3/18/2014

TO: Task Force on School Funding

FR: Heather Koch, Parent of Oregon Public School Elementary Student

 1326 SE Tenino Street

Portland, OR 97202

503-539-4208

RE: Submission of Written Testimony for Friday 3/21 hearing

I write to impress upon you the urgent **need for consistent and adequate TAG funding.**

I have been volunteering in my son’s elementary school (Portland Public School, Llewellyn Elementary), in various capacities for 3 years as a parent volunteer. I have seen how much our schools need help in nearly every area. This year, I helped lead the programs we create for TAG students as volunteers because the lack of funding for TAG students leaves them as a greatly underserved and struggling group.

Year after year, I see the “brain drain” as TAG-identified students leave the school due to unmet needs. They go to charter and focus schools, and sometimes to private schools. They leave behind fellow students yearning for their TAG classmates and still yearning for support. They leave behind a system without funding to support the needs of our Talented and Gifted Students. They leave behind a student body with a smaller TAG cohort, which arguably takes away an important part of the community for all students, TAG or not.

In my son’s 3rd grade cohort alone, a *minimum* of over 18% of the TAG students have left the school due to unmet needs over the course of 3 years. That is over 6% of TAG students per year. Those statistics are startling and should raise a red flag for any conscious person, especially school spending decision makers.

**I urge you to provide adequate and consistent funding for our TAG students.** They are yearning for challenge and engagement in our public schools, and the resources to support them now are neither predictable nor nearly adequate. These students, from every socio-economic background, fall through the cracks just like students underserved in other ways. Please do not ignore this crisis in serving some of our most capable Oregonians. They are an enormous part of our future.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony.