

TALENTED and GIFTED STUDENTS – Frequently Asked Questions

What is the TAG “Program”?

TAG programs/services/curriculum happens in regular classrooms. Pullout programs, enrichment activities, curriculum extensions, field trips, etc., “supplement” learning for TAG students, but the central requirement of a TAG program is that teachers address the level and rate of learning of identified students in their classrooms.

Who are we talking about?

“Talented and Gifted Children” as defined in ORS 343.391 are those children who require special educational programs or services, or both, beyond those normally provided by the regular school program. The instruction provided to identified students shall address their assessed levels of learning and accelerated rates of learning.

What is meant by “Level of Learning?”

The term “level” is not limited to grade level content, but encompasses complexity in subject, conceptual development, and vocabulary as well. Teacher observation of the amount of effort needed to gain mastery for an individual student may provide a good indicator of appropriate level of content. Informal assessment tools used to establish level of learning include writing samples, end of year and end of unit assessments, individual reading inventories, RIT scores from OAKS and/or Lexile scores. The K-W-L strategy may also be used with special topic units, i.e., science, social studies, health, etc. to determine the level of student knowledge prior to starting a unit. Many teachers have found that assessing for understanding of key concepts within a unit gives students the freedom to develop in-depth, independent research projects that complement the learning of the rest of the class.

What is meant by “Rate of Learning?”

Assessment of rate can be a source of confusion. The best assumptions that can be made about whether or not rate of learning provided is appropriate happen in the course of the actual learning assignment. Characteristics of accelerated rate include the student’s quickness in grasping and applying concepts with accuracy, as well as his/her consistency in finishing assignments with mastery in less time than peers. Students who receive top scores while not taking work home, or who spend significantly less time on an assignment than capable peers may need an adjustment in the rate and/or level of instruction provided.

Individual learning rates are not necessarily steady, so it is a good idea to make provision for a continuous monitoring of student response to modified curriculum. One way for teachers to demonstrate rate of learning is to document the date and time a specific assignment or unit of study is started and completed. Modifications for rate of learning could include reading and conference, accelerated study, compacted curriculum, or use of a tutor. Often rate of learning regulates itself as the level of instruction becomes more appropriate.

The key concept here is continuous instruction. Try to keep student “wait time” for new learning to a minimum. As much as possible, modifications in curriculum are to be based on the individual’s ability to grasp and master concepts rather than on instructional convenience.

Does assigning “more” work address rate and level of learning?

No. Identified TAG students should not simply do the work that the whole class does and then do more. They should be provided different and complimentary work that extends learning rate and level. The classroom teacher must differentiate instruction.

What is Differentiated Instruction?

Differentiated Instruction is a teacher’s response to a learner’s needs. It is “responsive” teaching rather than “one-size-fits-all” teaching.

“A fuller definition of differentiated instruction is that a teacher proactively plans varied approaches to what students need to learn, how they will learn it, and/or how they can express what they have learned in order to increase the likelihood that each student will learn as much as he or she can as efficiently as possible.” *Carol Ann Tomlinson*

Here is an example of how differentiated instruction works:

	Challenged	Average	Gifted
CONTENT what	Three crucial points Three concepts	All aspects of the topic	In-depth study
PROCESS how	Direct instruction of each step in the research process	Modeling Independent work Review and practice	Minimal instruction with probing questions for independent study
PRODUCT evaluation	Group paper of one page	Five page paper	Five page paper

Do the elementary and middle-level programs differ?

Yes. In the elementary program, students are pulled out of their regular classroom to join advanced groups, such as reading and/or math. At the middle-school level, students study advanced coursework within advanced classes in reading and/or math. In both programs, differentiation is practiced to meet the needs of all individuals.