

RESEARCH BRIEF



Office of Research, Assessment, Data, Accountability, and Reporting



Talented and Gifted Education: School Experiences

Talented and Gifted education, or TAG, serves to identify and support the needs of students with outstanding ability or potential in a range of areas. While intellectual and academic performance is the most commonly associated trait of this group, Oregon recognizes talent in a range of other areas, including creativity, leadership, and artistic ability [[ORS 343.395\(4\)](#)].

This brief is the second in a planned series focusing on the experiences of TAG students. The first brief, [Talented and Gifted Education: Identification and Representation](#), examines data on the challenge of determining which students qualify for TAG services and can be found on the [ODE Research and Data Briefs](#) page. The series is designed to support educators and policymakers in understanding and meeting the needs of gifted students across the state.

Oregon [law](#) and [rule](#) require all districts to create a plan to identify and support TAG students within their district. Districts offer support in a variety of ways, ranging from curricular extensions and supports embedded within the classroom, to dedicated programs or schools that serve primarily or exclusively students identified as TAG. Typically, 6-7% of students are identified as TAG in a given school year.

TAG students have specific learning needs, and when not appropriately identified and adequately supported may experience frustration with school leading to disengagement; ultimately, they may not develop their full potential, as all students should.

Key Takeaways

- TAG-identified students were more likely to report taking courses aligned with their interests, though they reported similar levels of coursetaking opportunities to their peers. They also reported wanting access to more advanced courses, mathematics courses, and social sciences courses, among other subjects, than their schools currently offered.
- TAG-identified students felt that they had less access to career counseling, which may represent an opportunity to better prepare these students for their futures.
- TAG-identified students reported more engagement in extracurricular activities and a higher sense of belonging, and experienced fewer discipline incidents relative to their peers.

“Talented and gifted children” means those children who require special educational programs or services, or both, beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their contribution to self and society and who demonstrate outstanding ability or potential in one or more of the following areas:

- General intellectual ability
- Unusual academic ability
- Creative ability in using original or nontraditional methods in thinking and producing.
- Leadership ability
- Ability in the visual or performing arts - ORS 343.395(4)

The SEED Survey

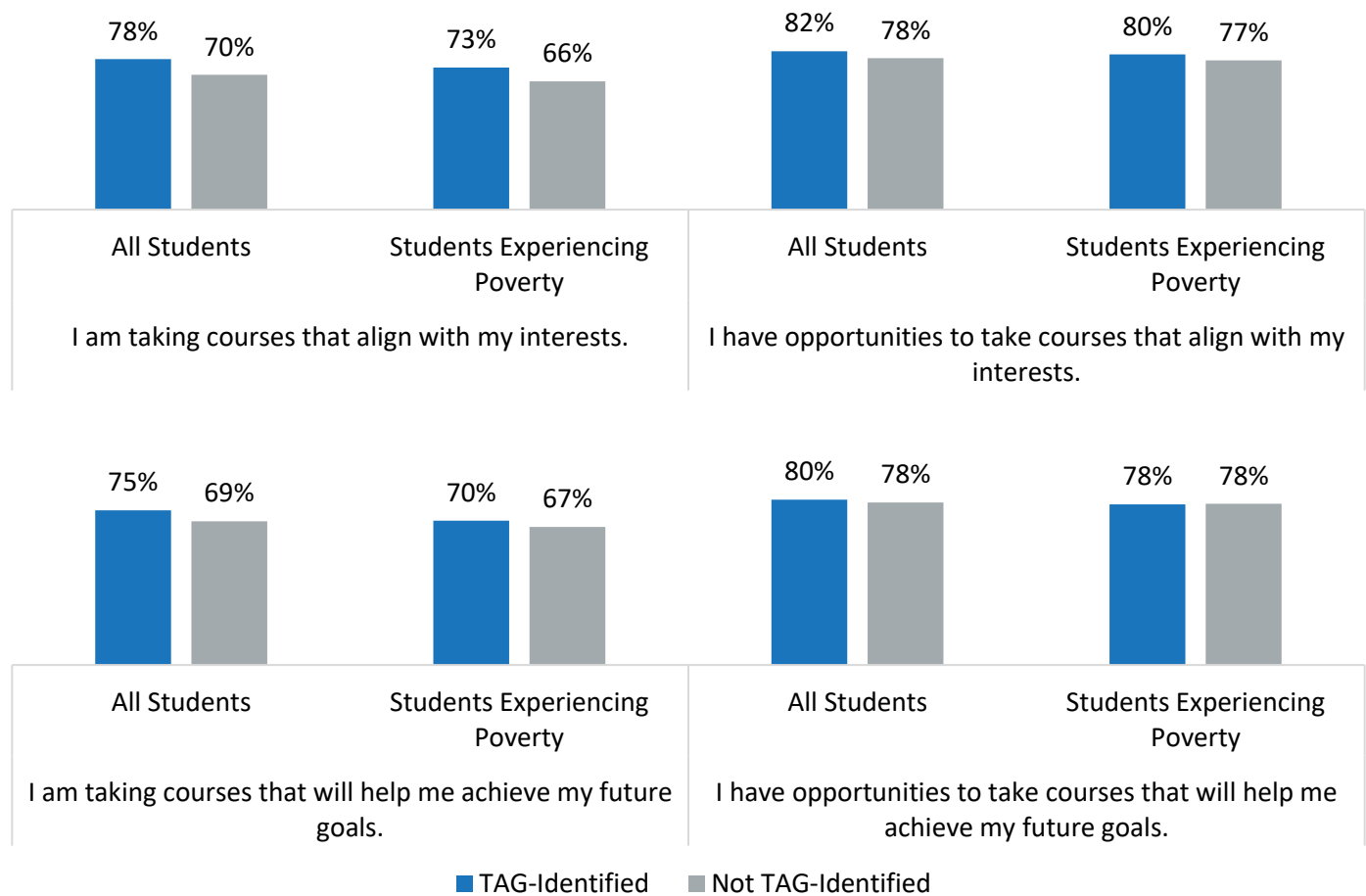
In 2024-25, on behalf of the Oregon Department of Education (ODE), Oregon schools administered the Student Educational Equity Development ([SEED](#)) survey in its second operational year. The SEED survey is administered to students in grades 3-11 and is offered in multiple languages and with accessibility features to support the participation of all eligible students. It asks students about their schooling experiences in areas that impact learning (e.g., access to learning resources, opportunities to learn). More information about the 2024-25 administration of SEED is available in the [2024-25 State Report](#). Much of the data in this brief is drawn from this administration of the SEED survey.

Coursetaking and Courses Wanted

Overall, most students who took the SEED Survey agree that they are taking courses that align with their interests and will help them achieve their future goals.¹ TAG students were more likely than other students to agree, and these differences persisted even after adjusting for poverty – students experiencing poverty reported similar course-taking opportunities to students overall, as shown in figure 1.

Figure 1: Students Reporting Opportunities and Coursetaking Aligned with their Interests and future Goals

2024-25 SEED Survey Results, % Agree/Strongly Agree, Grades 7-11



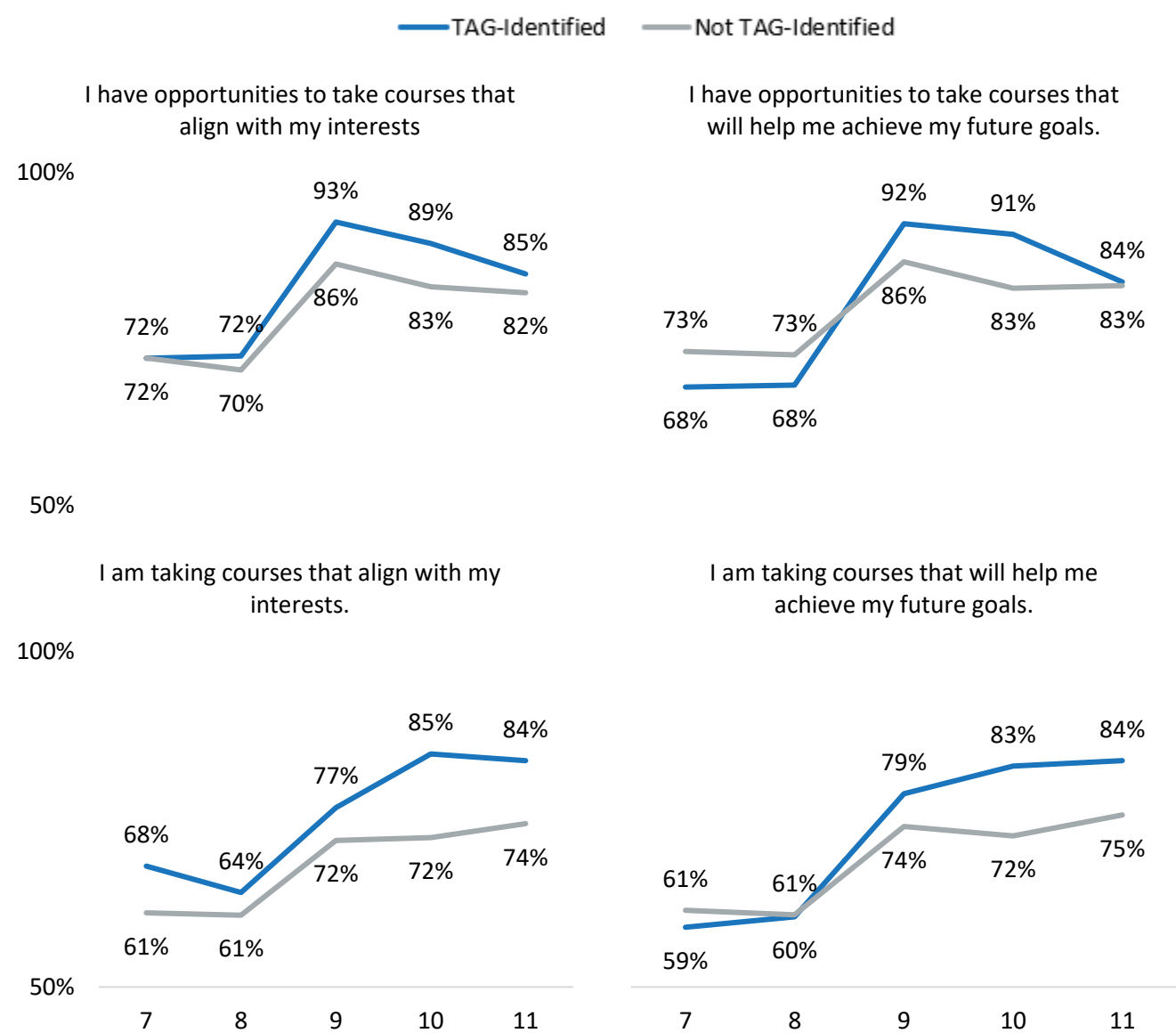
While TAG-identified students were substantially more likely to report actually taking aligned courses, the rate at which students reported *opportunities* to take courses aligned with their interests and goals was generally similar between students who were and were not TAG-identified. The difference (8 to 9 percentage points) persisted after adjusting for poverty for

¹ Data from the 2024-25 administration of the [SEED Survey](#). These items were only administered to students in grades 7-11.

students reporting coursetaking aligned with their interests, but narrowed substantially (from 7 percentage points overall, to 3 percentage points for students experiencing poverty) for students reporting coursetaking that will help them achieve their future goals.

Student experiences of coursetaking varied substantially by grade level as shown in Figure 2, with middle school students generally reporting fewer opportunities overall for coursetaking aligned with their interests and future goals. Middle school TAG-identified students were similarly likely to report opportunities for coursetaking aligned with their interests, and less likely than other students to report opportunities for coursetaking aligned with future goals, which aligns with other research that has found fewer opportunities for individualized coursetaking in middle school.²

Figure 2: Students Reporting Opportunities and Coursetaking Aligned with their Interests and Future Goals
2024-25 SEED Survey Results, % Agree/Strongly Agree by Grade Level



By high school, both groups of students were much more likely to report coursetaking aligned with their interests and future goals, but the gap between students identified and not identified as TAG widened. TAG-identified students were about 10

² Swiatek, Mary Ann, and Ann Lupkowski-Shoplik. "Elementary and middle school student participation in gifted programs: Are gifted students underserved?" *Gifted Child Quarterly* 47, no. 2 (2003): 118-130.

percentage points more likely to report taking courses aligned with their interests and future goals by 11th grade, even though the reported differences in opportunities were slight.

TAG-identified students in grades 3-5³ were also more likely to report at least weekly music lessons at their school (88%, vs 77% for students not identified as TAG). The difference was greater for students experiencing poverty (85% among TAG-identified students; 71% among students not identified as TAG).

Courses Wanted

Students in grades 7-11 were also asked on the SEED Survey to “Please list any courses you would like to take that are not available to you at your school.” ODE staff cleaned the responses, removed non-informative answers, and examined and categorized the frequency of courses or concepts within responses.⁴ These frequencies were then scaled based on the total number of informative responses received from TAG-identified and non-TAG-identified students to calculate the relative likelihood of TAG-identified students asking for a course type, compared to students who were not TAG-identified.

Table 1: Categorization of Courses Requested, Ratio of TAG to non-TAG Interest

2024-25 SEED Survey Results, including categories present in at least 1% of responses

Values represent the frequency of the category among TAG-identified students, relative to the frequency among students not identified as TAG.

Values above 1 indicate that the category was more common among TAG-identified students – for example, TAG-identified students were 4.2 times more likely than other students to report wanting more mathematics classes than their school offers.

Category	Ratio
Mathematics	4.2
Advanced (AP, IB, Honors, requests for more depth or higher level)	4.1
Social Sciences (including economics, geography, political science, sociology, anthropology)	3.3
Electives (non-specific)	2.6
History	2.3
English Language Arts (including speech, debate, journalism, philosophy, poetry, and writing)	2.0
World Languages	1.9
Science (including computer science, health sciences, engineering and medicine)	1.8
Civics/Government/Law	1.7
Arts (including performing arts, art history, crafting, design, visual arts)	1.5
Business (including accounting, investing, entrepreneurship, marketing, management)	1.4
Education/Child Development	1.4
Future Planning (including college and career preparation, budgeting, life skills, driver's ed, first aid)	1.2
Home Economics (including cooking, sewing, and general requests for Home Economics)	1.2
Outdoors (fishing, hunting, gardening, general references to being outdoors)	1.1
Trades (including automotive, agriculture, cosmetology, construction)	0.8
Extracurriculars, Teams, Clubs, Sports, and Physical Education	0.7

TAG-identified students were more than four times as likely to request additional mathematics courses, or advanced courses of any subject, although they were also much more likely than their peers to have enrolled in AP or IB coursework.⁵ They were also much more likely than their peers to request social sciences and history, often mentioning specific social sciences of

³ This question was not presented to students in other grades.

⁴ After cleaning, the sample contained 4,328 responses from TAG-identified students, and 32,126 responses from students who were not TAG-identified. Categories were applied to cleaned and resolved word and bigram frequencies within the results. Additional study of these results, including full hand-coding of each response, may result in additional findings and precision.

⁵ https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/citizen_engagement/Reports/SB736_LegislativeReport.pdf

interest. TAG-identified students were more likely to list about 50% more types of courses in their responses, resulting in a higher total prevalence of most categories in this population.

TAG-identified students also reported around twice as much interest in specific courses in history, language arts, and world languages. They were less likely than their peers to request specific clubs, sports, or teams, or to express interest in the trades.

Figure 3: Selected Quotations from TAG-identified Students

2024-25 SEED Survey, responding to “Please list any courses you would like to take that are not available to you at your school,” grades 7-11



Career Connected Learning

Despite reporting more coursetaking aligned with their future goals in high school, TAG-identified students were persistently less likely to report speaking with school adults about career opportunities. The gap is widest in middle school, but persists through 11th grade, as shown in Figure 4.

Research suggests that providing career counseling may be perceived to be more challenging for TAG-identified students, who are thought to have a broader range of aptitudes and thus a broader range of potential careers to consider.⁶ Prior studies have found that this perception, while based in limited evidence, is widely held. Research has also found that TAG-identified students are perceived as having less need for guidance than other students, or as being uniformly college-bound and therefore expected to receive the counseling they need in post-secondary.⁷ This lack of career counseling may be particularly detrimental to students identified for their exceptional creative ability, who may need more support to successfully transition to artistic careers or other less-mainstream postsecondary opportunities.⁸

While TAG-identified students do have higher post-secondary enrollment rates compared to students who were not TAG-identified, post-secondary enrollment is not a uniform experience for this group. About 1 in 5 TAG-identified students do not enroll in post-secondary in the year after their high school graduation, which will be explored in future briefs in this series.

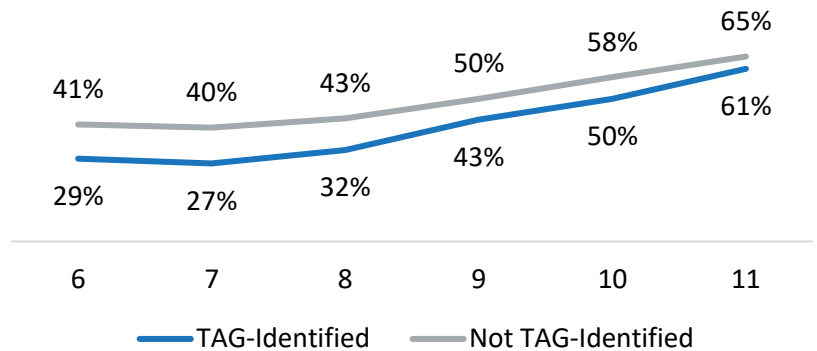
“I’d add an information hub online for all stuff regarding college and careers. This would help many of us have an easier time getting to the info.” – Oregon TAG Student, 2024-25, suggestion for improving their school⁹

Further, although TAG-identified students may be perceived to have the skills for career exploration on their own, these students report slightly lower rates of using the internet to gather information about careers (70%, vs 74% for other students) and connecting what they learn in class to potential career opportunities (69%, vs 72% for other students).¹⁰ Oregon’s [Comprehensive School Counseling Standards](#) call for all students to have access to high-quality counseling, including on career and college readiness standards.

“I would have more career based classes that can affect students because it can help us learn if we're actually interested in it instead of taking an expensive class during college and deciding it's not for us.” – Oregon TAG Student, 2024-25, suggestion for improving their school

Figure 4: Students Reporting Speaking with a Counselor, Teacher, or Another Adult at School about Career Opportunities

2024-25 SEED Survey Results; % Reporting Sometimes or Often, as opposed to Rarely or Never; Grades 7-11



⁶ Wessel, Laura Elizabeth. "Career Counseling for Gifted Students: Literature Review and Critique." (1999). [Available through ERIC.](#)

⁷ Kurt, Layla J. "Career counseling for gifted students: Understanding student needs and strategies for success." *The Practitioner Scholar: Journal of Counseling and Professional Psychology* 5, no. 1 (2016).

⁸ Greene, Meredith J. "Gifted adrift? Career counseling of the gifted and talented." *Roeper Review* 25, no. 2 (2003): 66-72.

⁹ Quotations drawn from the 2024-25 administration of the SEED Survey. Minor spelling and capitalization errors have been corrected for readability; more substantial changes are noted with square brackets or ellipses.

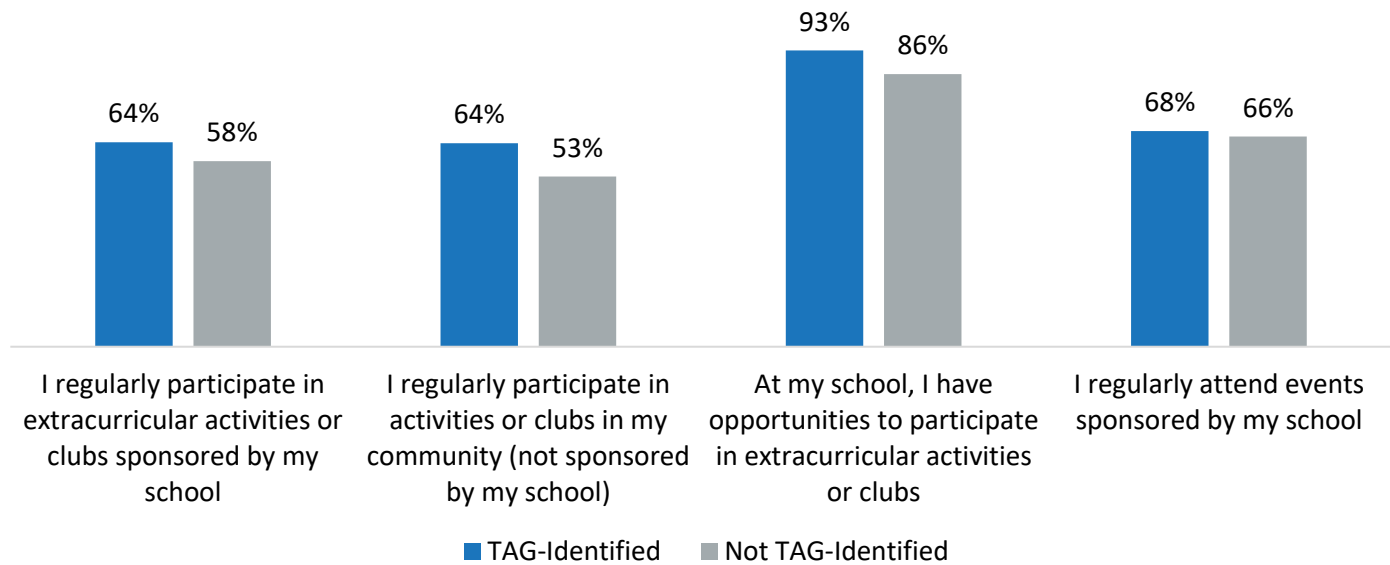
¹⁰ Percent of respondents who responded that they Sometimes or Often do these things at school, as opposed to Rarely or Never.

Although TAG-identified students may have more agency and analytic ability than other students, this does not consistently translate into being well-informed about the many possible paths open to them after high school, and counseling may be helpful in ensuring that they are well-prepared for that transition.

Extracurricular Engagement

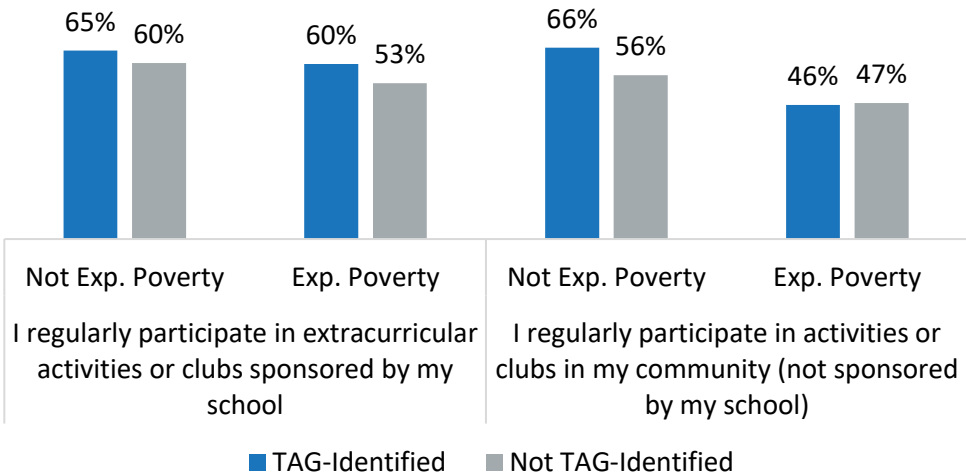
TAG-identified students were more likely to report participation in extracurricular activities, both in their school and in their community. This may be driven in part by the greater likelihood of being identified for TAG when students attend larger and more urban districts,¹¹ which commonly are able to offer more extracurricular opportunities. In some locations, participating in TAG activities is itself an extracurricular.

Figure 5: Extracurricular Engagement
2024-25 SEED Survey Results; % Reporting Agree/Strongly Agree; Grades 6-11



The disparities are also likely driven by the difference in identification rates for students in poverty. For school-sponsored activities, as shown in Figure 6, the difference in participation rates between students who were TAG-identified and those who were not TAG-identified was similar irrespective of whether the student was experiencing poverty. However, students experiencing poverty were substantially less likely to participate in community activities, and the rates were similar whether students were TAG-identified or not, suggesting that schools are doing a better job than community organizations of providing extracurricular

Figure 6: Extracurricular Engagement Among Students Experiencing Poverty
2024-25 SEED Survey Results; % Reporting Agree/Strongly Agree; Grades 6-11



¹¹ See the first brief in the series, <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/reports-and-data/taskcomm/Documents/TAGDataBriefPart1Identification.pdf>.

opportunities to students who would be interested but not otherwise able to afford them, or who face barriers to participating in community activities such as lack of transportation or competing responsibilities.

The rate at which students attend school-sponsored events (such as dances, sporting events, or concerts) was similar between TAG-identified students and their peers and remained similar after disaggregating by students experiencing poverty. TAG-identified student descriptions of why they did not participate in extracurriculars contained similar patterns to [those previously explored](#) for all students, though prevalence may vary, which is an opportunity for future study.

“I would change the school's focus on sports. They give way more attention to sports and badly neglect the creative arts, especially theatre. I am involved in theatre and sometimes I wonder why I put in so much time into it if my school will barely even recognize what I and my friends do.” – Oregon TAG Student, 2024-25

Discipline Incidents

TAG-identified students had substantially lower rates of exclusionary discipline (suspensions and expulsions), compared to their peers, and this was a consistent trend across grades and student groups. Overall, TAG-identified students were about one-third as likely to experience exclusionary discipline, though for some groups the discrepancy approached one-fourth as likely.

Table 2: TAG-identified Students Experience Fewer Incidents of Suspension or Expulsion

Percent of students who experienced at least one in-school suspension, out of school suspension, or expulsion during the 2024-25 school year, among those enrolled on May 1, 2025.

Student Group	TAG-identified	Not TAG-identified
All Students	2.6%	7.2%
American Indian/Alaska Native	4.0%	12.5%
Asian	1.1%	2.8%
Black	6.3%	11.9%
Hispanic	4.0%	8.0%
Multiracial	2.5%	7.7%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	5.8%	11.0%
White	2.5%	6.6%
Male	3.8%	10.0%
Female	1.1%	4.2%
Non-Binary	1.5%	6.5%
Students Experiencing Poverty	6.5%	10.9%
Students with Disabilities	7.8%	12.0%
Grade 3	2.2%	3.7%
Grade 4	1.9%	4.1%
Grade 5	2.1%	5.3%
Grade 6	4.2%	12.0%
Grade 7	4.3%	14.0%
Grade 8	3.8%	13.4%
Grade 9	2.7%	10.7%
Grade 10	2.4%	9.7%
Grade 11	1.4%	6.7%
Grade 12	1.3%	3.9%

Disparities were smallest for students with disabilities, who experienced sharply elevated rates of exclusionary discipline whether TAG-identified or not.

Students in grade 2 and below are not included in the chart above because early identification of students as TAG is uncommon.¹² However, looking at the discipline history of students who were identified as TAG by 3rd grade¹³ shows disparities in the rates of discipline these students experienced in grades kindergarten through 2nd grade that are consistent with those seen in 3rd grade, even though many of these students had not yet been formally identified as TAG in those earlier years.

When discipline incidents do occur, the evidence does not suggest that TAG-identified students are much more likely to receive more severe disciplinary actions (e.g. expulsions, as opposed to in-school suspensions). However, much of school discipline is up to the discretion of school staff and administrators, so it may be the case that TAG-identified students are more likely to receive office referrals and other low-level disciplinary actions that do not rise to the level at which data must be reported to ODE. As a proportion of total incidents, TAG students were slightly more likely to have been disciplined for violent offenses (such as battery) and slightly less likely to have been disciplined for insubordination, which suggests either that TAG students are less likely to engage in insubordination, or that they are less likely to be disciplined unless their behavior is extreme.¹⁴ TAG students were also slightly less likely to have been disciplined for tobacco possession or use and attendance policy violations. Most other common offense types (including fighting, violation of school rules, disorderly conduct, and harassment) composed roughly the same proportion of overall incidents for TAG-identified and non-TAG-identified students.

It may be the case that disciplinary problems prevent otherwise-gifted students from being identified as TAG. It may also be the case that stronger self-regulation skills typically present in TAG-identified students^{15,16,17} reduce the likelihood of them engaging in the types of impulsive behaviors likely to result in school discipline. Additionally, differences in help-seeking patterns, compliance with adult directives, or early-stage behavioral escalation may also contribute to lower rates of documented disciplinary incidents. However, research on discipline rates and offense types among TAG-identified students is very sparse, and additional research will be needed to identify whether these small differences are trends or anomalies, and what may be driving them.

Sense of Belonging

Sense of Belonging is a measure of a student's feeling of welcome and comfort within school. It is strongly correlated with attendance and on-track rates. To learn more about Sense of Belonging as measured on the SEED survey, see prior publications.¹⁸

¹² See the first brief in the series, <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/reports-and-data/taskcomm/Documents/TAGDataBriefPart1Identification.pdf>.

¹³ Data for students identified as TAG in 4th grade, while more comprehensive, would include students who entered Kindergarten in 2020-21, a year in which discipline data and kindergarten enrollment were both substantially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹⁴ Across 2022-23, 2023-24, and 2024-25, 11% of discipline incidents among TAG-identified students were for battery, compared to 7% among non-TAG-identified students. 8% were for insubordination, compared to 11% among non-TAG-identified students.

¹⁵ Tortop, Hasan Said. "A comparison of gifted and non-gifted students' self-regulation skills for science learning." *Journal for the Education of Gifted Young Scientists* 3, no. 1 (2015): 42-57.

¹⁶ Bouffard-Bouchard, Thérèse, Sophie Parent, and Serge Lavirée. "Self-regulation on a concept-formation task among average and gifted students." *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology* 56, no. 1 (1993): 115-134.

¹⁷ Arffa, Sharon. "The relationship of intelligence to executive function and non-executive function measures in a sample of average, above average, and gifted youth." *Archives of clinical neuropsychology* 22, no. 8 (2007): 969-978.

¹⁸ [Student Sense of Belonging in Schools: Predictive Factors](#), [Student Sense of Belonging in Schools: Connection to Outcomes](#), [Sense of Belonging: Domain Scores and Connection to Outcomes](#), [FAST FACTS: Sense of Belonging by Grade Band and Student Group](#), and [FAST FACTS: Sense of Belonging - Representation by Grade Band and Student Group](#).

TAG-identified students were more likely than other students to agree with all of the sense of belonging items, and in most cases these differences did not vary substantially across grade levels. 95% of TAG-identified students felt that there are adults at school who care about them, 98% agreed that they have friends at school, and 89% reported feeling welcome at their school. These rates are consistent with other research finding that TAG-identified students have similar or higher sense of belonging to their peers. Although earlier research theorized that they face more social challenges,¹⁹ more recent studies have found that TAG-identified students don't report a higher level of loneliness or social difficulties.^{20,21}

Table 3: TAG-identified Students Report Higher Sense of Belonging

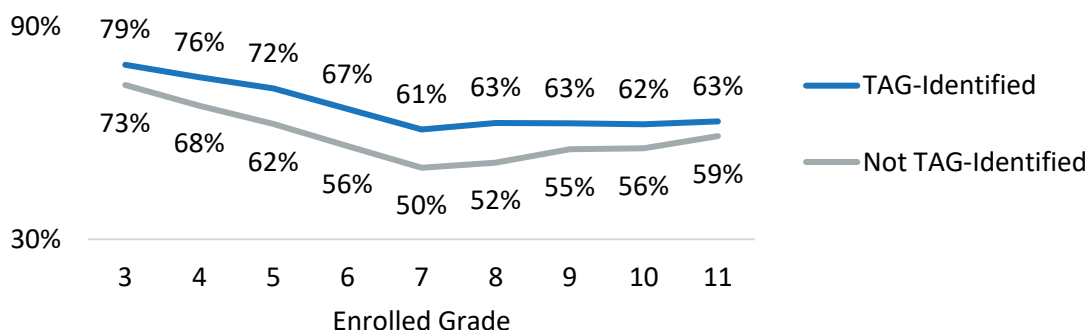
Percent of students reporting Agree or Strongly Agree to each Item, 2024-25 SEED Survey Results, Grades 3-11

Item	TAG-Identified	Not TAG-Identified
I have friends at school.	98%	95%
There are adults at my school who care about me.	95%	91%
I feel welcome at my school.	89%	83%
I feel safe talking with students at my school.	87%	83%
My classmates care about me.	86%	78%
I feel safe talking with adults at my school.	85%	81%
I like going to school.	68%	60%

Although, like their peers, TAG-identified students experience a drop in their reported enjoyment of school in middle school,²² they report higher enjoyment of school at all grade levels compared to their peers, as shown in Figure 7 below. The middle school drop for this student group is less severe than for students who are not TAG-identified, resulting in an 11 percentage point gap between the two groups in 7th and 8th grades. TAG-identified students report similar levels of school enjoyment throughout high school, while their peers report slightly more enjoyment of school in later grades, resulting in a narrowing of the gap to 4 percentage points by 11th grade.

Figure 7: TAG-Identified Students are Consistently More Likely to Like Going to School

2024-25 SEED Survey Results; % Reporting Agree/Strongly Agree with the statement "I like going to school" by Enrolled Grade



¹⁹ Peterson, Jean Sunde. "Myth 17: Gifted and talented individuals do not have unique social and emotional needs." *Gifted Child Quarterly* 53, no. 4 (2009): 280-282.

²⁰ Godor, Brian P., and Antonia Szymanski. "Sense of belonging or feeling marginalized? Using PISA 2012 to assess the state of academically gifted students within the EU." *High Ability Studies* 28, no. 2 (2017): 181-197.

²¹ Barber, Carolyn, and Jillian Woodford Wasson. "A comparison of adolescents' friendship networks by advanced coursework participation status." *Gifted Child Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (2015): 23-37.

²² A similar trend is present across other sense of belonging items, with elementary students in general reporting the highest sense of belonging. More details in [FAST FACTS: Sense of Belonging by Grade Band and Student Group](#) and [Student Sense of Belonging in Schools: Predictive Factors](#).

This finding also aligns with prior research on gifted students, which generally finds that these students report higher enjoyment of school than other students, as long as school is sufficiently challenging for them and they experience appropriate differentiation²³ and control in choosing their activities.²⁴ Some research has also found that there is variation in these students' school enjoyment between rural and urban locations.²⁵

"Overall, I am enjoying school. I enjoy most of my classes, and I have friends in every class, making each class pretty fun. I have a chance to develop most of my interests in class, minus a few, but I can expand on most of them." – Oregon TAG Student, 2024-25

Discussion

Overall, TAG-identified students reported more opportunities in their schools, including opportunities for extracurriculars and for coursetaking. They also reported generally higher enjoyment and belonging within schools and experienced dramatically lower rates of discipline. Although these students are already much more likely than their peers to be taking advanced coursework, they still reported unmet needs for additional advanced or in-depth coursework, often referencing subjects that would be more typically offered in college. They also reported a need for more career counseling, which may be an opportunity for schools to ensure that every student has access to the same counseling and future preparation resources. The introduction of the new Higher Education and Career Path Skills [course requirement](#) may also help ensure equitable access to these important topics.

"I love my school and my teachers and administrators, and I have gotten to pursue and create so many wonderful opportunities at school." – Oregon TAG Student, 2024-25

With thanks to our colleagues in the Office of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, the Office of Research, Assessment, Data, Accountability, and Reporting, and the Office of Enhancing Student Opportunities for their integral contributions to this brief, and to the many Oregon students who shared their experiences with us on the SEED Survey.

²³ Gallagher, James, Christine C. Harradine, and Mary Ruth Coleman. "Challenge or boredom? Gifted students' views on their schooling." *Roeper Review* 19, no. 3 (1997): 132-136.

²⁴ Middleton, James A., Joan Littlefield, and Richard Lehrer. "Gifted students' conceptions of academic fun: An examination of a critical construct for gifted education." *Gifted Child Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (1992): 38-44.

²⁵ Gentry, Marcia, Mary G. Rizza, and Robert K. Gable. "Gifted students' perceptions of their class activities: Differences among rural, urban, and suburban student attitudes." *Gifted Child Quarterly* 45, no. 2 (2001): 115-129.