

From: James Leavitt
Sent: Tuesday, May 20, 2025 7:23 PM
To: Public Comments; BoardMembers; Nicolet, Diane M; Mayberry, Adam; Woodley, Alex; Smith, Elizabeth A; Phoenix, James; Westlake, Colleen M; Hull, Christine
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Eliminating Community Support?

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Esteemed WCSD Trustees,

As a 30-year resident of Washoe County I keep a close eye on what's happening in our school district. I'm a proud graduate, as are my three children. I believe our district and state deserve better funding through the legislature. Unfortunately you all are left to make it work regardless of the legislative session outcomes.


I'm seeking clarification about some items presented during the meeting last week.

- Is the Education Alliance the nonprofit arm of the district? For WCSD, it seems like a vital department to ensure all available private foundation opportunities are being taken advantage of as more federal funding opportunities are threatened. The slide about the shift of the Education Alliance implies that the Washoe Ed Foundation will take on funding costs. However, my family and friends have shared that the Washoe Ed Foundation has merged with the Education Alliance due to their own challenges funding staff.
- Eliminating the Education Alliance from the general fund seems to be a short-sighted idea. WCSD is known for turning its back on community support. The passage of WC-1 was historical. When a clearly communicated request is given to our community, we come through for education.
- Additionally, the elimination of "Community Engagement" from the Communications department name indicates to the public that our help is not needed, when in fact the opposite seems to be true. WCSD needs more help than ever. From my perspective, it is a rash decision for WCSD to isolate itself from the very people who benefit from a well-educated workforce and would support it if asked by the leaders of WCSD. Invite our community in to help. The district cannot do it alone. Thwarting the efforts of those reaching out to help is negligent, hasty, and sends the wrong message.

I heard a lot of mentions of transparency during the meeting, but the murky language, and avalanche of other items left many confused. Please clarify the plan to include the community and offer a space for us to contribute through a legitimate 501(c)3.

Thank you for your commitment to education,
James Leavitt

From: Amy Horvath
Sent: Wednesday, May 21, 2025 5:31 PM
To: Hull, Christine; Westlake, Colleen M; Phoenix, James; Smith, Elizabeth A; Woodley, Alex; Mayberry, Adam; Nicolet, Diane M; Zimmerman, Tami; Rombardo, Neil; Public Comments; BoardMembers; Zoning
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: WCSD Board Decision Regarding Zoning for Huffaker (H2)

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Dear WCSD Trustees Hull, Westlake, Phoenix, Smith, Woodley, Mayberry, and Nicolet; Ms. Zimmerman; Mr. Rombardo; and ZAC,

I hope this message finds you well. I'm writing to follow up on the letter I sent on April 29th regarding the recent decision impacting the Huffaker community. I understand how many pressing matters you are managing, but I wanted to kindly express my hope for a response, as I have not yet heard back.

I've heard that other Huffaker families have received replies, and I truly appreciate the time and attention you've given to their voices. I'm hopeful that my concerns will also be considered as thoughtfully.

As a member of the Huffaker community, I respectfully ask the Board to consider revisiting this decision. I believe that engaging directly with our community — whether through meetings, surveys, or other forms of outreach — would go a long way in rebuilding trust and ensuring that our voices are truly heard.

If a split feeder pattern is ultimately pursued, I encourage you to include the community in discussions around how and where that division should occur. Transparency and collaboration in this process would set a powerful example of responsive, community-centered leadership.


Thank you sincerely for your time and your continued dedication to our students and families. I look forward to hearing from you.

Warm Regards,

Amy

Amy L. Horvath 

From: ksimon
Sent: Thursday, May 22, 2025 5:21 PM
To: Public Comments
Cc: Searcy, Adam T; Mike Kazmierski
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Board item 2.04 for 5/27 BoT meeting

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Dear Trustees,


Just a quick note to thank you and your staff as well as the RTC and their staff for the truly game-changing work to bring forward the MOU for RTC to provide FREE bus service for enrolled students. Not only will this effort help more students to make it to school, but it will also provide a safe transportation option for students who are out of school this summer.

Congratulations and thank you in advance for your support for this pilot project.

Warmest regards,
Katy


Katy Simon Holland

From: Tehan Slocum
Sent: Monday, May 26, 2025 2:54 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GT program

 External Email: This email originated outside of WCSD. Please exercise caution. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Good afternoon Washoe County School District Board of Trustees,
I have a 6th year old child finishing the GT program at Swope this year. The program has afforded her such academic and intellectual growth. She is able to be creative and is never bored in her classes. I value this program immensely, and cuts to it may result in enrollment reduction, as these kids could find alternative placements outside of the public school environment. Please maintain the funding for this program.
Sincerely, Tehan Slocum

From: Andy Walden
Sent: Monday, May 26, 2025 6:41 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GATE Funding

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Hello,

I am writing to express my concern regarding the ongoing discussions about funding for the GATE program, which I believe is a vital asset to Washoe County.

This program represents a critical investment in the intellectual capital of Washoe County, serving the unique needs of our most academically gifted students. We should, in fact, be identifying opportunities to *increase* investment in GATE, recognizing the significant return these students will provide.

My son's experience with the GATE program at Swope has been nothing short of transformative. Since being accepted into the program for sixth grade, he's been consistently challenged by his teachers and pushed by his peers to produce work he didn't know he was capable of doing. He's earned straight A's for three consecutive quarters, a testament to the program's impact and his hard work.

Before entering the GATE program, he was not as engaged as he has been this year. Fifth grade, in particular, highlighted this before he entered the program: his biggest goal, he told his teacher, was simply "to not look at the clock so often." While his teacher saw it as a "good goal," it was a clear sign that his interest and curiosity was lacking, and they both missed the opportunity to truly foster a love of learning.

This all changed with GATE. My son has been challenged in the right ways with the GATE program to create more interest and focus on his academics, which continually preps him to the next step in his academic career.

The deprioritization or removal of the GATE program would be a huge detriment to WCSD and, more importantly, to these students' academic futures. These students possess an incredible passion for learning and an exceptionally high ceiling for achievement. Like a talented athlete who needs specialized training and coaching to reach the next level, these students require the unique challenge and support offered by GATE. It ensures they realize their full academic potential, empowering them to become future leaders who contribute back to our community and positively impact the world.

- Andy Walden, father of a third-grade daughter and a sixth-grade son

From: Farrow, Jennifer
Sent: Tuesday, May 27, 2025 8:22 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Public comment for 5/27 Board Meeting

Washoe County School Board Members,

As an educator in WCSD for 29 years, I am deeply concerned by the direction things seem to be heading in the relationship between the Washoe Education Association and the district. I have seen how negotiations can get tense, but I have always believed both sides shared a genuine commitment to reaching agreements that worked for everyone. There was a mutual sense of partnership and respect.

Over the past few years, under the leadership of Calen Evans, the WEA has worked hard to build a collaborative and constructive relationship with the district. We have approached not only negotiations but all of our work with the district, from problem-solving at school sites to policy discussions, with a commitment to good faith, shared responsibility, and the belief that we are on the same team. Educators have appreciated this approach. Unfortunately, this year feels different.

Throughout the school year, there have been multiple decisions and patterns that feel less collaborative and more dismissive of educators' voices and realities. Combined with some of the positions the district has taken during negotiations, it is beginning to show a concerning pattern of behavior. It feels like the district is moving away from viewing the association and the educators it represents as true partners in the work of public education.

Lately, it seems like the district is asking more and more of teachers while making it harder to meet those expectations. A key example is class size. How is a teacher supposed to meet the needs of every student in a class of 35, often with no support staff?

Here is what a typical elementary classroom might include:

- 4 to 5 special education students, ranging from one to all subjects
- 1 to 2 students receiving speech services
- 4 to 8 students in the MTSS process, each requiring 60 to 90 extra minutes weekly
- 1 to 3 students with behavioral challenges
- 30 percent of the class slightly below grade level
- 5 to 10 percent above grade level
- The rest developing on track

We are being asked to increase small-group time for struggling students, but how can that be effective when small groups are 10 to 12 students, not the 4 to 6 students recommended by research? Meanwhile, the other 20 or more students are expected to work independently on material that often must be well below their level just to avoid constant interruptions. That is not a meaningful learning model. It is a survival model.

Then we are judged by assessment data that does not take into account the unrealistic demands placed on us. Teachers are trying to meet these expectations, but many are burning out. We are seeing more and more educators limit their work to contract hours, not because they do not care, but because they feel hopeless. They are doing everything they can, and it is still not enough. That is incredibly disheartening.


Recent updates from the WEA negotiation team have only added to a growing sense of frustration and discouragement among educators. While negotiations are just one piece of the larger relationship, the lack of support reflected at the table reinforces what many have been feeling all year, that the partnership between the district and its educators is breaking down. It is difficult to feel valued when the messages of appreciation do not align with the decisions and actions we are seeing.

If WCSD truly wants to move forward as a district, there needs to be a reset in how we work together. We need to approach each other as partners in this fight for public education, not as opponents or obstacles. That means coming to the table with an open mind and a collaborative spirit.

We know not everyone will get everything they want. But ensuring that the educators who keep this system running feel valued, respected, and supported is not just good for staff morale, it is critical to student success. Without that, we are just buildings, not schools.

Sincerely,
Very Tired WCSD Educator
Jennifer Farrow

From: Corrine Phillips
Sent: Tuesday, May 27, 2025 11:27 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GT budget cuts

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To whom it may concern,


I am writing to share why I feel GT magnet programs are extremely valuable to children. My son is part of the magnet program at Clayton M.S. He is currently in 6th grade. This has been the first year in all his schooling that he has felt challenged at school and is not "teaching his class". He has always been the top student and this year since he is in the magnet program, he is finally challenged and thinking deeper within his learning.

The GT teachers at Clayton are truly amazing and have done such a great job at coaching my child along to be a self-learner which he has never gotten before. In E.S he was often bored and not challenged and this has all changed since being a part of the magnet program. Students who are high achieving and gifted learners truly learn differently just like children who qualify for special education. I think it is extremely important to give high achieving students that same individualized learning from qualified teachers throughout their entire school day and not just a portion of their day. This has truly made a great difference in my sons learning and his ability to continue to grow and achieve at his learning level and quick pace.

Please do not cut funding to the GT programs across the district. These children deserve to have a learning environment that they can thrive and excel in just like every other learning group.

Cori Phillips


From: Rhys VanKirk
Sent: Tuesday, May 27, 2025 1:50 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] May 27th Board Meeting

 External Email: This email originated outside of WCSD. Please exercise caution. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello,

I hope your weekend was good. I've heard there is a projected budget shortage for the next school year and you may be considering reducing or eliminating programs. I hope that Gifted and Talented Education is not on the chopping block. My experience in GT, beginning in elementary school at Jerry Whitehead, and especially in middle school magnet at Sky Ranch Middle School gave me a huge leg up as I entered high school. My experience in the Hug Institute was incredibly valuable as well, and after that, I transferred to the TMCC High School program, which has allowed me to graduate with my associate's degree and my high school diploma at the same time. I could never have done this without the incredible teachers of the GT program and the many years of GT classes I had the opportunity to take. I am on track to graduate with my Bachelors in Nursing in only 2 years, and I hope that future kids of the Washoe County School District will be allowed to have the same opportunities and guidance. Thank you for your consideration,
Avery VanKirk

From: Aaron Altshuler
Sent: Tuesday, May 27, 2025 2:11 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Please keep GT Program Fully Funded

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Hi Washoe County School Board,

I am writing to express my heartfelt appreciation for the Gifted and Talented Program, specifically the Magnet program at Clayton Middle School, where my daughter is currently enrolled in the 7th grade. This program has been invaluable in fostering her academic growth and personal development.

Since joining the Magnet program, my daughter has thrived in an environment that challenges her intellectually and nurtures her curiosity. The curriculum is thoughtfully designed to cater to the unique needs of gifted students, providing them with opportunities to explore advanced concepts and engage in critical thinking. The dedicated teachers and staff have been instrumental in creating a supportive and stimulating atmosphere that encourages students to reach their full potential.

One of the most significant benefits of the Magnet program is its emphasis on individualized learning. My daughter has been able to pursue her interests in depth, which has not only enhanced her knowledge but also boosted her confidence and motivation. The program's focus on project-based learning and collaborative activities has helped her develop essential skills such as problem-solving, teamwork, and effective communication.

Moreover, the Magnet program has played a crucial role in preparing my daughter for future academic challenges. The rigorous coursework and enrichment opportunities have equipped her with the tools she needs to succeed in high school and beyond. I am confident that the foundation she is building through this program will serve her well in her educational journey.

I strongly believe that the Gifted and Talented Program is an asset to our school district and deserves continued support and investment. It is programs like this that ensure our gifted students receive the education they need to excel and become well-rounded individuals. The GT population is often overlooked and underserved and that is not a free and appropriate education as guaranteed by law.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your ongoing commitment to providing quality education to all students.

Sincerely,

Aaron Altshuler

From: Alex VanKirk
Sent: Tuesday, May 27, 2025 2:37 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Projected Budget Shortage

Hello,

I've heard there is a projected budget shortage for the next school year and you may be considering reducing or eliminating programs. I sincerely hope that Gifted and Talented Education is not one of them. As a former GATE student, I can attest that SWAS and especially Middle School Magnet are valuable stepping stones in a student's education. I am currently a mechanical engineering student at the University of Nevada, Reno, on track to graduate three semesters early. Without my time in GT classrooms, I can confidently say I would not have gained the skills necessary to be where I am today. Magnet taught me to be resilient and confident in my identity as a student. It reinforced my desire to learn, which in turn motivated my will to use my strengths to enact positive change in my community. I truly believe GATE is instrumental in developing confident, motivated, and educated leaders, and I hope that young students to come have the same opportunity to push themselves as I did.

Thank you for your consideration,
Alex VanKirk
Mechanical Engineering Undergraduate, UNR


From: Dasilva, Holly
Sent: Tuesday, May 27, 2025 3:37 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Regarding BOARD MEETING: Discussion of the 2025–26 Tentative Budget

As a teacher and parent, I am writing to share my experience with Gifted and Talented Education programs in WCSD. The programs available to students and families, including SWAS, Magnet, and such, have been an opportunity for students to thrive, build social skills, and strengthen the whole child overall. As a qualifying GT student, they fall under the special education umbrella and indeed prove to have needs that are not always addressed in the general education environment. I began teaching gifted students at a Title school as the AAP teacher. That experience showed me that there indeed is a great need for their exceptional capabilities and that our GT students truly benefit from the highly qualified education that is currently available to them. I hope that my brief input highlights the positive impact that these students and the department make on our community and promotes continuity of these specialized programs for the gifted child.

Best,

Holly Dasilva
3rd Grade Teacher
Caughlin Ranch Elementary

From: Arianne Sorreta
Sent: Tuesday, May 27, 2025 4:17 PM
To: Public Comments; Woodley, Alex; Nicolet, Diane M
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Agenda 3.01 - GT Funding

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Dear WCSD Board Members,

I am writing as a very concerned parent regarding the possible cuts to GT funding in the district. We have been a part of WCSD since 2011 and will continue until our youngest graduates in 2033. We are not only a family that is very involved in our childrens' education (through volunteering and support at home), but we also have a vested interest in continuing solid, beneficial programs for our community.

All four of our children are identified as GT and they have participated in almost all the programs offered by WCSD - Pull-Out, SWAS, Middle School Magnet, and the GATE Institute.

Our eldest graduated in 2024 from the GATE Institute and was valedictorian with a weighted GPA of 6.425 and has finished her freshman year at UNR as a SENIOR in credits due the opportunities the Institute gave her in advancing her academic pursuits. I still have no clue why we are not boasting of the number of AP opportunities Hug has to offer! Our third child is excited to start his freshman at the GATE Institute next year because he felt that it provided him the best path to reach his academic goals. He has been a part of the Clayton Magnet Program the last three years (as his sisters before him), and I have seen him mature and thrive in that environment. Our youngest participates in the Pull-Out program at Peavine Elementary. She does not receive the 150 minutes a week due to lack of space for her GT class at the school, but it is her favorite time of the week. To our fourth grader, her time in GT fills her cup both mentally and emotionally and we can see a difference when she misses it.

Gutting the district GT program will not only affect us on a personal level, but also the bright, hard working and difficult to teach kids in our community. Mainstreaming GT students reduces their engagement and greatly increases the load of teachers not certified or trained to teach this population. Most teachers either sideline them, make them unofficial student teachers, or throw busy work at them until they stop asking - all speaking from personal experience.

A very common assumption is that a student identified as GT equates to being easy and high achieving. This is not true. Their needs are not solely academic - they have social and emotional needs that are specifically served by GT. A student identified as GT needs a different learning environment OR THEY WILL FAIL. It's special education in every sense of the term.

The GT program is already operating on a veritable skeleton crew. We have seen the cuts and changes made in the past and I can only imagine that ANY further cuts would greatly cripple the GT program as a whole. Pull-out or itinerant teachers that visit elementary schools are a key facilitator in reaching kids

from lower income families that may not have the means to transport/send their children to magnet sites. The GATE Institute and Middle School Magnet does not offer transportation and this already provides a barrier of participation for GT kids. GT teachers go through rigorous training and certification to be able to serve this population and should also be compensated as such. Cuts will mean our trained educators will leave and these kids will be left with inconsistent untrained teachers.

Lastly, I also want to remind the Board that our GT population are the kids we read about when we see the names of National Merit Scholars or community leaders or those that are shining examples of empathy and compassion to those around them. They are most frequently the ones silently propping up the schools they attend with their test scores and are the helpers in their communities. We should be increasing our support for these kids, not gutting the programs that serve them.

Please do not remove funding from the GT program so our special needs kids can thrive until graduation.

Thank you.

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Arianne Sorreta

From: Rael, Kai
Sent: Tuesday, May 27, 2025 4:25 PM
To: BoardMembers; Public Comments
Subject: Archie Clayton Middle School GT Concerns

To whom it may concern,

I am Kai Rael, a current 7th-grade student in the GT program at Archie Clayton Middle School. This is my second year in this program, and the program is very beneficial to all the students participating in it. I was almost never challenged by anything in school before 5th grade, where I attended Caughlin Ranch Elementary School's SWAS program with Mr. Carlstrom. In contrast to my prior years in elementary school, this class challenged me in many ways. I learned many things academically, as well as real-world skills such as organization, while being challenged in all subjects. This, from my experience, would not be able to occur in a non-GT or non-SWAS environment, due to the size of classes and lack of GT certification in teachers.


Throughout my two years at Clayton, I have been once again challenged in many ways, while also being able to connect with peers that learn and think in a similar way to me. I personally know that this is very important for children that are considered gifted: being gifted is not always easy, and it often is a challenge in itself. Therefore, it is important to be able to connect with other gifted students. The teachers at Clayton are also amazing for gifted education, as they can deliver more personalized and project-based learning, which supports gifted students. All my current (and past) teachers have varied teaching styles, which allows GT students get a variety of different types of learning. Mrs. Roberts is always engaging with the 6th-grade students first beginning to enter middle school and GT, Mrs. Breuch always has a rigorous curriculum to keep our learning in Math and Science going, Mr. Burkhouse often connects history lessons to other things and always keeps us doing project-based learning, and Ms. Tiernay personalizes support very often during her ELA classes. All my teachers at Clayton expect me to do my best while keeping me engaged, supported, and challenged to assist me in reaching my goals.

To conclude, I would like to emphasize the extreme importance of GT programs. They work towards all our education and keep us challenged and learning. Being gifted has special needs, even if they're on the other side of the spectrum. If the funding was cut for these programs, our learning would suffer heavily and many of us would lose any aspect of challenge or difficulty in school. Without these personalized programs, we would lose our definition of gifted, that being a diverse group of individuals with many different skills and talents, who often differ among each other. Only 150 minutes a week (or 30 minutes per school day) would not be nearly enough to keep our curriculum challenging enough for our skill level. Therefore, children would become disengaged with education, and in extreme cases, drop out of school.

What can the GT student body do to prevent these budget cuts from occurring? Where will our voices be heard?

Sincerely,
Kai Rael

From: Craig Burkhouse
Sent: Tuesday, May 27, 2025 4:34 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Cuts to GT programs

 External Email: This email originated outside of WCSD. Please exercise caution. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

I'm writing to you not only as a teacher in our district, but also as a parent of a child in the Gifted and Talented (GT) program. I'm deeply concerned about the proposal to reduce funding for GT services, which I feel would be a backward step for a forward looking school district.

Gifted students aren't just kids who are "ahead" academically—they have unique needs that go beyond what a typical classroom can provide. GT programs offer these students the challenge, support, and sense of belonging they need to stay engaged and grow. Without that, we run the risk of seeing them lose interest in school, underperform, or even act out—not because they can't succeed, but because their needs aren't being met.

As a parent, I've seen firsthand how the GT program has made a difference for my daughter. It's helped her thrive academically, yes, but just as importantly, it's helped her find her people—students who share her curiosity, creativity, and love of learning. That kind of connection builds confidence and helps students feel valued.

As a teacher, I know how challenging it is to meet the full range of student needs in a single classroom. GT services don't just benefit gifted students, they support teachers, too. They give us tools, strategies, and a system for making sure high-ability students are challenged appropriately, without taking away attention from others.


Cutting these services would send a discouraging message about our priorities as a district. We talk a lot about equity, and rightfully so, but equity means meeting each student where they are and giving them what *they* need to grow. That includes our gifted learners.

I strongly urge the board to reconsider any plan that would reduce GT services. Let's keep pushing to meet the needs of all students, especially those whose gifts challenge us to think bigger and teach differently.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to our community.

Sincerely,
Craig Burkhouse

From: Evangelline Murray
Sent: Tuesday, May 27, 2025 4:39 PM
To: Public Comments; BoardMembers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Agenda 3.01 - GT Funding

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Dear WCSD Board Members,

My name is Eevee Murray and I am a fourth grader at Peavine Elementary. We have GT on Wednesdays every week with Mrs. Wortman and I really like it. You should not take it away. It teaches us a lot of stuff. Like what we are learning now is how we can help clean our oceans and Lake Tahoe. GT is also really fun with some art and very experimental projects.

GT is really important to me because it warms up our brains. We start with puzzles and then we go to the big projects. In my classroom there is a lot of drama. When I go to GT I feel free from stress.


Next year I will be a fifth grader and would like to be in GT again before I go to middle school. For middle school, I will go to the Clayton Magnet Program and I hope to learn science.

Please keep the GT programs.

Sincerely,
Eevee

Evangelline Murray

From: Elizabeth Bedard
Sent: Tuesday, May 27, 2025 4:40 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] School board meeting 5/27

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Hello,

My name is Elizabeth, and I am a student at Hug High School in the GATE Institute. My English teacher, Keith Roberts, told us that we could submit public comments today regarding keeping our program intact.

I just wanted to put in my two cents on the program and how much it has benefitted me. I joined the program in the sixth grade at Clayton Middle School. I tested twice before I got in, which I thought was dumb, but I also knew that there would be a lot more expected of me in the program, and I am grateful that I could join at such a pivotal time in my education.

The program, through the six years I have been in it, has benefitted me so much. I remember being so bored that I wanted to tear my own eyes out in elementary school and the general classes in middle school, and even now.


I also greatly appreciate all of the opportunities that GATE has given me. I have learned so much being part of the program, not just meeting my cognitive needs for learning, but also with the people I've met and the connections I've made. Not only with my peers, but also with my teachers. From Mr. Burkhouse, Mrs. Roberts, and Mrs. Martinez at Clayton to Mrs. Stokes, Mr. Pacheco, and Mr. Roberts at Hug, the teachers have made my experience even better. They have always known my needs as a learner and helped me exceed in my education. Not to mention that I had the opportunity to get a lot of the beginning college-level classes paid for.

I can only request that you reconsider the notion of cutting funding to our program. It has been so helpful to not only me, but all of my classmates, and many students to come. Specializing education to meet the needs of students helps us grow and achieve in ways that many people can't imagine. When I told my family and friends that I was in the only program in the district that let me take four classes for college credit as a freshman, they were appalled. Many people think the only way for students to get that level of education is privately. By keeping this program in public schools, it supports participation in public education and improves the outcome of students across the board in Nevada.

In the words of Janet Roberts, "it truly is 'Every student, by name and face, to graduation.'"

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Elizabeth Bedard

From: Maddison Boharsik
Sent: Tuesday, May 27, 2025 4:50 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Projected Budget Shortage

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Good Evening,

I've heard about the projected budget shortage for the next school year and that you may be considering reducing or eliminating certain programs. I hope that Gifted and Talented Education is not on the chopping block. I was in the district's GATE programs from 2nd-8th grade, including pullout GT, SWAS, and Magnet, and it is undeniable that my experience in these programs gave me a leg up as I entered high school and college. From my early elementary school years, GATE fostered my creativity and challenged me academically so I was able to reach my full potential as a young student and truly learn to love school. Middle school Magnet continued to challenge me academically and creatively, preparing me for the rigor of high school honors and AP classes. Furthermore, Magnet was able to give me a jump start on the high school curriculum, allowing me to enter junior-level courses as a freshman and graduate with 15 dual-enrollment college credits.

My experience with GATE in my K-12 education significantly shaped my outlook on the value of high-quality public education, and inspired me to pursue a degree in Elementary Education from the University of Nevada, Reno. Currently in my second year of undergrad, I can still feel the impact of my experience in GATE. Not only did I receive the Presidential Scholarship from the university due to my academic achievements in high school, but I am also on track to graduate a semester early. Neither of these things would have been possible if not for the Magnet program challenging me and preparing me for higher education.

It is my hope to someday return to the district's GATE programs, this time as a teacher, and give the gift of a quality, valuable, and applicable education to future students as it was given to me. However, this won't be possible if funding to these programs gets cut. I hope that my story helps you to see how truly beneficial the GATE programs are to Washoe County students, even years after exiting them, and that you continue to maintain and grow these programs.

Thank you for your time,
Maddison Boharsik

From: Roberts, Keith
Sent: Tuesday, May 27, 2025 4:55 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: GT Programming

Good day,

As a nearly thirty-year teacher at Hug High School and a current teacher in the GATE Institute at Hug, I would like to take this opportunity to briefly give you a few things to consider as you look once again at whether or not to continue our program.


1. I don't know how the budgets are done from your end, but in a very real way there will be very little cost savings by eliminating the GATE Institute at Hug. Our students are provided no transportation, so there is no cost to the district for them to attend a school out of their zone. We have roughly 100 students in our program each year, and we have 4 teaching allocations through the GATE department. Should our Institute students return to their zoned schools, those 4 allocations would not be "saved" because those 100 students would still be on the books somewhere and those teachers would need to be reassigned to where the new numbers called for them. The money might come off GATE's books, but it wouldn't be actually saved by WCSD.
2. All of the GATE allocated teachers at Hug teach many other Hug students who are not a part of the Institute. Our GATE math allocation, Art Pacheco, is one of our best geometry teachers and works with some of the most struggling students on our campus. I myself have been the theater director for the better part of the last 25 years as well as teaching several GATE English classes for the last 5 years, and our Science and Social Studies allocations are integral parts of their departments as well. Removing the GATE allocations from Hug will severely impact the school as a whole, not just the Institute. Hug admin has worked hard to make sure that they get the most bang for their buck with these allocations, and WCSD is getting more than their money's worth by keeping us here.
3. The programs that we are able to provide for the Institute students are of great benefit to other zoned Hug students as well. The honest truth is that before the GATE Institute came to Hug, we were simply not able to offer as many advanced course offerings as many other schools. We work hard to find students on our campus already who can benefit from the programs we build, and often there are neighborhood kids in our classes, who may have never been identified as Gifted but who nevertheless have the potential to succeed in accelerated courses, who can have their trajectories changed because the Institute allows us to offer courses we wouldn't have had the numbers to run otherwise. These are often the most vulnerable of high potential students, and this program has allowed us to literally change their lives.
4. Finally, our program continues to be the best place for our students. For those families who choose to transition from the Magnet programs to the Institute, satisfaction is high, kids return year after year, and often younger siblings follow along as older siblings graduate. I am humbled by the thanks and appreciation parents show me every year, not only for the high level of academic rigor we provide but for the personalized approach and the human concern and connection we provide their students. We build a family here, and it is one that often helps kids who for a variety of reasons, many related to their neuro-atypicality, need the specialized approach that we provide.

Thank you for your time, and please include our staff, students, and families in your further investigations into the way to move forward with GATE programming in WCSD.

Sincerely,


Keith Roberts
AP Capstone & English Teacher
Theater Codirector
Procter Hug High School

From: Herschel Murray
Sent: Tuesday, May 27, 2025 5:02 PM
To: Public Comments; BoardMembers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Agenda Item 3.01 comment

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Hello, my name is Herschel Murray, and I am in the magnet program of Clayton Middle School. I believe that funding should not be cut because it is important to everyone inside of GT. I have been in the GATE program since 2nd grade, and I attribute most of my success in academics to the program. Gifted kids are special needs, and it is not fair for their main support in learning to get cut from funding.

From: Aelliana Murray
Sent: Tuesday, May 27, 2025 5:05 PM
To: Public Comments; BoardMembers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Agenda Item 3.01

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Good evening Washoe County School District Board Members,

My name is Aelliana Murray, a current Freshman at UNR. I want to speak on Agenda Item 3.01, specifically around possible cuts towards Gifted and Talented programs in the district.

I went through almost all of the GT programs here in Washoe County, from pull-out GT and SWAS in elementary school, MAGNET in middle school, and Hug's GATE Institute in high school. These programs helped to elevate my learning and allowed me to transfer to UNR with over 80 college credits, from both AP classes and dual credit, as well as graduate valedictorian of my class. Without these programs, I'm sure I would not have achieved the same results. It's common for high-achieving students to be told to not continue to challenge themselves, as they've already achieved the highest grade in the standard curriculum. This stunts further growth and can dissuade people from learning. Many students need these programs to remain engaged in their studies, and gain opportunities to further their education.

Furthermore, these programs helped me connect with people who think similarly to me, and I have made lifelong friendships with peers and staff alike. They have helped me to come into my own as an adult and to evaluate my world. For future students, such as my siblings, I want them to have the same enriching education that led me to where I am today. Even though I have graduated, these programs still continue to be the highlight of my schooling and I wish for others to have the same opportunity.

So I please ask for no cuts to our Gifted and Talented Programs.

Thank you for your time,
Aelliana Murray

From: Elane V Faisal-Sage
Sent: Tuesday, May 27, 2025 5:10 PM
To: Public Comments; BoardMembers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] 5.27.2025 Board of Trustees Regular Meeting / Agenda Item 3.01 - Public Comment

Dear Members of the Washoe County School District's Board of Trustees,

My name is Elane Faisal-Sage, and I am a community member and former student residing in Reno, Nevada. I am writing to you today regarding item 3.01 on the agenda for the regularly scheduled meeting for today's date, May 27th 2025.

As a graduate of the Gifted and Talented Institute at Procter R. Hug High School, a participant in both GATE Magnet and Pull-Out services, and now a technical manager at the University of Nevada, Reno's Office of Information Technology, I want to emphasize how critical it is to continue funding these programs.

Throughout my time in Washoe County schools, I often found it difficult to stay engaged in a general education setting. My teachers were understandably focused on meeting the needs of the broader classroom, but that meant I lacked access to content that truly challenged or excited me. Everything changed in the 3rd grade when I was placed in GATE pull-out services. For the first time, I was in an environment that encouraged curiosity, exploration, and reflection.

Let me be direct: Gifted and Talented (GT) students are special education students. We have unique learning needs. We might advance quickly in certain subjects, yet struggle in others. Supporting us effectively requires specially trained educators who understand how to connect with GT learners. Speaking from personal experience, I often felt like an outsider in traditional classrooms. GT services provided not just academic stimulation, but a sense of belonging. Through my time in GT, I was able to amass over 100 college credits, graduate from high school a year early and *still* be in the top 5 of my class. As I now work with and supervise graduates of gifted programs from other states and counties, I find it apparent that participating in these GT programs benefits them well past graduation and into the workforce.

It frustrates me that the only time I see the Board discussing GATE services is when they consider cutting funding to the program. WCSD used to refer to its GT programming as the district's "crown jewel," as we were nationally recognized. If the District wishes to live true to its motto of "Every Child, by name and face, to graduation," eliminating funding for these academic programs is unacceptable.


Eliminating GATE funding may be the easy choice to give the District more financial breathing room, but it is not at all the right choice.



Elane Faisal-Sage (she/they)
Global Support Lead
Office of Information Technology

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From: Aurabella Murray
Sent: Tuesday, May 27, 2025 5:30 PM
To: Public Comments; BoardMembers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Agenda Item 3.01 - WCSD GT Program

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WCSD Board Members,

My name is Aurabella Murray, and as a new high school junior I have been a part of Washoe County Gifted and Talented programs since second grade. I have had the opportunity to attend the pullout program, the SWAS program, and the MAGNET program – all of which I attribute my academic progress to, including my current attendance at the Davidson Academy at UNR.

The various GT programs allow students to widen their perspectives, apply their knowledge in a supportive environment, and reach their potential. It was under the wings of many specially trained and beloved teachers, in a classroom of other gifted kids, that I was able to excel. The Gifted and Talented program is important and its funding must be maintained to continue to support our district's students.

In elementary school, I was learning at a pace that standard teachers didn't have the material or expertise to handle properly. Often, fellow gifted students and I would be placed in the highest reading groups and were allowed to work ahead for math assignments. However, the materials were restricted to either our grade level or by what the curriculum required, which caused us to be delegated to teaching other students, reading independently, or sitting quietly: all tasks that didn't support our academics or social skills. It is difficult to pursue challenges when the opportunity to find one's potential isn't provided. I have met students who were identified in middle school as gifted who have had similar experiences in class and were stunted by the lack of support, feeling unmotivated, becoming isolated from their class, and being encouraged to restrain themselves to meet the normal curriculum while staying engaged.

The weekly pullout program broke through that self-destructive loop by creating an attentive and adaptive environment that meets the needs of GT students. The interactions between GT teachers and between the students, alongside a curriculum that allows students to receive critical feedback and apply

their knowledge vastly improves the academic success of students. Attending the program, despite it being once a week, had an incredible difference on my engagement during class. I was being challenged and was able to work with other gifted kids who expanded my understanding of both the world and my own thought processes, which wasn't provided in standard classes.

The pullout program was such a success that, under the guidance of my GT teacher, I applied to and joined the SWAS program a year after. I adore the SWAS program: it took the positives of the pullout program and combined it with a year-round, flexible curriculum that addressed my academic needs perfectly. The same applies to the MAGNET program, which continued to support me into middle school. It is thanks to these programs and the people involved in them that I became aware of and was able to attend the Davidson Academy.

The GT program is incredibly important to me and is the main contributor as to how I got to where I am academically. There are many, many other students who utilize and are finding themselves only through the program. I don't want this opportunity to end with me, I want it to continue to provide students the chance to find others like them and to excel.

Thank you for your time,

Aurabella Murray