# A DIFFERENT DRUMMER

**Fall 2026** **Volume IX, Issue 2**

*Working for a brighter future for Oregon's gifted*

*Margaret DeLacy*

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***Editor***
***Darlene Robinson***

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In this letter, I am sharing five rationales for sustained funding for Talented and Gifted (TAG) services and accelerated instruction in Oregon.

**First**, the **Quality Education Commission** has issued its latest report:

The initial QEC developed "prototypical" elementary, middle, and high schools and estimated the resources needed at each level. Although early reports included a category of spending in each elementary school *for "4.5 FTE for specialists in areas such as art, music, PE, reading, math, **TAG**, library, ESL, child development/counselor"*, the 2022 report dropped funding for a TAG specialist.

This year, however, the QEC incorporated a series of "white papers" developed by area experts at the Oregon Department of Education including one on "best practices" for Talented and Gifted students which you can find here:

The QEC report noted that whereas some "best practices" relied on continuing current grants-in-aid, others would need additional funding for "specific supports." Among these were:
:
*"Support the development of Talented and Gifted (TAG) students by addressing specialized staffing shortages through funding, either at the state or district-level, for teachers to obtain a certified TAG specialization."*

Now that the QEC has acknowledged the need, It is up to us to advocate for the inclusion of TAG funding in future reports.

**Second**, a substantial proportion of Oregon students is ready for more advanced academic opportunities.

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The most recent Oregon Department of Education data show that, in 2024–25:

- *17.4% of students reached Level 4 ("exceeds") in English Language Arts;*
- *14.5% reached Level 4 in mathematics, and*
- *5.2% of students in tested grades reached Level 4 in science*.

These students have demonstrated that they can master material beyond the standard curriculum. They need advanced classes, acceleration, and appropriately challenging instruction.

**Third**, research continues to prove that gifted education strengthens schools and expands opportunity, contradicting the myth that advanced academic programs benefit only a small privileged group.

For example, among very recent reports:

- A working paper by Farah Mallah at Stanford found that adding advanced classes to a school increases its socioeconomic diversity, making the whole school more diverse.
- A working paper for the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) by David Card, Eric Chyn, and Laura Giuliano looked at students identified for a TAG program by an IQ test. They found that *for disadvantaged boys* with IQ's near the 116-point cutoff, identification led to large increases in course-taking and grades, concluding that*, "being identified as gifted leads to a large increase in the probability of completing high school on time and entering college the following year."* There was a small but not statistically significant effect for girls.

Access to advanced classes is an important tool for expanding opportunity, particularly for students who might otherwise be overlooked. Funding is necessary for training staff and developing programs to identify and serve these students.

**Fourth**, a January 2026 study for Portland Public Schools entitled "*Why They Stay and Why They Leave*" found that nearly 82% of families who had left PPS did so because of concerns about academic quality. Nearly 74% of families considering leaving expressed the same concern. If Oregon wants to retain families and strengthen its public schools, it must provide appropriate academic challenge.

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**Finally, Oregon voters strongly support funding for gifted education and continued access to advanced classes.**

In May, the nonprofit Center for Educational Progress released the results of a survey of likely November 2026 Oregon voters. The results showed strong, bipartisan support for dedicated Tag education.

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.Three findings from this survey stand out:

**1**. **The public supports TAG funding.**
Half of the respondents were surveyed on a proposal to dedicate "*1% of Oregon's K–12 education budget"* to TAG, and the other half were told it would dedicate "$120 million." Two-thirds supported the 1% proposal and 55%, supported *"$120 million."*

**2**. **The leading objection isn't to gifted education itself.**
Among those who opposed the funding proposals, the most common concern—cited by 26%—was that the money would be wasted, mismanaged, or lost to fraud.
The primary objection is about how all education dollars are spent, not opposition to providing advanced educational opportunities.

**3. Voters overwhelmingly reject detracking.**
An extraordinary 83% of Oregon voters support ability grouping and oppose eliminating advanced classes—a bipartisan majority of more than five to one.

**Oregon voters want students to have access to appropriately challenging instruction, and they strongly support funding to make it possible**.

Despite the evidence that TAG funding has broad bipartisan support, strengthens schools, promotes opportunity, and benefits students who might otherwise be underserved, the Legislature has repeatedly failed to provide sustained, categorical support for TAG services.

We intend to try again in the coming legislative session.

**You can help!** Get to know your state legislators. Ask them to support funding for TAG services and accelerated instruction. Participate in the legislative process during the long session. We will keep you updated as the legislative process gets underway. In the meantime, speak up.

TAG students should not have to depend on their ZIP code to receive an education that challenges them. Oregon has the research, recommendations, and public support to do better.

# OATAG Teacher Grant Program

OATAG is offering a EDUCATOR GRANT PROGRAM for the 2026-2027 school year. Applicants must be OATAG members at the time they apply.

**Applications are due by December 11, 2026** and grant funds must be used by September 1, 2027. Grants will be approved by a committee and payments will be disbursed through your district.

You may apply for any project that will improve your knowledge and skills as an educator of talented and gifted students including classes and conferences or for any media/materials/services that will contribute directly to the education of TAG students in your classroom.

Grants may be combined with other funding sources for a single project as long as the project contributes directly to educating TAG students or to your knowledge and skills related to educating TAG students.

If you are selected for a grant, you must agree to send OATAG a *brief* follow-up on how it worked out. OATAG may share this. You may request that your identity and contact information not be disclosed.

## Grant Award:

Grants range from $500 to $2000. The number of grants awarded will depend on the size of the grants selected.

## Eligibility Criteria:

Applicants must be OATAG members at the time they apply.

## Application Process:

***Please note that you cannot save and edit the application and will not be able to change the application once submitted.***

1. The following information will need to be attached to the application:
    1. What goal will this grant address? Provide a brief explanation of why you are requesting this grant--how will it make a difference?
    2. How will Grant be used? Provide a proposed budget and explanation of what funds will be used for. (i.e. curriculum materials, PD Courses, etc.)
    3. An optional Photo for publicity
2. Complete and submit Application form via Air Table (see Teacher Grants Quick Links)

## Grant Committee Review:

All applications will be reviewed by a committee of volunteers with a variety of experiences and an interest in TAG students. The committee will be selected by the Board of Directors of OATAG. Decisions by the committee are final and not subject to review.

## Results Report:

A final report by grant recipients is due upon completion. The final report should include:

1. A brief description of how/whether the grant helped you educate your TAG students.
2. The result report should be attached to the Result Report submission form on Air Table.

# OATAG Student Grant Program

**Supporting Growth and Development for Students**
OATAG is excited to offer scholarships of **up to $1,000** to support students who are pursuing enrichment opportunities that encourage personal, academic, or creative growth.

## Purpose:

This scholarship is designed to support **students who are eager to grow and develop** through enrichment experiences such as classes, camps, workshops, competitions, or independent projects.

## Eligibility Criteria:

- Open to **students in grades K–12**, including **homeschool students ages 4–18**
- Parent/Guardian Permission
- Oregon residents
- Applicants must demonstrate how the enrichment activity will support their growth and learning

## Award Details:

- Scholarships of **up to $1,000** will be awarded. The OATAG Grant Committee will determine the number of awards based on the grant requests and available funds.
- Funds may be used for:
    - Tuition or registration fees for enrichment activities
    - Materials or supplies related to the activity
    - Travel expenses directly tied to the opportunity
- Scholarship recipients will also receive a **one-year OATAG family membership**

## Application Process:

1. Download and complete the *Student Grant Proposal*, *a* Microsoft Word document (see Student Grants Quick Links). Please limit proposal to no more than 2 pages.

    **Proposal sections:**

    - Applicant Information - Name, Age, and Grade.
    - Goal – What you hope to accomplish and when.
    - Budget – Itemized expenditures and funding sources

## CONFERENCE KEYNOTE SPEAKER

***Dr. Tamra Stambaugh***

# Bio

Dr. Tamra Stambaugh is Professor and the Margo Long Endowed Chair in Gifted Education at Whitworth University. An internationally recognized scholar and leader in gifted education, her work focuses on talent development, advanced curriculum and instruction, and improving access to gifted services for students from rural and low-income backgrounds.

She is the author, co-author, or editor of numerous articles, book chapters, and award-winning curriculum programs, including the Vanderbilt PTY Curriculum and the Jacob's Ladder Reading Comprehension Program. Her books include *Serving Gifted Children in Rural Settings* and *Unlocking Potential: Identifying and Serving Gifted Students from Low-Income Households*.

Dr. Stambaugh serves in leadership roles across state and national organizations. Current roles include governance secretary for the National Association for Gifted Children, the American Educational Research Association Gifted SIG incoming program chair, Gifted Child Quarterly Editorial Board, and the Washington Association of Educators of the Talented and Gifted board (WAETAG). Previously, she was Executive Director of Programs for Talented Youth and Associate Research Professor at Vanderbilt University. She earned her Ph.D. from the College of William & Mary and began her career as a teacher and later a coordinator of gifted education programs, before working in higher education.

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Her contributions have been recognized with numerous national awards for leadership, scholarship, and service, including the NAGC Early Leader Award, NAGC Distinguished Service Award, and the Margaret The Lady Thatcher Award from the College of William and Mary. She is a frequent keynote speaker and has led educational initiatives and professional learning throughout the United States and internationally, including ongoing work in the United Arab Emirates

## Keynote*: Conceptions and Misconceptions in Gifted Education: What Do We Know and Where Do We Go?*

**Synopsis:** What does gifted education look like when viewed through a talent development framework? As the field evolves, we must distinguish between widely held myths and evidence-supported practices. This session explores past research alongside the shifting paradigms that are confirming or redefining how we understand, develop, and nurture talents. We will specifically examine what advanced learners need to thrive and what those who support them need to know to develop or advocate for services that enhance student learning.

## *Breakout #1: Three Ways to Differentiate: Add a Concept, Relationship, or Problem*

**Synopsis:** How do we provide meaningful, advanced learning opportunities for students who have already learned grade-level content or require more challenging opportunities to thrive? Meeting the needs of advanced learners requires moving beyond "more work" to deeper work. This practical session introduces three ways teachers can apply advanced differentiation and intentionally include abstraction, complexity, and depth into standard curriculum. Models and frameworks to support differentiation will be shared with practice or modeling of strategies as time permits.

## *Breakout #2: For Parent/Caregivers: Developing Talent Across the Lifespan*

**Synopsis:** How does potential transform into expertise, and what factors contribute to this trajectory? Talent development is not a static or fixed, but a dynamic, lifelong journey. Understanding how to develop and nurture talent requires a comprehensive view of how talent evolves from early childhood through adulthood, including the contributing factors that support the development of expertise and creative productivity. In this session we discuss five essential understandings for developing talent and share practical implications for caretakers, educators, and other advocates.

# JOIN US FOR OUR ANNUAL CONFERENCE OCTOBER 3, 2026

## THEME: CENTERING GIFTED EDUCATION

### Keynote Speaker: Dr. Tamra Stambaugh

**Keynote Topic:** ***Conceptions and Misconceptions in Gifted Education: What Do We Know and Where Do We Go?***

- **What: OATAG Annual Conference**
- **When: October 3, 2026**
- **Time: 8:55 am to 3:05 pm**
- **Registration starts at 8:25 am**
- **Where: Clackamas Community College, 19600 Molalla Ave, Oregon City, OR**

**Map to Conference and Parking Lot Locations**

**Register for Conference**

**Conference Program**

**Conference Poster**

**Vendor/Exhibitor Information**

**Online registration ends Sept 23, 2026. (*Registrations start at $75.00*). Walk-in registrations will be accepted at the door, but lunch is not guaranteed. Walk-in payment with credit card or check will be accepted.**

**No Cash please.**
**Volunteers are needed on the day of the conference. Volunteers receive free registration.**

**Contact OATAG's President (president@oatag.org) or Secretary (secretary@oatag.org) for more information.**

# OATAG MEMBERSHIP BALLOT

**Voting will take place at the October 3rd Conference during lunch in Gregory Forum between 12:15 to 1:15 pm. This meeting is open to all OATAG members, and nominations may also be made from the floor.**

**OATAG is very pleased to nominate the following Slate of Candidates for the following Terms:**

## 2026 Board Member Nominees

**Candice Guertin-Carey, LMFT (*Beaverton*)**

**Ash Friend *(Ashland)***

**Pam Ryan *(Rogue Valley)***

**Judy Smith *(Secretary) (Tigard)***

## Continuing on the OATAG Board

**Jonathan Ladniak (*Portland*)**

**Stephanie Lovdokken *(Pleasant Hill, Lane County)***

**Debra Barnes *(Vice President) (Siletz)***

**Margaret DeLacy *(President) (Portland)***

Oregon Association For Talented And Gifted

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CLACKAMAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE
OREGON CITY

OCTOBER 3RD 2026

A CONFERENCE FOR EDUCATORS AND FAMILIES

# CENTERING GIFTED EDUCATION

**EQUITY. EXCELLENCE. OPPORTUNITY.**

FOR GIFTED LEARNERS. FOR EVERY LEARNER.

- CENTER STUDENTS
- INSPIRE CURIOSITY
- CULTIVATE TALENT
- BUILD CONNECTIONS
- CREATE FUTURES

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