

A DIFFERENT DRUMMER

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



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

GOVERNMENT REPORT

TAG Advocacy Update: Progress, Policy Changes, and Ways to Stay Involved

Member Advocacy Made a Difference

Thanks to your tireless advocacy, the full-time TAG State Specialist position is secure, keeping a crucial resource for gifted education intact. Thank you to everyone who took the time to speak up for our students. This is a clear example of how member voices can influence education policy.

There's more to celebrate—and more work to do! SB 934 is now law, and new assessments are on the horizon. Read on for key updates, data insights, and the latest opportunities to speak up for TAG students.

SB 934: New Referral Pathway for TAG Identification

Senate Bill 934, passed during the 2025 legislative session, allows anyone who knows a student to refer them for TAG assessment. This law took effect on January 1, 2026.

Although the statute is already in effect, the administrative rules needed to fully implement the law are still being reviewed.

The Oregon State Board of Education held its first reading on February 19, and we expect the second reading and vote at the April 16 board meeting.

Members who want to review the proposed changes can read the Board's February [docket](#) under:

Item 6.A. Senate Bill 934 (2025) Implementation: Talented and Gifted (TAG) Identification [OAR 581-022-2325](#).

The Board discussion [video link](#) includes a helpful explanation of the TAG identification process by Angela Allen at approximately 2:14 in the recording.

New Statewide Formative Assessments (SB 141)

At the same meeting, the State Board approved a temporary rule implementing the formative assessments required by SB 141.

These assessments **must** be administered three times per year for **all students in grades K–8**. Districts may choose from four approved assessments:

- *STAR*
- *MAP*
- *i-Ready*
- *Smarter Balanced*

These assessments may influence instructional planning and data collection statewide, so it will be important to watch how districts use them.

Speak Up: Public Testimony Opportunities

Anyone can sign up to give public testimony at [Oregon State Board of Education meetings](#). Member testimony can help ensure that TAG students remain visible in statewide policy discussions.

Meeting agendas and supporting materials are usually posted in the Board’s online “Board Book” about one week before each meeting.

If you are interested in speaking, watching meetings, or tracking policy changes, checking the Board Book regularly is the best way to stay informed.

New ODE TAG Data Brief

The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) recently released a [TAG data brief](#) focused on identification, with additional briefs expected in the future.

The report uses data from the SEED student engagement survey and finds that TAG students are more likely to report being regular readers.

The brief also examines disparities in TAG identification across demographic groups. It concludes that while identification practices may contribute to these gaps, broader opportunity gaps also play an important role.

One key concern highlighted in the report is that identification often occurs in upper elementary grades, which can disadvantage students who exit English Learner services later and could benefit from TAG programming.

Updated TAG Funding Data

ODE has also released updated statewide TAG data. [The State Report Card](#) includes demographic TAG information through the 2024–25 school year, although other datasets currently extend only through 2023–24.

The overall trends have changed little in recent years:

- *Total TAG spending has declined by just under \$1 million since 2004–05, the first year with reliable statewide data.*
- *About half of Oregon school districts either identified no TAG students or reported no TAG spending for the students they identified.*
- *On a slightly more positive note, TAG spending increased by about \$100,000 from 2022–23, and 27 districts reported spending more than \$500 per identified student.*

These numbers show that continued advocacy remains essential.

Federal Updates

The National Association for Gifted Children continues to post [federal advocacy alerts](#), although most address broader education policy issues.

The Council for Exceptional Children, which also includes gifted education within its scope, has published a clear [overview](#) of current federal education funding discussions. According to CEC, so far, the administration has not reduced funding for IDEA (the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) and has not transferred special education programs to another agency as part of its effort to abolish the U.S. Department of Education.

A new national nonprofit, the Center for Educational Progress, has been posting a [series of articles](#) on advanced and gifted education. Interested readers can subscribe to their Substack for ongoing commentary and analysis.

Want to Help Advocate for TAG services?

Member advocacy is one of the most effective ways to protect and improve services for advanced learners.

If you want to get involved, start with the [advocacy resources](#) on our website, including a guide to using the Oregon Legislative Information System (OLIS):

Even small actions—writing an email, attending a meeting, or sharing information with others—can make a real difference.

Join our Board

The OATAG board is elected by a membership meeting in the fall. Board members make it possible for us to advocate for improvements in Oregon education and our students. Interested? [Learn more](#) by accessing this link.

THE OATAG BOARD NEEDS YOU

Friends:

Without a board OATAG would not exist. And without OATAG, the families and educators of gifted students in Oregon would lose their voice.

OATAG board elections take place in October. This is the time to learn about joining the board and meeting board members. We usually meet quarterly, either online or in a hybrid format. Joining the board will enable you to make some new friends and expand your knowledge about TAG in Oregon and will help families all over our state.

Next year, when the Legislature convenes for the long session, we will be actively advocating for TAG funding and other important improvements in the services provided to our students. You can learn much more about the process as a board member.

Whether or not you would like to join the board, we also need help with marketing and development. If you have experience with those, please let us know.

Here are the duties of our board members. You can read all our [bylaws here](#).

Duties of Board members: Maintain an active presence in OATAG through attendance at meetings and/or events, both [virtually and physically](#).

1 Respond to all communications from other Board members and officers in a timely manner, including those via electronic means.

2. Use OATAG-approved communication mediums for dissemination of official OATAG information to others.

3. Contribute timely information relevant to the OATAG mission for dissemination to OATAG social media and membership on a regular and recurring basis.

4. Support the growth of OATAG by recruiting new members and providing appropriate information about OATAG to others.

To submit your application to become a board member [visit](#).

Thanks,

Margaret DeLacy
OATAG President

OATAG ANNOUNCES 2026 EDUCATOR GRANT RECIPIENTS

The Oregon Association for Talented and Gifted (OATAG) is very pleased to announce that educators from the Ontario, Corvallis, and Lakeview school districts will receive grants for 2026 from OATAG. The grant applications were evaluated by an OATAG committee and were funded by a donor-advised program at the Oregon Community Foundation.

Valerie Reynolds, the TAG coordinator for the Ontario school district, was awarded a grant to purchase sets of classroom materials for use by her students for STEM projects at Aiken Elementary, Alameda Intermediate, and Ontario Middle School.

Angela Wendlowsky, a TAG liaison for the Corvallis School District, was awarded a grant to purchase professional development materials and curriculum for the use of educators in Bessie Coleman Elementary School and Linus Pauling Middle School.

Deborah Watts, a teacher at AD Hay Elementary School, was awarded a grant to purchase materials for students at all levels in the Lakeview School District for use in completing student-led projects.

OATAG awards grants of up to \$2,000 for any project that will improve OATAG members' knowledge and skills as educators 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 their classroom.

Grant applications for 2027 will be posted on our website at www.OATAG.org later this year. OATAG congratulates these dedicated educators!

Save the Date!

The Next OATAG conference will be held in beautiful Bend, Oregon on October 3rd 2026. The theme is "Centering Gifted Education." More details will be posted on the [OATAG website](http://www.OATAG.org) soon!

OATAG IS LOOKING FOR STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Dear Students and Parents,

We are excited to announce an important opportunity for students who are passionate about advocacy, leadership, and the education of talented and gifted (TAG) learners across Oregon. We are seeking a motivated and dedicated student representative to serve on the **Oregon Association for Talented and Gifted (OATAG)** board.

About OATAG and Its Mission

OATAG is a state-wide non-profit membership organization committed to ensuring that all highly capable students in Oregon receive an education that challenges and nurtures their individual abilities. Our mission is to create an inclusive and equitable educational environment for TAG students, regardless of their socio-economic, racial, or ethnic background. We advocate for comprehensive training for educators, culturally sensitive assessments, strong parent and student involvement in educational planning, adequate funding, and appropriate instruction for every student. We work to ensure that every TAG student has access to the resources and opportunities they need to thrive.

Role of the Student Representative

We are looking for a student who is not only interested in advocating for the needs of highly capable learners but also willing to work collaboratively with others to improve educational opportunities for TAG students across the state. This is a great chance for students to make a real impact on policy and practice at the state level.

The selected student will:

1. Serve as a **Student Representative** on the OATAG Board for a term of up to **two years**.
2. Participate in **quarterly online board meetings**, where they will help represent the voices and perspectives of TAG students in Oregon.
3. Provide feedback and insights from the student body, sharing ideas and concerns about how to improve programs and services for TAG students.
4. Meet with policy makers and legislators.
5. Serve as the OATAG representative to the National Gifted and Talented Student Advisory Board that is currently being organized by students.

Eligibility

We are seeking a **highly capable student** who:

1. Is actively engaged in their education and passionate about advocating for their peers.
2. Has demonstrated leadership potential and a commitment to improving the educational experience for TAG students.
3. Is available to attend quarterly online board meetings for the duration of their term.

Why Apply?

This is a unique opportunity to:

1. Engage with state leaders and educators who are dedicated to improving TAG education in Oregon.
2. Contribute to meaningful conversations and decisions that affect TAG students statewide.
3. Gain valuable leadership experience, including advocacy, public speaking, and policy development.

How to Apply

To apply, please submit a **brief application** (no more than 3 pages) that includes the following:

1. Your name, grade level, and school or homeschool.
2. A short essay describing your interest in serving as the student representative, including why you are passionate about gifted education and what you hope to accomplish on the OATAG board.
3. A brief letter of recommendation from someone in your school or community who can speak to your leadership abilities and academic potential.

These can all be submitted through the application form online.

Applications are due by **Monday, APRIL 12**

Please access and complete the application form [here](#).

We look forward to seeing your application and hearing how you can contribute to the important work of OATAG!