

June 6, 2007

To: PPS Student Achievement Committee

From: Tom Gauntt (Chair) & Marianne Zarkin (Vice-Chair), PPS Talented and Gifted Advisory Council

On behalf of the District's TAG Advisory Council (TAGAC), we respectfully submit the attached document, "Research-Based Best Practices and Recommendations for Talented and Gifted Services in Portland Public Schools." This report summarizes and recommends the adoption of acceleration and grouping strategies that have proven effective in meeting the needs of advanced learners. It focuses on low-cost strategies which, we believe, can be readily implemented throughout the District.

Our recommendations are consistent with conclusions drawn by the 2003 district-wide evaluation of TAG services and with previous recommendations made by TAGAC (formerly DTAC). They are further motivated by our sense of an ongoing consensus among TAG parents that many Portland schools fall far short of meeting both the needs of their children and the District's policy to provide "curriculum and instruction designed to meet the level and rate of learning of gifted and talented students."

Since TAGAC's completion and formal adoption of this report, we have further assessed the status of talented and gifted education in the context of organizational and curricular changes taking place within Portland Public Schools. These deliberations have bolstered our conviction that a district-wide acceleration policy will provide a timely and effective way to meet the needs of advanced learners. We therefore recommend that the Portland School District adopt a policy requiring that each school provide a clear pathway through which advanced learners can progress to grade-level work that matches their capabilities, challenges their intellect, and augments their motivation to learn. We recommend that District policy requires each school -- as appropriate to its instructional level -- to facilitate all four modes of acceleration discussed in this report: namely, whole-grade acceleration, single-subject acceleration, early admission to kindergarten, and early high school graduation.

We submit this report in fulfillment of our mandate "to make recommendations to the TAG Administrator, the Superintendent, and the School Board, with respect to services for talented and gifted students in Portland Public Schools." Our discussions with district-level administrators leave us optimistic that PPS is planning to move in the direction of a comprehensive acceleration policy, which, we believe, should complement a broader set of measures under consideration by the District.