of gifted and talented students, funds should be reallocated to provide appropriate materials.
 - ◆ Staff with expertise in the area of talented and gifted should be included on district curriculum committees including but not limited to committees on policies and procedures, materials adoptions, standard setting, and assessment.
 - ◆ Recommended accommodations and modifications of the district curriculum to meet the needs of advanced and out of level students should be developed across grades and within subject areas. Accommodations and modifications should address the following areas:
 - student learner outcomes,
 - accelerated or enhanced curriculum objectives,
 - appropriate instructional strategies and classroom activities.
 - ◆ Implementation of accommodations and modifications should be monitored for consistency and articulation across the district through the use of such strategies as:
 - classroom observations by building administrators using specific tools to focus the observation on strategies appropriate to advanced level learners,
 - individual school plans and reports.

Strategy II

- The curriculum and instruction for TAG identified students should reflect appropriate rate and level of learning (*Oregon Administrative Rules for Talented and Gifted ORS 343.395*)
 - ◆ Pre-assessments and assessments of mastery and level of instructional need and ability should be ongoing and developmental.

- ◆ Student learning plans should be revised so that teachers can easily incorporate them into the classroom instruction and record keeping.
Appendix Section I
 - ❑ Each student-learning plan needs to focus on the unique needs of the student. Not all gifted students have the same talents or needs.
 - ❑ The plans should reflect an accelerated, enhanced, or compacted curriculum in areas of strength and ability linked to identified needs.
 - ❑ Assessment records and plans should be progressive and transfer with students (grade to grade, teacher to teacher, school to school).
- ◆ High school curriculum should include a broader array of advanced level courses, especially honors and Advanced Placement courses.
 - ❑ Consideration should be given to establishing vertical teams at the middle and high school level.
 - ❑ Staff should be supported to use these teams as part of their professional growth and development.
 - ❑ Course work in the lower grades that will nurture and develop the skills of under represented populations should be part of the vertical teaming plan.
- ◆ Cluster grouping, as well as flexible grouping should be the norm in all the schools as a strategy for meeting the needs of TAG identified students, as well as those students demonstrating potential to benefit from TAG services. *Appendix Section III*
- ◆ Academic accommodations should begin within the first weeks of the school year. (*Oregon Administrative Rules for Talented and Gifted ORS 343.395*)

Strategy III

- A K-12 manual of specific instructional expectations, objectives and strategies for the Portland TAG services should be available.
 - ◆ A K-12 program framework should be developed, possibly using the state developed standards.
 - ◆ Learner outcomes should be developed for all grades and content areas.
 - ◆ Instructional strategies indicated in the student learning plans should be an integral part of daily instruction (compacting, differentiation, acceleration etc).
 - ◆ All instructional strategies for gifted and talented students should be aligned with the district curriculum but should demonstrate ways in which the core curriculum has been differentiated to meet the needs of TAG students.
 - ◆ Administrative staff should increase their awareness of and training in appropriate curriculum and instruction for TAG students.
 - ◆ Instructional practices and curriculum should be reviewed on a 3-5 year rotation to determine effectiveness, alignment with district curriculum, and best practices in gifted education.

Strategy IV

- ◆ All district staff should have instruction in appropriate curriculum and instruction for TAG services and identified students. *Appendix Section V*
- ◆ District professional development plans should include effective practices for special needs populations including TAG.
- ◆ Personnel from the TAG Office should be part of design team for professional development for all staff.
- ◆ Personnel from the TAG Office should work directly with building administrators and TAG coordinators to assure that strategies for TAG students are part of all professional development offerings.
- ◆ Personnel from the TAG Office should mentor all new staff in strategies and techniques appropriate for TAG students.
- ◆ Professional development should be delivered in tiered or multiple levels in order to honor the different levels of teacher expertise and experience. (e.g. awareness, practicing the teaching, and reflection). Evaluation of professional development services should include the impact on learners, as well as the degree to which the professional development has enabled teacher to change their instructional practices.

Strategy V

- Instruction in all content areas should include strategies, resources, and support to meet the needs of TAG identified students. Specifically, math, reading, and writing should include:
 - ◆ opportunities for advanced students to demonstrate mastery of skills at any time and advance to an appropriate level of learning,
 - ◆ consistent availability of resources, and
 - ◆ use of mastery level measures, including out of level assessments.
- A comprehensive reading program for advanced level learners should consider the following:
 - ◆ some gifted students may need direct instruction and must not be overlooked,
 - ◆ specific recommendations for materials and/or programs, and a list of advanced resources should be available for all staff, and
 - ◆ expected outcomes, i.e. content and goals beyond basic skills, for advanced learners in reading should be developed.
- A comprehensive writing program for advanced level learners should consider the following:
 - ◆ alignment of the skills tests with state and district writing measures,
 - ◆ addition of early keyboarding and work processing,
 - ◆ appropriate outcomes for advanced learners in writing.
- Strategies for using science and social studies programs for advanced level learners should be part of the district curriculum.
 - ◆ Curriculum for science and social studies should include strategies and techniques for differentiating the curriculum for all special needs learners.

- ◆ Teachers should be well trained in how to deliver differentiated curriculum in science and social studies assessment.
- ◆ Alternative methods for grouping students should be infused in the teaching of science and social studies in every classroom across the district.

II. STUDENT IDENTIFICATION

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| National Standard: “Gifted learners must be assessed to determine appropriate educational services.” |
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Credits:

- Clear procedures for identification, K-6, are in place.
Evidence: Paper review
- The procedures generally match the Oregon Administrative Rules.
Evidence: Paper review
- Parent signatures are required and kept on file.
Evidence: Paper review
- Parents are notified of eligibility.
Evidence: Paper review
- The process for appeals is included in the handbook and shared with parents and staff.
Evidence: Paper review
- Parent information sessions are offered at most school sites.
Evidence: Interviews
- Staff from the District Office for Talented and Gifted is available for parent and staff questions regarding identification and assessment.
Evidence: Interviews and Forums
- Building based TAG identification committees are in place and are an active part of the student selection process.
Evidence: Interviews and Forums
- All information is available electronically and in multiple languages.
Evidence: Interviews
- Identification procedures provide for the selection of students who show “potential for success” in TAG.
Evidence: Interviews and paper review

Recommendations:

- The coordination of the process for student identification needs to be refined and more clearly communicated from the central office to schools and parents.
- Instruments used for student assessment to determine eligibility need to measure diverse abilities, talents, and strengths in order to provide equitable access for all students. The current instruments should be reviewed and revised.
- Assessment procedures for identification need to be reviewed and revised at the middle and high school levels. This review should consider the possibility of eliminating identification for TAG in high school.
- Current assessment instruments should be reviewed to determine if they are the most current and most relevant for the district population and services available.
- The matrix for selection of TAG students should be correlated with current research and best practices in gifted education and identification of special needs populations.
- Program offerings need to match the student assessment profile and the strengths and needs of the students. For example, classroom services should focus on one or more of the following areas in which a student may be identified:
 - ◆ advanced cognitive skills and needs,
 - ◆ level of ability in verbal/reading.
 - ◆ level of ability in quantitative/mathematic.
 - Student learning plans should be specific to the areas identified above. Differentiation on the rate and level of instruction should be part of regular classroom practice in Science and Social Studies.

Implementation Strategies for Change:

Strategy I

- A separate manual focusing specifically on the tasks, expectations and activities for identification should be developed to:
 - ◆ align with state and district policies and procedures,
 - ◆ specify building and central office responsibilities,
 - ◆ include all forms and resources (e.g. timelines, sample letters in multiple languages, sample advertisements for community publications, sample activities for staff),
 - ◆ outline information for appeals regarding identification with timelines, responsibilities and actions, and
 - ◆ include information on process for identifying potential candidates.

Strategy II

- Communication responsibilities of TAG personnel should include:
 - ◆ working directly with school TAG coordinators and administrators on annual information sessions for staff and parents,
 - ◆ attending regular meetings with other special focus groups (e.g. Special education, ELL, Diversity), and

- ◆ being part of building administrator work sessions to review nominations, identification, parent support, data interpretation, and staff responsibilities for TAG services.

Strategy III

- The pool of candidates should reflect diverse and under- represented populations
 - ◆ Using all available data, the district office should coordinate the collection of data in reading and math for potential candidates and send this information to each school TAG team for consideration in nomination.
 - ◆ Building teams should identify all potential candidates who demonstrate unique learning styles and a need for advanced academic services in reading and/or math.
 - ◆ The TAG office needs to formalize their work with the ESL and Special Education offices to identify and serve twice-exceptional TAG students and provide options for ELL students and families to work directly with ESL Department personnel in the identification process.
 - ◆ Provisions for students with potential to participate in the identification process should be further formalized
 - ❑ No level of performance should automatically eliminate these students.
 - ❑ These students should be flagged for in-depth consideration by the building and office teams.
 - ❑ Additional assessment measures should be considered for students in this category who have one or more indicators for success in TAG (e.g. portfolios, alternatives assessment instruments, letters of application or support, rating scales - including learning styles).
 - ◆ Consideration should be given to opportunities for students who show potential but are not ready for full-time TAG service (e.g. notification to the classroom teacher, participation in academic competitions, participation in enrichment activities, part-time placement in appropriate cluster groups).

Strategy IV

- Identification procedures should reflect current research and best practices.
 - ◆ Instruments for selection of students should be reviewed and revised.
 - ❑ The same instruments should be used consistently across the district for the first level of group assessment.
 - ❑ Additional instruments should be included to further identify strengths of potential candidates.
 - ❑ All instruments should be reviewed for reliability and validity, as well as cultural bias.
 - ❑ Teacher and parent referral documents should be re-designed to be more user friendly, free of bias, and focused on the need of the specific student for TAG services.
 - ❑ Teacher and parent referral documents could be considered as qualitative pieces of evidence for selection.

- ◆ Explore collaborative assessment efforts across departments (e.g. Special Education, ESL).
 - ❑ Cross department teams should be considered for the assessment of all special needs students.
 - ❑ TAG personnel should participate in, but not be solely responsible for, the assessment of students.
 - ❑ Timelines for testing students should be reviewed and revised with the following considerations:
 - o assess one time per year to reduce costs,
 - o consider use of comparable assessments already administered by other departments,
 - o consider use of comparable out-of-district tests to place transfer students, and
 - o consider on-demand testing for students with unique needs as identified by building level teams.
 - ❑ All assessment procedures should comply with the timeline established by Oregon State policy. (*Oregon Administrative Rules for Talented and Gifted ORS 343.395*)
 - ❑ Students should be assessed and assigned in the spring of the school year, with notification to parents and schools.
 - ❑ Direct services should begin in the fall of the same year. The student-learning plan should be presented to the parents no later than the fall conference.
- ◆ Matrix development should be reviewed and revised to reflect current best practices and research. *Appendix Section II*
 - ❑ Elementary and middle level identification should be a specific and well defined procedure followed by each building and articulated with TAG district practices. The process should be:
 - o implemented consistently across the district,
 - o supported through the TAG Office,
 - o monitored for equity of access and selection,
 - o monitored for equity and consistency of services provided across the district, and
 - o designed to allow for access to program if a student changes schools.
 - ❑ High school procedures should reflect the academic needs of the student and be facilitated at the building level. Consideration should be given to an open enrollment option for students, based on pre-requisite course completion or demonstration of mastery of skills.
 - o Tag office personnel should provide guidance and expertise.
 - o TAG office personnel should assist in placement decision when appropriate services are not available in the school.
 - ❑ The matrix scoring procedures should be revised to allow for the best selection of qualified and potential candidates for TAG services. *Appendix, Section II*

- ◆ TAG guidelines should specifically address procedures for exiting the program or being placed on provisional status. *Appendix, Section II*
 - Students exiting or being placed on provisional status should have access to a due process procedure.
 - Staff, school administrators, TAG staff, and parents should have well defined roles and responsibilities in the process for exiting or being placed on provisional status.
 - Procedures for exiting or being placed on provisional status should match state and district policies and procedures.

III. PROGRAM DESIGN

National Standard: “The development of appropriate gifted education programming requires comprehensive services based on sound philosophical, theoretical, and empirical support.”

Credits:

- Services are in place, K-12 in the Portland Public Schools.
Evidence: Paper review
- Services have a long history and support from the district and school board.
Evidence: Paper review and interviews
- This is some continuum of services across the grade levels for students.
Evidence: Interviews
- TAG services are supported by district money.
Evidence: Paper review and interviews
- The district has a board policy and incorporates the needs of advanced learners in the strategic plan.
Evidence: Paper review

Recommendations:

- The TAG office personnel should review identification and selection procedures to assure access to services for all advanced learners.
- The TAG office personnel should review and revise the continuum of services to increase consistency across the district and grades.
- Grouping strategies should be an integral part of TAG services and should be delivered consistently across the district.
- Funding should be consistent with program goals and needs and should be reviewed annually to determine the most appropriate allocation of resources.
- The district curriculum and instruction and professional development plans should include provisions for teaching TAG identified students, as well as all advanced level learners.
- The service delivery model for TAG students should be grounded in current research and best practices in the field of gifted education.
- The service model should have a clearly articulated statement of philosophy, supported by measurable goals and objectives.

- The TAG office personnel should collaborate with other departments to promote common goals and to help prepare potential students to participate in advanced, higher-level classes.

Implementation Strategies for Change:

Strategy I

- Gifted programming should be built on researched models and services that meet the needs of identified students and support the practices of the Portland Public Schools.
 - ◆ Research should be done to identify TAG model(s) that have a specific framework, identifiable objectives and assessable outcomes that are compatible with the policies and practices of the Portland Public Schools. (*Portland Public Schools Board Policy 6.10.015, June, 1998*)
Appendix, Section III
 - The model selected should outline all roles, duties, and responsibilities.
 - Availability of funding should be a primary consideration in selecting a model.
 - Identification and selection of students must comply with state and district policies.
 - Services for TAG students should be delivered within the regular school day.
 - ◆ Instruction and curriculum should be articulated with district plans and demonstrate clear differences for advanced level learners, K-12.
 - ◆ All staff should receive professional development to support the delivery of curriculum and instruction for advanced level learners.
 - ◆ Staff assignment policies should take into account placement of:
 - staff with background and training in working with advanced level learners and advanced content with TAG students, and
 - staff with an interest in working with TAG identified or potential students in assignments for advanced level classes.
- The TAG budget should be reviewed for most appropriate allocation of funds available. Consideration should be given to:
 - highest impact for identified TAG students,
 - in-class academic needs,
 - academic competitions, and
 - support of scholarships for those needing off campus classes.

Strategy II

- All students should be exposed to critical thinking, creative problem solving and enrichment activities.
 - ◆ Enrichment activities should be provided as an integral part of the core curriculum for all students and serve as an indicator for those students who demonstrate advanced thinking skills and abilities.

- ◆ Critical and creative thinking should be a part of the district curriculum and instruction for all students.
- ◆ Academic competitions should be open to all interested students, be a part of class time, or be part of a school-sponsored opportunity.
 - Parents and community members can serve as facilitators/leaders.
 - School foundations or community groups should be approached to support/off-set funding issues and scholarships.
 - Secondary schools might include competitions as a part of their student activities budget.

Strategy III

- All staff should receive district level support for the implementation and delivery of services for TAG students.
 - ◆ Professional development should be an integral part of the district and TAG office plans.
 - Professional development opportunities should recognize and support the levels of expertise within the staff.
 - Master level teachers should serve as mentors, demonstration teachers, and instructors for colleagues and be included as resources in the district master plan for professional development.

Appendix Section V

IV. PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

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| National Standard: “Appropriate gifted education programming must include the establishment of a systematic means of developing, implementing, and managing services.” |
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Credits:

- Qualified personnel facilitate TAG services in the district.
Evidence: Forums and interviews
- The program has an advisory group.
Evidence: Paper review and forum
- The TAG Office has begun to create linkages with other departments to better serve the students (e.g. ESL Department).
Evidence: Interviews
- TAG personnel work in the buildings for a portion of their assignment to provide information, resources, and workshops.
Evidence: Interviews

Recommendations:

- Maintain the TAG administrative office to oversee the efforts to improve TAG services in the district and support personnel and parents.
- Review and revise job descriptions for TAG personnel.
- Assign more of the clerical duties to support staff, thus allowing the experts in curriculum and instruction more time in the field.

- Focus TAG staff efforts on curriculum, instruction, and professional development.
- Review TAG services budget to ensure that funds are allocated to the areas that have the highest impact.

Implementation Strategies for Change:

Strategy I

- The responsibility for TAG services requires a strong relationship between the TAG office and general education.
 - ◆ The TAG manager should be included in district level curriculum, instruction and professional development planning, be a member of district committees (e.g. other coordinators, budget, research, retreats), and attend principals meetings so that TAG issues are addressed in the context of the total general education program.
 - ◆ TAG personnel should be included in materials resource adoptions.
 - ◆ Clear communication links need to be in place in order to address current issues and concerns that impact TAG services and to support the daily operations.
 - ◆ The TAG office needs to continue to maintain a positive relationship with constituency groups – advisory, parent groups, state associations and community members.
 - ◆ The fiscal responsibilities for TAG services should be shared with other district departments.
 - ◆ A review of the TAG budget should move available dollars to direct support for identified and potential TAG students at the classroom level. This may mean reduction in dollars currently allocated for extra curricular and enrichment activities.

Strategy II

- The roles and responsibilities of all TAG personnel should be reviewed in order to identify those roles and responsibilities that provide the most effective service to students, staff and parents. Appendix Section IV
 - ◆ TAG support staff should be allocated more clerical and office tasks in order to allow certificated staff to focus on field activities.
 - ❑ Clerical staff could manage student records, phones, budgets, materials management, and electronic files.
 - ❑ Other potential areas to be covered by clerical and support staff should be considered.
 - ◆ TAG TOSAS should have clear and aligned job descriptions that focus on activities that have the highest student impact. For example:
 - ❑ direct support to buildings (staff, identified and potential students, administration, and parents),
 - ❑ assessment of students as a collaborative effort with staff from other departments and the school buildings,
 - ❑ parent and community support. *Appendix Section IV*

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

National Standard: “Gifted learners are entitled to be served by professionals who have specialized preparation in gifted education, expertise in appropriate differentiated content and instructional methods, involvement in ongoing professional development, and who possess exemplary personal and professional traits.”

Credits:

- A TAG professional development plan has been developed to support TAG staff in the delivery of services.
 - *Evidence: Paper review and interviews*
- TAG staff is qualified to deliver multiple professional development classes.
 - *Evidence: Interviews and forums*
- TAG staff work closely with building administrators or TAG coordinators to support staff learning and growth.
 - *Evidence: Interviews*

Recommendations:

- Professional development for all staff that provides TAG services should be aligned with and supported by the district plan.
- Development of a differentiated curriculum should be one of the goals in training staff.

Strategy I

- A strong professional development plan should be in place for those who work with TAG students. *Appendix, Section V*
 - ◆ TAG TOSAS should focus on training opportunities and support for cluster teachers who are working with TAG identified students.
 - Use hands-on, project based learning, peer coaching and discussion groups to support teacher development. Create multiple levels of professional development to accommodate the experience and expertise of staff.
 - Connect with credit opportunities through a local institution.
 - Regionalize the trainings; include some cross level opportunities (elementary to middle to high).
 - Align the training with current school or district initiatives so that teachers view strategies for TAG students as part of a continuum, of instructional practices.
 - Consider releasing teachers to observe others, using TAG specialists to cover classes.

Strategy II

- Participate in a district initiated needs assessment activity for professional development.
 - ◆ Determine region-wide school needs and build on district initiatives.
 - ◆ Build a district-wide professional development calendar that integrates TAG offerings.
 - ◆ Provide staff self-assessment tools to help teachers know, understand, and identify their strengths and needs in delivering TAG services.
 - ◆ Make all professional development part of an integrated package that builds learning over time rather than “one shot” experiences.

CONCLUSION

It is periodically appropriate to examine the levels of performance, proficiency, and effectiveness of all educational programs. The review of services for the Talented and Gifted in the Portland Public Schools has been inclusive of all stakeholders and has focused on key elements as outlined by district personnel. It is intended to highlight areas that can be strengthened and offer specific strategies to accomplish this task. The recommendations are made with the recognition of the fiscal constraints within the Portland system. Many of the suggestions integrate and build upon collaborative efforts between departments as a way to best serve the needs of TAG students and those who teach them. Thus, the recommendations focus on building on successful practices.

In review, priority consideration should be given to the integration of the curriculum and instruction for Tag students with district curriculum and instruction. The current TAG curriculum is not representative of best practices for gifted students and TAG program needs district support to establish appropriate standards so that staff understands the learning expectations and targets. Best practices that should be a priority focus are materials adoptions, providing TAG services within the school day, and developing student plans that are an integral part of every classroom.

Identification of TAG students is an area of concern due to possible “gate keeping” practices that may preclude some students from being able to participate in, or even apply for, consideration for TAG services. Current gate keeping practice in evidence are lack of support and encouragement for certain students, inconsistent district level communication, and lack of knowledge about or interest in the program among some parent groups. For some of the students, particularly those from under-represented populations, success as graduates is dependent on early identification and nurturing of skills.

In the area of identification, the TAG Office should collaborate with other departments to combine resources and build support. Condensing the timelines, reducing identification to once a year and revising the identification plan should provide improve efficiency in this area. The modification of the matrix for selection is a major consideration. These changes should not increase costs.

Program design is an area targeted for major changes. The Portland School District would be well served by selecting an already developed model that is based on best practices and research, aligns with the practices of the district, and is in compliance with state and district policies. Current services are difficult to define and have little grounding in research; they have evolved over time rather than being selected as the best model of service for TAG students.

Professional development will be critical for the success of any new service model. Staff, administrators and parents will need to participate in training and education sessions to

understand the new model. With a new direction in service, professional development for teachers working with TAG students can be aligned within the district plan. All staff should understand that TAG student require a greater degree of differentiation in the curriculum.

The TAG personnel should be recognized for their expertise in gifted education and be supported in making a shift to more direct service to staff, students and parents. This shift will enhance delivery of instruction for all students and will build a collaborative and supportive network between central office and the schools.

Portland Public Schools are in a time of transition and have the opportunity to build the program for TAG as a part of the continuum of services for all students in the district. The national standards movement is intended as a base for building good curriculum for all students, including those who are high achievers. The district has the potential to provide an elegant solution for this special needs population. The parents have been loyal to the school system and are looking for commitment to a quality program that will meet the needs of their children while providing appropriate challenges. Portland is in a position to respond to issues of equity and excellence in education by delivering TAG services that intentionally plan for and support the academic and intellectual growth of every child.

Portland is to be commended for under taking this process. Such significant changes do not occur quickly. However with the implementation of the recommendations and strategies, attention to the concerns of stakeholders, and more open communication Portland will be able to move toward more comprehensive and inclusive TAG services.