
From: Nick Cote
Sent: Friday, January 22, 2021 12:07 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Reduction of SWAS, GT, and MAGNET funds.

Dear Board Members,

My name is Nick, and I have been through the SWAS program at Caughlin Ranch, and am currently in 8th grade in the MAGNET program at Swope Middle School.

My experience in these programs has been wonderful. I know many people who share my experience. It would be terrible if eager students would not be able to experience this. I know many great teachers who would be very disappointed in WCSD if they were cut.

Please consider my opinion, and the opinions of others.

Thanks.

From: Vibeth atienza
Sent: Friday, January 22, 2021 12:46 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Counselors

Counselors are needed during very stressful times. PLEASE ADD MoRE COUNSELORS! You've been overworking our counselors for a very long time. You need to add more counselors to prepare our kids well for college and assist them during difficult times. Also, I recommend that you have a specific program to assist kids who are new to the district. A new environment can be very stressful for kids and when we were new here, we did not get any support.

Vibeth Atienza

From: Jeremy Murray
Sent: Friday, January 22, 2021 3:02 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] WCSD Board Meeting - January 26, 2021 - 4.10 GT Concerns

Hello. I have heard there is discussion of reducing or removing GT services in the upcoming school board meeting.

Our family has three students in GT services: a freshman in the Gate Institute, a sixth grader in Clayton Magnet, and a fourth grader in Caughlin Ranch SWAS. Our kindergartener is also looking like she will need these programs.

I'm highly concerned. Agenda item 4.10 shows drastic cuts to GT in all of these areas.

- Hug's Gate Institute was the sole program in the district that provided a learning environment with both accelerated math and science. All other programs indicated our daughter would run out of classes by Junior or Senior year. Hug was strongly recommended as it would support an individual learning focus and concentrate on AP and integrating college courses. So far, it has even shown to be more flexible and student-focused than Davidson. Losing this would be a huge blow - we considered it to be almost the crown jewel of WCSD GT. There is no equivalent in the district and keeping up contact with GT highschool students in other schools around the area has done nothing but prove that further this year.

- Reducing the number of SWAS schools from 3 to 1 does not provide enough information of how this would work, but on the surface it reads as reduction in capacity. Assessments and follow-up are already semi-encouraging students to move to private schooling instead of SWAS. Pullout GT is underfunded and under-supported (some school admins and teachers are actively hostile toward pullout, not to mention some parents). Having dedicated teachers and environments for these early identified students is crucial to them staying engaged in school. SWAS has shown to be great for both the students and the teachers involved and we are very glad it exists. We've used the bus service to send our kids, even when that has been over an hour ride time to and from school every day - that's how important it is to have these kids in class with peers sharing the same learning issues.

- Middle School Magnet Programs as a topic doesn't say what's being considered. From the other points in the same agenda item, I'm guessing it means a reduction of services or closing of a site. Again, usage shows there's a need here. Closing sites doesn't fit that. We have had two children in Clayton Magnet and agree it is a very good program, especially for math.

For these changes, there is no upside, no alternative - it is just a budget reduction.

The discussed changes would gut GT in the district. This will severely affect these bright, hard working, and difficult to teach kids. Mainstreaming GT students reduces their engagement and highly increases the ask of their teachers - many of which don't bother. Most teachers either sideline them, make them unofficial student teachers, or throw busy work at them until they stop asking. These students require high engagement from their teachers, and frankly our educators are, in general, not trained to teach them and do not have the time or energy to make their learning successful. (Speaking from both our personal and fellow GT parent/student experiences.)

This also doesn't talk about the loss of some of the most talented teachers in the district. They work hard for these kids and are a benefit to all the other teachers they work with. Reduction here is a further brain drain on our educators right when we need them more than ever. How many mainstream remote classes are leaning on materials and training from GT right now? Our best remote teachers are from GT and we would be screwed without them.

A student identified as GT does not mean they are better. It doesn't mean they should just be in a higher grade. Their needs are not solely academic; they also have mental and social needs that are 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. When cuts like these are proposed, it feels to me like those making the decisions do not understand the consequences of not having GT.

Where is the GT advocate on the school board? Why are we not fighting as hard for these kids as we're fighting for keeping sports running during the pandemic? These students, these teachers, and these programs are an integral part of our school district and should be treated as such.

Both my wife and I would be happy to discuss this further with anyone if that would make a difference. Please use any or all of this in public comments for both the meeting and the agenda item.

Please do not reduce GT services. We should be investing in these programs, not reducing them.

-Jeremy

bcc - Arianne Sorreta, school board list, some teachers, and some GT parents. Please forward as you like.

Jeremy Murray

Reno, NV 89503

From: marina johnson
Sent: Friday, January 22, 2021 4:53 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Gifted and talented

Hello,

Today I am writing you about the prospect of cutting the magnet and gifted and talented program. A cut that would not only affect our schools, but our entire city. I began the gifted and talented program in the fourth grade. There I learned critical thinking skills that were not taught to me in the normal curriculum. I was taught things that some students are still learning in highschool, how to voice my opinion, how to create a PowerPoint, marketing skills, and many other things. I was then able to continue my education in Archie Clayton Pre-AP academy. It was there that my true education began. It was there where I truly felt I had a home. I did not have a good relationship at home. I fell into a deep state of depression. It was at Clayton where I felt important. It was at Clayton where I felt wanted. The magnet teachers were my family, they told me how special I was and how I was a great leader. They pushed me to be the best version of myself. By taking away these programs, you are taking away students potential to be leaders, to thrive in an environment where the teachers are trained to deal with advanced students. The magnet program was the best education I have ever received. Please. I beg you not to deprive students of the opportunity to experience what I already have.

Thank you,
Marina Johnson

Sent from my iPhone

From: A Vogel
Sent: Friday, January 22, 2021 5:52 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GATE program

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing as an appreciative but concerned parent of two GT students: Eli (SWAS grade 4, CRES) and Calista (Magnet grade 7, Swope). Simply put, the GT program is essential for their realization of their potential. We are counting on the WCSD board to do right by our kids and preserve these programs.

Thank you in advance for your support and have a great weekend,
Alex

From: Varun Giritharan
Sent: Friday, January 22, 2021 7:37 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GT Funding cuts

Hi, I am a former GT student and would like to state that the GT program is a very helpful program that has created success for me and my colleagues

-Varun Giritharan

From: Nanda Reddy
Sent: Friday, January 22, 2021 8:42 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GT funding cuts

To whom it may concern:

This letter is in response to the district's proposal to drastically reduce the GT program, which has already undergone cuts in past years.

Washoe county's GT program has been one of its most successful programs in the county. I make this claim based on my experience (I have one high schooler and one magnet middle schooler, both of whom went through SWAS) and because of the program's exemplary NAGC ranking in 2019. Crippling this gold-star program by further reducing funds will undercut Washoe county's educational system as a whole.

The county's motto is "every child by name and face to graduation." The GT program helps to fulfill that promise in a big way. Children's diverse educational needs should be met in diverse ways, and this program meets the unique special education needs of students who qualify for GT services. Like all special education students, GT students do not thrive in one-size settings. They thrive under the care of the county's talented GT teachers who have been trained to meet their needs. This program allows GT students to feel like they're seen and cared for. Please don't take that away.

Washoe County was unique and revolutionary in setting up such an exemplary program. This program draws families to our state because it promises to meet diverse needs. Good GT services do not exist in many counties nationwide. But that's not a reason to cut it. That's a reason to nurture and expand it.

Simply put, cutting this program will leave children behind. Cutting this program reduces the county's ability to serve its diverse population. Cutting the program takes the county backward, to a one-size-fits-all approach, which does not work.

Please consider all that's at stake when you vote, including the large population of diverse children this program currently serves.

Thank you,
Nanda Reddy

From: Mohanty, Aadarsh
Sent: Friday, January 22, 2021 8:42 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: GT

I'd just like to say that GT really helped me get to where I am now. My names Aadarsh Mohanty and I moved to Reno in 8th grade and I was very nervous and shy. However the kids I met in gt were great and helped me be more outward with myself. It was interesting because I felt as though we were all completely different but somehow the same. I loved everyone I met in the class and they made me have an amazing year as a new student

From: rosa lester
Sent: Friday, January 22, 2021 9:46 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GATE

I am writing in support of keeping as much of the GATE Dept intact as possible. Both of my children are going through various stages of utilization, and I guarantee that this programming is vital to the student population as a whole. With my 2 kids both being twice exceptional, the fact that they have had access to curriculum, teachers and programming that matches their high needs, has been wonderful. Both tend to "check-out" and become behavior problems if they are not engaged and are bored. I know that many teachers don't know the best way to help educate these kids, and so gifted kids get told to pay attention, go do busy work, or sent out of the room for not behaving. I don't expect most teachers to make separate curriculum for the gifted kids to keep them engaged, while having to help those who need a little extra help, ELL and all the other variants of kids that WCSD serves. It is equally important that kids learning English, kids that have disabilities and typical kids get the best education they can. To do this, in my opinion, gifted kids need to be engaged with like- minded peers, and with teachers who know best how to keep them challenged. SPED has its own department because that is a specialty that not all teachers want to or have the ability or time to devote to. ELL has its own Dept for the same reason. All kids benefit from the teacher not having to devote extra time to each learning style, so let's get as many Gifted kids as we can engaged properly. I know there are kids that should be served by GATE and other vital programs, that aren't, because of funding, and this is unfortunate. We are losing learners and opportunities by not funding and prioritizing more programs.

Thank you for your time and for all the hard work you have been doing, especially through the pandemic.

[Sent from AT&T Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

From: Bergen Smith
Sent: Saturday, January 23, 2021 5:57 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Magnet and Gate programs

Hello,

I am a mom to three school aged boys. Two of whom are in programs such as the Clayton Magnet program. I can not tell you how wonderful the programs have been for my children. They have grown, not only intellectually, but also emotionally. I have seen their confidence and problem solving skills blossom. I would really be disappointed if our district cut funding and locations as so many kids depend on it to grow and find themselves. Kids are not all equal and to hold back or limit of gifted students would be a huge disservice to our community and future. Please reconsider.
Bergen Smith

Sent from my iPhone

From: catharine cook
Sent: Sunday, January 24, 2021 2:37 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support of GATE Services

To the Board of Trustees:

It has come to my attention that it has been recommended to cut WCSD GATE services per agenda item 4.10 at the Board of Trustees' meeting on Tuesday, January 26th. Agenda item 4.10 has drastic cuts to all GATE programs. There are no changes to the programs, no suggested alternatives, only drastic budget reductions.

Our family consists of two students, both utilizing GT services; an eighth grader and a sixth grader in the Magnet Program at Clayton Middle School. Our eighth grader was just accepted to the Institute at Hug High and is thrilled to attend this fall.

We moved to NV in 2016 and were initially concerned about the quality of the education provided by WCSD but were reassured by friends and colleagues that the GT program in WCSD was exceptional and nationally recognized. We have been beyond impressed with the quality education our children have received from the Advanced Academic Placement model in elementary school and the Magnet Program in middle school and we are looking forward to the opportunities offered at the Institute.

The needs of GT students are not met in the mainstream classroom. The GT student in a mainstream classroom faces boredom and disengagement. They are overlooked by teachers, thrown busy work, and often become assistants to the teachers, rather than challenged. It is too much to ask of a classroom teacher to teach to these students separately. GT education is Special Education.

GT education provides our students a rigorous academic program that challenges and engages them. These students are bright, creative, and hard-working and to dismiss their educational needs by not providing a rigorous learning environment sets them up for failure. It is special education in every sense of the term.

These students, teachers, and programs are an integral part of our school district and should be treated as such. It breaks my heart to think the district would reduce and/or remove such amazing programs.

Please, do not reduce the GT program. I understand the need for budgetary reductions but there must be other options to explore that would not harm the educational success of so many students.

Thank you,

Catharine Cook

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Catharine Cook

From: Kai Pruyn
Sent: Sunday, January 24, 2021 2:55 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Concerned Student

To Washoe County Personnel,

My name is Kai Pruyn and I am a Reno, Nevada native. I am currently attending the University of Utah to study biomedical engineering on a full ride scholarship and am so disappointed to hear about the proposed cuts to the GATE programs. I wouldn't be where I am now if I had not attended the Clayton Magnet program. I learned to love learning, and was finally in a program that challenged me academically and pushed me to be the best student I can be. I chose the Clayton Magnet Program because of the offered diversity, not just the fabulous opportunity for education and great teachers. I see cutting this program specifically as a huge equity issue, impacting underprivileged and at risk gifted kids more than any other students. Gifted education and the GATE program is special education, something I thought was supported and valued in WCSD. These proposed cuts demonstrate otherwise. Without these programs Nevada's students and overall education will suffer even more. The Clayton Magnet Program made such an impact on my life, and I can't imagine that I would've gotten this far academically without this program. Why are you looking at eliminating entire programs, rather than cutting administrative costs? This would be better than hurting students directly, and it seems WCSD administrations have far larger salaries than the funding given to essential special education programs, such as Clayton GATE. I urge you to examine all of your options before cutting programs that offer so many students amazing opportunities for education. I will be severely upset and disappointed should WCSD go through with cutting the Clayton GATE and other magnet programs.

Sincerely,
Concerned Alum Kai Pruyn

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Kai Pruyn
Biomedical Engineering
The University of Utah

From:
Sent: Sunday, January 24, 2021 3:24 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support for Washoe County GATE program

To the WCSD Board of Trustees:

It has come to my attention that it has been recommended to cut WCSD GATE services per agenda item 4.10 at the Board of Trustees' meeting on Tuesday, January 26th. Agenda item 4.10 has drastic cuts to all GATE programs. There are no changes to the programs, no suggested alternatives, only drastic budget reductions.

Our family consists of two students, both utilizing GT services; an eighth grader and a sixth grader in the Magnet Program at Clayton Middle School. Our eighth grader was just accepted to the Institute at Hug High and is thrilled to attend this fall.

We initially lived in an area in the North Valleys where there was only a GT pull out program which we found insufficient. We purposely moved to a location that provided full GT services at the elementary school level and have bent over backwards to rearrange work schedules to ferry our kids to Clayton. With the cuts that are proposed there will be no option for students that live in the North Valleys.

The needs of GT students are not met in the mainstream classroom. The GT student in a mainstream classroom faces boredom and disengagement. They are overlooked by teachers, thrown busy work, and often become assistants to the teachers, rather than challenged. It is too much to ask of a classroom teacher to teach to these students separately. GT education is Special Education.

GT education provides our students a rigorous academic program that challenges and engages them. These students are bright, creative, and hard-working and to dismiss their educational needs by not providing a rigorous learning environment sets them up for failure. It is special education in every sense of the term.

These students, teachers, and programs are an integral part of our school district and should be treated as such. It breaks my heart to think the district would reduce and/or remove such amazing programs.

Please, do not reduce the GT program. I understand the need for budgetary reductions but there must be other options to explore that would not harm the educational success of so many students. We can not afford to extinguish our shooting stars!

Thank you,

William Cook

From: Lorna Denton
Sent: Sunday, January 24, 2021 5:11 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Proposed Cuts to the GATE Program

I wish to make a comment with regards to proposed cuts to GATE services. In these extremely challenging times, there is a limited budget for education and a need to address funding across the board but targeting the GATE program is short-sighted.

I have two children who have received GATE services in the SWAS and Magnet programs. They have benefited enormously from the targeted education they have received in the programs allowing them to consistently exceed the average levels of attainment of their peer group. They have been engaged by teachers that understand the special needs of these students and the unique learning requirements of this gifted population. Many of which are simply not addressed in mainstream classes due to time, class sizes and lack of resources. From personal experience, I have found that before entering the GATE programs my children were not challenged and spent much of their time acting as teachers aids, supporting other students learning.

I have observed a definite shift in the GATE program over the last several years, particularly in SWAS where constraints have been placed upon teachers to limit student attainment, particularly in regards to Maths. The goal seems to have been to keep the gifted students in check, and more in line with their peers. The message appears to be, we cannot handle accelerated learning in our school district.

These proposed cuts seem another method of enforcing this policy of providing education for all but not responding to the special needs of these gifted students.

Though the current pandemic I have been so impressed by the response of the teachers in the Magnet program at Pine Middle School. They have delivered a curriculum in-person and online that has met and stimulated my student's needs. This is in stark contrast to the general education elective classes.

The districts have goals of improved graduation rates and providing a workforce that meets the demands of specialist companies moving to Northern Nevada, I feel that WSCD is doing a great disservice to these gifted students and the broader community. Further reducing, or removing, the support that these students need to achieve their potential will have far-reaching effects.

A school district's role is to educate all students, and addressing the special needs that gifted students have should be a core function for any individual teacher, school, district or state. Removing Gifted programs, transferring the students back to mainstream classes, and assuming they will thrive because they are bright, is a rather naive approach.

Without specialized programs for gifted students, many will never be identified, challenged or supported and will not reach their potential for themselves or the community.

Lorna Denton

From: Jeff and Darcy
Sent: Sunday, January 24, 2021 6:15 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comments for 1/26/21 board meeting: Re Gate Program

Dear School Board Members:

We are parents of a 6th grader who is currently enrolled in the Pine Middle School Magnet program. Our student attended Hunsberger SWAS the previous 3 years and participated in the Lenz Elementary GT enrichment class previous to that. We are writing in opposition to the reductions in GATE programming in Washoe County School District.

Gifted and talented students possess special abilities to soak up information and learn complex concepts quickly. GT students have unique social and emotional needs which differentiate them from other students. GT students needs are best met using a curriculum targeted towards their learning abilities. Reducing the number of locations where GT programs are available limits the ability for families to access these programs.

Reviewing the GT presentation for the January 26, 2021 board meeting we are appalled to learn that between now and 2023 GT staffing will be reduced by up to 16 teaching positions and nearly 7 admin/counseling/support staff. Also concerning is the loss of three locations currently serving gifted students, including 1 SWAS site, the Clayton MS Magnet program and the Hug High GATE Academy. These reductions are hard to understand when community population and district enrollment trends are strongly upward. District enrollment increased from 62,220 in 2011 to 63,794 in 2020. The district responded to this growth by adding new elementary, middle and high schools across the district. Since GT services are available to the top 2% of students, this growth indicates that GT services should be increasing, not decreasing.

Our family's personal experience at the Hunsberger SWAS and Pine Magnet suggests GT enrollment is decreasing. Looking at Hunsberger yearbooks, SWAS enrollment in grades 3, 4, 5 decreased by 65% from 79 students in 2017-2018, to 57 in 2018-2019, to 44 in 2019-2020 and is down to 27 students this year. This year we observed that a significant number of our son's SWAS classmates from Hunsberger opted to attend Herz MS instead of transitioning to the Pine Magnet Program. Most parents we have spoken with thought academically Pine would have been the best choice, but the lack of district transportation from the Hunsberger/Lenz zoning areas prevented them from sending their students to Pine.

If the district is seeing a decline in either the number of students qualifying for GT services or how many families opt in for GT programs a better solution would be to examine assessment techniques or add locations and/or transportation options.

The district began system-wide testing for all elementary students during the 2015-2016 academic year. This move was advertised to give all students a fair shot to qualify for GT services. A few years later the district switched from the CogAT test to the Naglieri Nonverbal Abilities Test again with the goal of fairer assessment of non-native English-speaking students. Did these changes result in more students qualifying? If not, what is the explanation?

If families are not choosing GT options, has the district evaluated the location of where programs are offered. By reducing the number of locations, the district is creating new barriers for participation for families with GT students.

The Reno-Sparks area is attracting top talent to new high-tech industries. With COVID and the increase in telework options other highly skilled individuals are moving to the area. WCSD needs to be pro-actively meeting the needs of our community by strengthening GT programs and providing districtwide access. GT students have minds that are capable of great things. The current services offered by WCSD were nationally recognized at the 2019 NAGC conference as representing the gold standard of public domain GATE services available. Please do not throw away the achievements that our teachers and administrators have made for our gate students. Please give our students options to excel.

Sincerely,

From: Melissa Pruyn
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 7:24 AM
To: Public Comments
Cc: Taylor, Angela
Subject: [EXTERNAL] replace comments

Use this comment please:

Dear WCSD Board members,

It is with grave concerns that I write about proposed budget cuts to the Gifted and Talented Education program item 4:10.

The GATE program in WCSD is nationally recognized as the gold standard for gifted education. It is a draw to professionals and businesses in our community. The proposed cuts will devastate the program and affect positive growth throughout our area.

Gifted students are special education students. They learn in a unique way and need the support of specially trained educators to help them maximize their potential as future leaders in our community and beyond. This population is at the greatest risk for mental health issues and suicide. They need our support, not cuts!

As a parent of gifted students, I will say that the Clayton Middle School GATE Magnet program changed their lives. Instead of boredom, repetition, and social conflict, their middle school years were full of challenge, excitement, and the development of life-long bonds. This program is life-changing. Our daughters are now enrolled in top college STEM programs with full academic scholarships at their respective schools. This path started at Clayton, which they picked because it was a small program with a diverse population. The reasons that make Clayton unique are also why it is on the chopping block – because our district is only looking at numbers, not STUDENTS!

As the current ELA teacher for the Clayton Magnet program, I know we do our utmost to support this school family and foster deep relationships with our students and their families so they grow beyond any potential they may have in a regular education program. Clayton is the most diverse program and it **will be cut** if nothing is done to financially support education. How can we say our district supports diversity when we allow this to happen?

We also need to look closely at the WCSD proposed cuts. Why are PROGRAMS DIRECTLY SUPPORTING STUDENT LEARNING being cut when there is so much more that could be removed from administration and other services. Those are our top salaries, let's look there, not at our students!

I ask you to help fund programming for our gifted students. They need our help!

Thank you for your support,

Melissa Pruyn, MA, NBCT
ELA Clayton GATE Magnet
Site and Program Lead Teacher

From: arathi veeraswamy
Sent: Sunday, January 24, 2021 8:30 PM
To: Public Comments
Cc: Dwarak Vuppalapati
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Changes to GATE program.

According to the proposals, GATE students will have other available alternatives, such as CTE and Signature Programs, Dual Credit, and IB. These are not substitutes for programs designed for highly gifted students. Giftedness does not merely mean a child is academically talented. Often, highly gifted children are overlooked for services due to behavioral issues and inadequate traditional academic achievement. In fact, by conflating giftedness with good grades and high standardized test scores, we do highly gifted students a disservice. The National Association for Gifted Children states that gifted children's needs, concerns, and how they experience development may be quite different. Merely placing these students in competitive academic environments may exacerbate the pressure of perfectionism and anxiety that many of these children experience.

That brings us to another group of highly gifted students who may fail to thrive in the general population; children who are twice-exceptional, meaning students who have an IEP for a disability as well as being highly gifted. For these students, a unique GT environment may mean the difference between success and failure. Standard classes are not set up for a child with an IQ in the 99th percentile but who is also autistic. Our special education teachers are already spread too thin. Will they be given the time and the specific professional knowledge to help these students?

My 2 kids were in the SWAS program for 3 years, I felt a tremendous change in their personality & social movement especially for my shy daughter. She seems have made a lot of friends than I have ever seen her have so far.

She is more confident & works well with her peers, which was always an issue we had to focus on without much success. The difference was like night & day. Once they were enrolled in the SWAS program they enjoyed School again.

I have another daughter who has started her third grade in SWAS & was hoping she will thrive like her siblings over the years. It would be unfair for her, for no fault of hers that she does not get the same opportunities her sibling had enjoyed.

Therefore, I beg you to reconsider limiting the opportunities for children like my kids. Every child in our school district should feel like they have a place. Every child should feel like they too belong no matter how different they are.

Arathi vVeeraswamy.

Sent from my iPhone

From: Dawn Martens
Sent: Sunday, January 24, 2021 9:20 PM
To: BoardMembers; Public Comments; DiMartino, Cheryl
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Gifted Education IS Special Education

Hello,

I am writing in regards to the upcoming board meeting proposal to reduce the district-wide SWAS program to a single site. If this proposal is enacted, many SWAS students will be forced to ride the bus for multiple hours a day, an option that many families find unacceptable for their children. Multiple hours sitting on a bus every day means multiple hours lost that a child could be playing outside, imagining, practicing a musical instrument, or spending time with his or her family. Gifted children especially have "excitabilities" that require these aforementioned activities RATHER than hours sitting on a bus or in a carpool. In addition, many families will have to make a choice between supporting long commutes for their children and maintaining their own employment. In the end, consolidating SWAS to a single elementary school will force some families to decide to unenroll their child from SWAS.

I've heard the argument that schools should not devote funds to gifted children because they're "already smart anyway." This argument could not be further from the truth. Calling these children "gifted" is a misnomer that leads people to assume these kids are "smarter" or "better" or "will succeed no matter what". In fact, these children are SPECIAL EDUCATION students in the truest sense of the term. They learn and interact very differently from children in general education, and they need special services to meet their very special needs. In a general education classroom, these students receive little to no direct instruction and rarely have peers to interact with, leaving their social and emotional needs unmet. Drilled with the same facts that they could abstract upon years earlier, their interest and innate love for learning wanes, and they either cause trouble or learn nothing.

The Davidson Institute says it better than I can: "With all the talk of failing schools these days, we forget that schools can fail their brightest students, too. We pledge to "leave no child behind," but in American schools today, thousands of gifted and talented students fall short of their potential. In [Genius Denied](#), the Davidsons describe the "quiet crisis" in education: gifted students spending their days in classrooms learning little beyond how to cope with boredom as they "relearn" material they've already mastered years before. This lack of challenge leads to frustration, underachievement, and even failure. Some gifted students become severely depressed. At a time when our country needs a deep intellectual talent pool, the squandering of these bright young minds is a national tragedy. There are hundreds of thousands of highly gifted children in the U.S. and millions more whose intelligence is above average, yet few receive the education they deserve. Many school districts have no gifted programs or offer only token enrichment classes. Education of the gifted is in this sorry state, say the Davidsons, because of indifference, lack of funding, and the pernicious notion that education should have a "leveling" effect, a one-size-fits-all concept that deliberately ignores the needs of the gifted. But all children are entitled to an appropriate education, insist the authors, those left behind as well as those who want to surge ahead."

The SWAS programs sought to CHANGE education for gifted children- they sought to teach DIFFERENTLY and to ignite the curiosity and drive of these students. PLEASE do not take this program away from these kids who DESERVE to learn. The SWAS program at Hunsberger has been life-changing for my son, both academically and socially. He has found his "tribe", the kids who get him and his quirks, and an exceptional teacher who teaches project-based learning and pushes him to his full potential.

If you must, please consider combining grade levels at the existing SWAS sites. My son has been in a mixed 3/4 class for the past two years, and it has worked beautifully. The students learn concepts together, albeit with different expectations per grade level, and have breakout sessions as necessary. The older students learn leadership and role model for the younger students, but they still learn all grade-level material and more. Younger students who are more advanced, which is often the case in a SWAS classroom, have access to the more advanced material in subjects in which they excel. A 3/4/5 combo class at Hunsberger would require just a single teacher and would allow a south Reno SWAS site for children from Incline to Double Diamond. I am confident that this solution would allow children at all grade levels to learn while still maintaining a site close enough to home to allow them to stay enrolled in this vital program.

Thank you so much for your consideration,
Dawn Martens

From: Mary Owens
Sent: Sunday, January 24, 2021 9:27 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Board Agenda Item 4.10 Gifted and Talented

Hello Board of Trustees,

Below please find the email I have already sent to my personal trustees (Vice President Taylor and Trustee Nicolet)

January 24, 2021

RE: Comments for Feb. 2nd, 2021 Agenda Item: 4.10

Dear Board of Trustees,

Thank you for reading my comments and information about a population in need of specialized education, Gifted and Talented (GATE) students in WCSD. Although item 4.10 mentions “changes” with no specific actions, I can surmise that it likely means cuts to services/staff from this department that does incredible work for its students and their families. This would be very detrimental to the education of these students.

GATE students need teachers with specialized education aimed at understanding their unique abilities and struggles. Specially endorsed teachers positively impact GATE students so they can reach their highest potential, and have successful, fulfilling futures. GATE students deserve services that focus on their individual and specific needs, just like students who require speech and special education, etc.

Here are a few of the opportunities the GATE department offer students and their families:

- targeted Social and Emotional Lessons to help students master strategies to overcome their over-excitabilities, underachievement, perfectionism, insatiable curiosity, impulsivity, understanding their unique GATE characteristics, and creating positive peer relationships.
- time to work and collaborate with like-minded GATE peers on motivating, rigorous projects.
- projects and lessons that go beyond the regular curriculum in order to challenge GATE students in problem solving, critical thinking, making new meaning, and presenting findings.
- specialized Gifted resources such as articles, books, optional activities inside and outside of school, and web sites are made available to families and guardians of GATE students.
- GATE teachers (who have been certified by the Social Emotional Needs of the Gifted Organization, SENG) offer classes to families on how to support their Gifted child(ren).

Below is information from the National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC.org)

What is Giftedness (<https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources/what-giftedness>):

- “Students with gifts and talents perform—or have the capability to perform—at higher levels compared to others of the same age, experience, and environment in one or more domains. They require modification(s) to their educational experience(s) to learn and realize their potential. Gifted and Talented students: _
- Come from all racial, ethnic, and cultural populations, as well as all economic strata.
- Require access to appropriate learning opportunities to realize their potential.
- Can have learning and processing disorders that require specialized intervention and accommodation.

- Need support and guidance to develop socially and emotionally as well as in their areas of talent.”
-

A Definition of Giftedness that Guides Best Practices: Position Statement from NAGC link:

<https://www.nagc.org/sites/default/files/Position%20Statement/Definition%20of%20Giftedness%20%282019%29.pdf>

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions about the work we do as educators for our GATE students. Please do the right thing by allowing us to continue to best serve the GATE students of WCSD and keep this department whole with no cuts to either staff or services!

Sincerely,
Mary R. Owens
Teacher of Gifted Students

From: Herschel Murray
Sent: Sunday, January 24, 2021 9:36 PM
To: Nicolet, Diane M; Thigpen, Kurt L; Taylor, Angela; Batchelder, Jennifer; Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] WCSD Board Meeting- January 26, 2021 -4.10 GT Concerns

Hello.

I am Herschel Murray and I am a fourth grader in Caughlin Ranch SWAS. I am currently in DL SWAS with Dr. Luckey and Mrs. Richards. I want to tell you how important GT is to me.

I started school at Peavine Elementary. In kindergarten, I felt like I had to physically hold myself back. For example, I wanted to write a whole sentence, but the rules said I could only write one letter. I was physically shaking trying to tell myself to stop. In first grade, I could loosen up a little bit. There were some challenges, but not much. In second grade, I learned the most so far in regular classes.

In second grade I was introduced to the GT program. I started with Power Hour and then I went to Pull-out with Mrs. Huntington. These were the most challenging experiences I had while I was at Peavine. I liked it even though it was frustrating at times.

In third grade, I went to SWAS. I had to wake up early to ride the bus one hour to and from school, but I didn't mind. I could sleep on the way home. I learned so much more! At school, I failed a little bit at first because my brain expected less work. Things were easy before. School was harder and I couldn't control my emotions. My teacher, Mrs. Bhatia, helped me calm down and taught me coping skills. I kept trying.

In GT, I have met a lot of people similar to me. It is nice to be on the same level and be able to ask for help from other students. I was always helping everyone before and didn't really get help from others. Even though I am the only one in class that is very emotional, I feel more comfortable expressing it in GT. I feel like people will help me and that they do not think less of me.

This year in distance learning, I still am learning a lot. My brain is still getting used to having harder work, but I am still getting support and being more challenged. We do meditation, music, PE, SEL, and art. I also have the support for my emotions from my mom.

I have made new friends this year, too! I wouldn't have met them unless GT existed. We are all from different SWAS schools. We play and work together.

In conclusion, GT has helped me a lot in school and in making relationships with people similar to me. I have a younger sister in kindergarten and she might qualify for GT, too. Please don't make any cuts to the GT program.

Sincerely,

Herschel

From: Arianne Sorreta
Sent: Sunday, January 24, 2021 9:41 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] WCSD Board Meeting - January 26, 2021 - 4.10 GT Concerns

I strongly disagree with the proposed cuts to the GATE program in agenda item 4.10. Claims of underutilization of this department and the programs it provides are false. We are already underserving this population with teachers and specialists already at a higher student to teacher ratios than is recommended for special education classes. Cutting these special education programs for our vulnerable population of highly intelligent students will be catastrophic for both their education and social and emotional needs. We need to safeguard these services for current and future GT identified students.

I am a parent of four children currently enrolled in WCSD. Three of them have been identified as GT and have participated or are currently enrolled in Peavine Pull-out, Caughlin Ranch SWAS, Clayton Magnet, and the Hug GATE Institute. Our kindergartner will most likely need these same services.

I am also a parent volunteer and have regularly taught classes in art, science, and robotics in mainstream, pull-out and SWAS elementary classes for the past 8 years. I have experienced the difference in these classes and how GT students change dramatically in both engagement and security when they are with GT certified instructors and peers. I seek out volunteer opportunities especially with GT kids. Working with the GT teachers has shown I can teach a subject matter particularly garnered to the learning style of GT kids while focusing on social and emotional needs. It is vastly different than when I teach in mainstream classes – both in expectations and teaching style.

I have seen how much these programs matter with my own eyes. I have worked with children across these settings and can tell you what a difference it makes to have a safe place where your interests are celebrated and encouraged, where you are stimulated and engaged, and where you are not isolated or relegated to a corner by both your teachers and your peers. GT certified teachers provide the environment needed for these highly intelligent children to thrive.

We had quite an experience with our eldest who is now a freshman in the Hug GATE Institute. In her early elementary years, she was scoring in the 98-99th percentile in MAPs. In third grade, she was in GT Pull-out. At the time, her teacher was not GT certified nor able to meet her needs. During a normal school day, she was relegated to a corner to read for HOURS because she was done with her work early. She was told to “not worry” about things she was interested in when she asked for more information. Disengagement occurred and her MAPs dropped to the 70th percentile! GT children are so empathetic and non-confrontive that we did not know what had happened until full disengagement occurred. Our GT teacher, Irene Huntington, helped guide us on our next steps to get her out of mainstream, retested, and into the SWAS program. Had we not had prior identification due to teacher nomination or the support of GATE, we would have been at a loss of what to do.

By 5th grade at Caughlin Ranch SWAS, she was scoring back at the 99th percentile. Her SWAS teachers kept her challenged and she was able to make lasting relationships with her peers. She learned not only lessons in academics, but life lessons that she practices today. She continued with

her education with three years at Clayton Magnet. It is a model of inclusivity. She especially thrived in the math program under Dr. Salls.

Our daughter is currently going to run out of math classes in the district at the pace that she is going. At the GATE Institute, they were able to be reactive and place her in the classes that would keep her fully engaged in her education with GT certified teachers that can adjust to her needs. I can think of no other program that could provide this and think it is truly a pinnacle of what GT education can and should be. Without GATE, our child would have been disengaged from school at THIRD grade and would not be able to thrive in a subject that girls are often shut out of.

To think that these services are underutilized or that there is not a need for them is simply not true. I have known kids that have applied to Magnet and were denied to due to space. It had a lasting negative effect on them. They are going through the motions of school, but when you ask them about it, you get answers of apathy and pessimism. I have seen bright children that don't make the cut due to changes in universal testing and no money to be tested privately. They are in mainstream classrooms with no support. Our SWAS teachers last year had high ratios of students to teachers - my son's class had 29 children to one teacher! Pull-out teachers have an even bigger challenge when going to different schools. They are met with different levels of support from administration and teachers while trying to provide an environment for GT identified kids to get enrichment, SEL and support in a mere 2.5 hours a week! Some parents and staff still don't understand this essential special education time for their children and treat it like it is a reward. It is not. Being GT does not automatically equal high achievement. Being GT is being born wired differently and needing a specific learning environment to grow and thrive into contributing adults in our society.

Cutting these programs would cause a devastating blow not only to our children currently receiving these essential services, but also to future GT students not yet identified. This population will fail. They will become the problem children in the classroom. They may not even make it to graduation. We need to keep these programs available for our highly intelligent children. For most GT students, this is the only path to success.

I implore you to observe any of these classes – both distance and in-person – to see the benefits of these programs in action. I would gladly talk to any of you in person, via zoom, or on the phone if you'd like to hear more of my unique perspective.

Please do not reduce these essential GT services. We should be investing in them, not reducing them.

Arianne

Arianne Sorreta

Reno, NV 89503

From: Vogel, Eli
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 7:26 AM
To: Public Comments
Cc:
Subject: SWAS comment

When I'm in my SWAS classroom, I know I can be myself. I always felt like "the nerd" in general education. SWAS lets me appreciate who I am, not always wanting to be someone else. This school year we learned about germination, fossils, order of operations, writing 5 paragraph essays, and much more. I'm not going to tell you not to cut anything, because that's completely unrealistic. But I am asking you to think about this when deciding what to cut, because that feeling is the best part of being in SWAS.

Thank you,
Eli Vogel
SWAS 3/4
CRES

From: Jorge Delgadillo
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 8:00 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Concerns with GATE funding

To whom it may concern,

As a father of two students who are a part of GATE, I would like to ask that the great benefits of this program be considered when deciding the distribution of funds. This program is essential to the development and success of these young minds in the future. Based on my children's education, I have seen firsthand the difference of a learning environment this program created for them and it would be disappointing to see this program downsized. Before being tested and admitted my children found themselves bored and unchallenged in their regular classrooms. The GATE program has allowed them to develop and make the most of their skills and talents. I hope that you take the opinions and concerns of many GT families with great consideration before making a decision that will severely impact the education of these students.

Best regards,
Jorge Delgadillo

From: Andrew Q
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 8:00 AM
To: BoardMembers; Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Regarding the GATE Institute

Dear Washoe County School District Board Members,

My name is Andrew Quispe, an alumni of Hug High School and the GATE Program. It is my understanding that recent legislation has been passed which may directly affect the GATE Program in a negative manner.

GATE (Gifted and Talented Education) is very important to me, and is to all high-achieving students alike, as well as all teachers and educators which work within the program helping students be challenged academically. It is because of this program that I was challenged academically for most of my school years. I have benefited from this program a great deal, such as having earned enough college credits (through AP classes) to make me a Junior in university, which would ultimately help me become an officer in the military much quicker than I could've imagined. Currently, I am enlisted in the Marine Corps (an institution I do not speak on behalf of) and have been able to do well for myself due to the professionalism and etiquette, especially in speech, taught by the GATE Institute. I would wish that these same outcomes can benefit several more students to come.

It is because of this that I write to you today, to the Board Members of my school district, including the president of the board, Angle Taylor, a previous alumni of the same high school I graduated from. I have fought alongside of the board for a new school on Wildcreek Golf Course, having made public comments in support during business meetings and the like. And now I am fighting to keep my program alive and thriving, a program I fully believe in and fully support. If Nevada as a state is to not rank near last in education, keeping these programs well-funded gives hope into bettering our state as a whole, and not just the county.

Thank you for taking the time to read this email, and I hope we can take keep the GATE Institute alive.

Sincerely,
Andrew Quispe

From:
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 8:00 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GT Budget Concerns

To whom it may concern,

My name is Jorge Delgadillo, and I am a student at Swope Middle School in the GT Magnet program. I appreciate the hard work of my teachers and have enjoyed being in this program compared to being in a normal classroom, where I feel like I am not learning or challenged enough. It would be greatly appreciated if you consider the opinion of my peers and I, since it will affect not only me but the other people in this program who also enjoy it. Downsizing the Gifted and Talented program would take away the opportunity for students to grow academically and be in an environment where they can succeed, which I think is the school district's responsibility to provide.

Sincerely,

Jorge Delgadillo

From: Riley Gillis
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 8:01 AM
To: BoardMembers; Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Agenda Item 4.10 – Comments From Riley Gillis

Good morning,

I am Riley Gillis, a student attending the GATE Institute at Hug High School and a prior SWAS and Magnet student. I am submitting this comment to not only warn, but beg you to not vote to approve the actions recommended in this agenda item (4.10). As a long-time participant and advocate for these Gifted And Talented Education programs, I can tell you first-hand how critical these are for not only individual growth of the students involved, but also the growth and well-being of our entire school district. GATE students are a different species of student that are truly special education. They do not function on the same level academically or socially as other students and as such require these programs to succeed. Anecdotally, I will tell you that these programs are invaluable. SWAS puts elementary school students who are eager to succeed in a realm of opportunity that truly challenges them, gives them more opportunity to grow than even high school or college courses (with individualized challenge, a plethora of accelerated subjects, and even challenges to non-academic skills (for example: public speaking through requirements of 15-20 minute memorized presentations, a challenging task that surpasses even advanced high school levels)). Most Magnet students will begin high school at higher levels of math than regular high schoolers graduate with (if given the opportunity at places like the GATE institute), and will enroll in 4 years (or 3 for social studies) of AP or college classes for each primary subject.

Objectively, the GATE institute and its pathway consistently produces students that attend the most prestigious universities of the entire world, oftentimes on full-ride scholarships. Whether it be Princeton University, Rice University, or even untraditional yet incredibly prestigious pathways like that of the United States Military Academy at West Point, the GATE institute at Hug High School performs time and time again, ensuring success of its students and bringing pride to the Washoe County School District.

Additionally, had I not participated in these programs I would certainly not be where I am today: at the top of my class tri-enrolled at the GATE institute, Health Science Academy, TMCC, president-elect and current Vice President of my Health Science Academy and HOSA chapter, treasurer of my National Honor Society, Regimental Sergeant Major of my JROTC regiment (in charge of around 200 students), Captain of our Raider Challenge (strength and agility training) mixed-team, a part of 2 varsity sports, a concert pianist working for several professional-level local and state orchestras, a student ambassador for a healthcare organization, just worked as the Program Coordinator for a local healthcare organization for ~9 months, and pursuing admission at Johns Hopkins and West Point upon graduation in 2022. I assure you this is not bragging, I see this as average compared to what I am around at the GATE institute; all of these students strive for success and are active in their community. These programs teach students like me to work hard and be active in our community. It is a unique experience for unique students who will only grow in specific environments. This k-12 pathway provides that environment as well as the intended outcomes.

The goal of this agenda item is to "ensure annual student academic growth," by approving this agenda item, the only thing that is ensured is that opportunities are wasted, futures are destroyed, and lives are decimated. Sinisterly, if these students are not challenged through these programs, they will lose interest and turn from the top scholars of America into high school dropouts. Even more disturbingly, I 100% believe that it will cost lives. These students have higher rates of depression and suicide, if one were to take away one of the only things that keeps us going, I am certain it would cost the lives of the greatest minds this district has to offer and suicide rates will increase among this population during these already low-morale times (referring to the COVID-19 pandemic). These students have a very special way of thinking that requires special attention from teachers k-12, not skipping grades or extra busy work from teachers that already have enough on their plates. These programs need more funding, not less, these above-average minds are the future of America; we need to foster their growth, not threaten their education. I understand that funding is a precarious and complex situation, but this is not the solution.

These students' lives are in your hands, it is up to you whether you will loosen your grasp and allow them to grow into the auspicious high achieving scholars they can be with these programs or tighten your hand, suffocating these programs and condemning their students to lives of misery and failure.

I hope you are able to see things from our perspective. Please choose wisely.
Thank you,

Riley Gillis

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Riley Gillis
Concert Pianist | Instructor
Reno, NV



From: Spencer Gillis
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 8:00 AM
To: BoardMembers; Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GATE Program Funding

Trustees,

I am writing this email, along with several of my classmates and current members of the GATE Institute to express my concern for item 4.10 on the board meeting taking place on 26JAN21.

My name is Spencer Gillis, and I graduated with the Hug High School class of 2019. I am a product of the GATE program. There is no doubt in my mind that the experiences afforded to me by the GATE program, beginning all the way back in second grade, have shaped me into the person I am today. I have participated in the GATE pull out program, SWAS program, the middle school magnet program, and most importantly, the GATE Institute. 13 years of my education so far were provided through the GATE program, so it would be unfair to claim that it has not had a serious and relevant impact on my life. I write to you now, however, in defense of these programs. Many times in the past budget cuts have been proposed. Some have experienced more success than others, but since middle school I have done my best to defend these programs and will continue to do so the rest of my life because I have seen firsthand that they are truly life changing.

I am currently studying mechanical engineering and a member of a D1 athletic program at a small public school on the Hudson. This college had been a dream of mine throughout high school, and although COVID has significantly impacted our operations, it remains my proudest achievement. I strongly believe that the primary contributing factor, outside of having parents invested in my education, would be the GATE programs, and in particular, the GATE Institute. I am a member of the second class to graduate from the GATE Institute, so in reality, I have only experienced it in its infancy. Myself, along with many of my classmates, have seen our dreams come true and continue to excel every day because of the foundation that was developed in high school. The GATE Institute provided us with more than just the option of taking more advanced classes than any other high school in the district, it also did so at no expense to our access to the activities that often define our high school experiences. Did the differential equations course I was able to take help foster an interest in math and engineering, and reinforce the idea that I wanted to study engineering? Absolutely. Did the Capstone program expose me to college level writing and open my eyes to the complexity of research? Most definitely. But when I think of high school, I think of the athletic programs I was able to participate in, the band trips and concerts, the leadership challenges I faced in JROTC and NHS... the courses I took were certainly important, and have helped accelerate my education to levels that would have otherwise been inaccessible to me, but the experience would just not be the same without the ability to live life as a high schooler for four years. The challenges placed in front of me by the curriculum, in combination with the experiences and opportunities to grow that I had through participation in extracurriculars, not only made me a better and more educated person, but they also earned me a ticket into my top choice of college - one which has changed the course of my life forever. Mr. Thigpen... I think it would be appropriate to mention here that the GATE programs offer more than just the ability to accelerate education. As you are probably aware, gifted students are oftentimes 'quirky' and do not always fit in with their other classmates, and are frequently subject to ostracism at a young age. GATE programs group together these kids, who think alike and act alike, and provide them with a social environment that makes them feel comfortable with themselves and comfortable at school. These programs are where I made lifelong friends, and that experience is concurrent with many others who go through these programs.

The journey to my own personal success did not start there, however. Since second grade I have been a member of the GATE program, and this accordingly set me up for success at the GATE Institute. After a couple years of participating in the pull out program, I was in SWAS through sixth grade after which I went to the magnet program at Mendive. These

experiences, for myself as well as hundreds of other students, have led us into and prepared us for the most competitive high school programs in the district. To my dismay, however, many of my peers chose not to attend the GATE Institute. This was for many reasons, but the primary two are as follows. For one, like I have already mentioned, I went through this program in its infancy. Even though I was the second graduating class, many of the methods used today were tested out on us (but the program continues to adapt). Many of my peers as well as their parents were concerned that it didn't have the structure necessary to create successful students, so opted for the tried and proven IB program or AACT. I think it has since become somewhat obvious that the GATE Institute is miles ahead of any other program in the district when it comes to providing opportunities for its students to excel, but unsurprisingly, there is still hesitation from many families about sending their students there. This is because the other reason, the one I suspect held many parents back, is that Hug has a false reputation that is perpetuated throughout the school district, within communities of students, parents, and teachers. I know that I need not inform any of you about this, or that many of the rumors and myths about Hug are not indeed true (as climate surveys every year prove), but the reality is, this has hindered the recruitment process for the GATE Institute.

When I heard about the new school being built, I again showed up with my classmates to convince the board that this was a necessary improvement for the Hug community. I care very deeply about Hug as well, and I know that this school will make a positive change in the lives of many in the Hug community. Dr. Taylor, Mrs. Minetto, and Mrs. Calvert, I know that you are all too familiar with the current state of Hug's facilities, and I know you will also agree with me as fellow Hug alumni that the children in the Hug community deserve better than that. Even more importantly than the improvements of the actual school, though, I hope that the new location and mix of populations from several schools will help dispel the Hug myth. As a result, I believe that this will be the first time that the GATE Institute is given a fair chance at success, and I'm excited to see what it will accomplish. But it won't be able to accomplish anything if it is phased out, and one of the best attractions at the school will be nothing more than a faded memory of a time when the school district did its best to provide for all students.

Many of us writing to you today no longer have any skin in the game. We all graduated. Very few of us have siblings in the program. A good portion of us may never even live in Reno again. What we do know though, is that the GATE Institute is something truly special. The college I attend has some of the greatest geographic diversity in the nation. Students attend from all 50 states, and more than 1 in 80 students are from other countries. I have not heard of a single program that is even comparable to the GATE Institute. I have no doubt that similar institutions exist, however, they are few and far between and for a state that is consistently ranked among the bottom three in the country for public k-12 this is an organization to be proud of. There have only been three years of graduates thus far, but I have no doubt in my mind that each and every one will go on to do something great, largely due to the GATE Institute. THAT is why we are writing. We have been fortunate enough to be granted this opportunity, and we feel that it is our duty to ensure that same opportunity is granted to other kids like us. It is far too easy to see high achieving students and forget that they need a specialized education to reach their maximum potential. Many gifted students will falter in generalized education. When school becomes boring, when a child is not challenged by the work he or she receives, and when they inevitably lose the motivation to learn, then their schooling has failed them. These children need an accelerated program to stay engaged in their education, and quite frankly, many of these children will eventually grow up to have massive contributions to their society far greater than what it cost the state government to educate them. Cut that education short, or fail to provide it at all, and at best you have an unfinished product.

We write to you because we acknowledge that these children matter. They matter to far more than us or even their families, though. They matter to society. Every time one of these GATE programs is cut or downsized, children are cheated out of the education that they not only need, but deserve. This population may be small, but take note of the amount of response you are getting today. For the few that this would impact, it means a great deal to them. Several of us are writing to you even though we were already able to squeeze by and luckily dodge every dagger pointed at the heart of the GATE programs! If nothing else, consider the funding required to educate a gifted student an investment. As with any student, the money spent on a child's education will eventually make its way back into that child's community. I know that none of you want to make budget cuts, and I am aware that GATE students fall outside of the acceptable range for per pupil funding. I am also aware that it would be naive to suggest a particular course of action to remedy the situation here, but I am no stranger to bureaucracy. Naturally, as somebody employed by the largest employer in the

entire world, I have already seen my fair share of situations where it seems impossible to accomplish something that should be very straightforward and easy. I have also seen that there is ALWAYS a solution, and I trust that you all will find one. Mr. Church, our experiences in the military are probably very different thus far, but I know that you will understand as a former O-5 the importance of looking out for the welfare of your subordinates, or in this case, your constituents. Ending any of these programs would cause a cascade of effects for several children that could include repeating 2+ years of their education before they start learning anything new. Mr. Caudill, this may seem somewhat removed from your sphere of influence but many of your constituents will be moving to the new high school soon so this impacts them greatly.

If nothing else, take note of the magnitude of responses from parents, current students, and alumni of the GATE program. I think you would be hard pressed to find any other k-12 program in the nation that has such a significant portion of its former students coming back to defend it. If there is anything else we can do to secure the future of young gifted students' education, let us know... we aren't ready to back down.

Very respectfully,
Spencer Gillis

From: Ana Delgadillo
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 8:03 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GATE Concerns

To whom it may concern:

Hello, I am Ana Delgadillo, and I am a part of the GATE Institute's graduating class of 2020. I was first introduced to the GATE program in 6th grade where I participated in the Maxwell Elementary School pull-out program, I later moved on to Swope Middle School Magnet, and finally the GATE Institute at Hug high school.

I have nothing to say but wonderful things about my experience as a GATE student, this program created an environment that allowed me to thrive as a student, an opportunity I did not find in a regular classroom. While I am no longer a student in this school district, I am still concerned for the future of the GATE program because it had a huge impact on my education. My younger brother is a part of Magnet at Swope Middle School and has plans to attend the GATE Institute for high school. I'm extremely grateful for the academic opportunities GATE provided for me and I'm 100% certain that I would not be where I am today without it. I want my brother and the many students who are a part of this wonderful program to experience it to its full potential. They have worked hard to achieve what they have and deserve the opportunity to be in an environment that allows them to thrive.

The Washoe County School District prides themselves in their motto, "Every Child, By Name And Face, To Graduation", I believe that in order to uphold this statement the GATE program must be a priority when considering the distribution of funds. Gifted and talented students in this school district, just like all students should be given the opportunity to be a part of a learning environment that allows them to grow and develop their skills and strengths in their path towards graduation. It is no secret that every student has a unique way of learning and that educators try their best to accommodate for different learning styles. The GATE program has been one of the best investments this school district has made because it has done just that, the program allows for students to study at their level and develop skills that would otherwise stay dormant in a regular classroom.

The GATE program is not just helpful to students in an academic aspect, it provides a well-rounded school experience for students that aids in preparing them for the real world. The uniqueness of GATE is that students receive a fully comprehensive school experience, while still attending classes that are at their level and taught by teachers endorsed in gifted and talented education. This education model has been nationally recognized and shows that WCSD has been taking steps in the right direction. It would be disheartening to see this progress gone in a matter of years simply because its overwhelming benefits were not taken into consideration. I firmly believe that GATE is making a significant impact on the success of many GT students as well as the overall future education this district will provide. I sincerely hope the success and benefits of this program are taken into consideration when carefully deliberating the future of GATE.

Very respectfully,
Ana Delgadillo

From: Ana Macias
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 8:05 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GATE Funding

To whom it may concern,

My name is Ana Macias, I am the parent of two children who have the great opportunity to be in the GATE program; with the recent discussions about the future funding for this program I would like to express my concern for how the possible changes could impact the education of students in GT. Because of the GATE program my children have been able to have a full day of classes that challenge them, and most importantly that they love. I worry that if not enough funds are allocated for this program GT students will suffer tremendously. The GATE program allows students to grow academically by creating an environment where they can interact with like-minded peers. I saw the frustration of my children when they were in their regular classes because they were not able to learn at their pace. GATE made a difference in their education because it allowed them to thrive. I hope that these concerns are taken into consideration when discussing a decision that could impact the education and future of these bright kids enormously.

Sincerely,
Ana Macias

From: Vogel, Calista
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 8:09 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: GT Magnet Comment

To whom it may concern,

I moved to Reno for second grade and was part of the general curriculum (with some GT time once a week) until joining magnet at Swope Middle School in sixth grade. As part of the GT community, I have been provided with teachers who will go the extra mile to make sure that their students understand the concepts being taught, contrary to what I found outside of the program. Being in Magnet surrounds me by like-minded students who want to accel and grow which makes my personal school experience enjoyable. It has come to my attention that the gifted and talented program's funding could be reduced, but I ask that you consider the resources necessary to make GT teaching/learning effective.

Calista Vogel
Swope Middle School
Magnet, 7th grade

From: NATALIE Vogel
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 8:14 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GATE parent comment

To the Board,

I understand you have the impossible task of managing a large state deficit. I write to let you know how important the GATE program is to my family. I am a physician, as is my husband, and we both practice in this community. We believe in public schools and feel very lucky to have found the GATE program. Unlike the schools we attended as kids in Massachusetts and California, our children were tested to see if they might belong in the WCSD GATE program. Our daughter was tested a year after we moved here and enjoyed the pull-out GT curriculum alongside her general education classroom. Our son joined the SWAS 3/4 classroom in 3rd grade and is now in 4th grade. Our daughter is now at Swope Middle School in the Magnet program.

I cannot overly emphasize how much they are THRIVING. Although they enjoyed school prior to these experiences, they are now being educated rather than helping to educate the other kids in their classroom. The curriculum matches their interests and learning speed, unlike what they experienced previously. Given large classrooms in a large district, they were appreciated but not attended to in the general education classroom, understandably. Socially, they feel much less isolated.

I do understand that perhaps the GATE parents and students are better able to advocate for their needs than parents in other parts of the Special Education curriculum. Given that, I hope you are able to balance the cuts you are forced to make in an equitable way across programs. I care about all the kids in our community.

Thank you,
Natalie Vogel, MD, FAAP

From: Sharon Cabangon
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 8:22 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Proposed Cut to GT services

Dear Board Members,

As a GT math teacher, I am disappointed in the upcoming agenda item 4.10:

4.10 PRESENTATION, DISCUSSION, AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO APPROVE THE DEPARTMENT OF GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION PROGRAMS (GATE) PROPOSED CHANGES TO PROGRAMMING INCLUDING: USE OF GIFTED AND TALENTED (GT) ITINERANT TEACHERS, SCHOOL WITHIN A SCHOOL (SWAS), MIDDLE SCHOOL MAGNET PROGRAMS, THE GT INSTITUTE AT PROCTER R. HUG HIGH SCHOOL, AND THE GT DEPARTMENT (FOR POSSIBLE ACTION)

More specifically, the recommendations brought forth:

SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDATION: That the Board of Trustees approves the proposed changes for Fiscal Year 2022 to the Gifted and Talented Department and proposed changes to Gifted and Talented services including; relocation of School within a School (SWAS) programming to one elementary school, reduction of the Middle School Magnet Program, reduction of two GT itinerant staff, and phasing out the GT Institute at Procter R. Hug High School beginning in Fiscal Year 2023.

The students that are identified as GT deserve better than this. The reduction of sites and services will impact the equity and diversity of the program. This will also impact the ability of teachers in our district to support GT students all over the district. The support students get from their GT certified teachers is invaluable. We aren't just pushing them further in content, we are challenging them to think deeper. We aren't just assigning them menial tasks to keep them busy, we are allowing them to explore their passions to change their world. We aren't just monitoring them, we are helping them see the value in executive functioning skills so that they can be successful for their lifetime. Our students are supported in ways most people don't realize they need to be.

All students who are identified as gifted and talented deserve to be given the services that best match their needs. With fewer sites and fewer teachers, how will this be accomplished? How will this change the equity and diversity of the program? So many strides have been taken to increase the equity and diversity of the program, we should not be taking steps backwards.

I implore you to take a deeper look at how these cuts to our program will affect the students, families and community that we serve.

Sincerely,
Sharon Cabangon

From: Cathy Hollomon
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 9:19 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GATE Institute Funding

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on agenda item 4.10 of the January 26, 2021, Washoe County School Board of Trustees meeting.

I would like to go on record stating that I am against any future cuts to or the elimination of the GATE Institute at Procter R. Hug High School. This Institute provides very important programs that not only benefit the students but our community as well. I might add that the constant threat of funding cuts to this Institute serves as a deterrent to families enrolling children in the program. Please vote to ensure that necessary funding is provided to this very important Institute.

Thank you,
Cathy Hollomon
Reno, NV

From:
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 9:41 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] New Attndence issue

Hi my name is Carol Tyler and I have two kids in the Washoe county school district. The reason for this email I was informed on Friday January 22 2021 that my kindergarten son has a attendance issue. Every time he has been absent I have sent in doctor's note because he has chronic asthma and has missed a few days of school and the dean of students said he is absenteeism. She also sent me a link with the student absent rules stating that none of those absent are excused and the attendance policy has changed. My question is why weren't the parents notified of said change.?. I then read through the policy and it's contradicting because it also states if u bring in a note or verbal excuse then it will not count against the student. Also my son has speech therapy at a private facility every other week and I take him out of school early and the dean said those absent are excused because he has a iep but when I enrolled my son I brought in doctor's note and his medical equipment for his asthma. So how can one be excused but not the other? Can u please clarify this issue for me because the dean of students at his school has no answers.

Thank you for your time

A concerned parent

Carol A Tyler

From: Kelly Li
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 9:46 AM
To: Public Comments; BoardMembers
Cc: kelly.li1979; Bill Jackson
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Concerns about the cuts to GT in Agenda item 4.10

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing in response to the discussion of reducing or removing Gifted and Talented (GT) services. My son, Daniel Jackson, is a 7th grader in the Clayton Magnet program and my daughter, Sonia Jackson, is to attend the Caughlin Ranch SWAS program next school year. I am very concerned about the cuts to GT in Agenda item 4.10 in the upcoming school board meeting.

Equity issue in closing the Magnet program at Clayton Middle School: Closing the site at Clayton is an "Equity" issue. Clayton Magnet program is the most diverse even though it is small. Most students attending the Clayton Magnet program are zoned for Clayton Middle School. Closing this site will leave these gifted Middle School students little chance to receive GT services due to the issue of transportation to other Magnet sites. These gifted students are a vulnerable group and require special education! My son told me that the Magnet program at Clayton Middle School is a good program. This program keeps him challenged by offering a more advanced curriculum and the teachers at Clayton Middle School are wonderful and knowledgeable teachers and know how to keep the gifted students engaged. So, please don't close the Magnet site at the Clayton Middle school.

Reducing SWAS to 1 location will not work well for the gifted Elementary Students around

Reno/Sparks/Verdi: Considering the reduction of SWAS staffing from 7 to 3-4 teachers, reducing the number of SWAS schools from 3 to 1 will result in fewer gifted students getting admitted to the SWAS program. Therefore, some profoundly gifted students will NOT receive the appropriate GT services. Again, transportation may be a significant issue; how will bus transportation work if all the SWAS program students need transportation to a single SWAS site? Will buses and bus drivers be delegated to the SWAS program students?

Please do not reduce GT services. Gifted students need the GT-appropriate services at the proper locations.

Best Regards,

Kelly Li

From: Melanie Lahren
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 9:55 AM
To: Public Comments; BoardMembers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Reduction in GATE Funding and Programs

Dear Board of Trustees,

My daughter is currently taking part in the GATE Magnet program at Sky Ranch Middle School. It has come to my attention that this program is danger of being reduced in some capacity due to budget cuts. While I appreciate that deciding where to make cuts within the school district is a difficult task and I don't envy your position, I would ask that you please reconsider making reductions to this program.

GT is a form of Special Education. As such, this form of Special Education should be regarded in the same manner as any other form of Special Education. These children need to be challenged and in a place where they feel safe and understood, both by teachers who have been trained to work with highly intelligent students and by other students who relate to and understand them.

If my daughter is asked to leave Sky Ranch Middle School, as she is not zoned to attend here without the Magnet Program, it will be the second time she's been removed from a GT program in the past two years by the district and the fourth time she's been required to change schools, both to attend and to be removed from a GT program. This is not healthy for a child to have to continue to feel unsettled and that she'll be asked once again to change settings, curriculum and friends.

Gifted children are not only very bright, but they oftentimes have deep emotions, as well. They don't always do well with change and general education teachers don't always know how to help them succeed. My daughter has been made to clean classrooms and teach classmates because she has sped through her assigned work in a traditional classroom setting. General education teachers sometimes feel that they need to pile on extra work, rather than giving them meaningful, challenging work. The wonderful teachers in the Magnet and SWAS Programs cater to the students' needs in a way no other teachers can.

These children need to be seen and fought for just as much as anyone else in the district. It feels as though they are first to be reviewed when budget cuts are necessary because they already meet and exceed educational standards. They're important, too, and their complete well-being needs to be considered.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Melanie Lahren

From: Stephanie Lee
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 10:10 AM
To: Public Comments; Heidi.Gansert@sen.state.nv.us; Teresa.BenitezThompson@asm.state.nv.us
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GT in Washoe County School District

Hello. I have heard there is discussion of reducing or removing GT services in the upcoming school board meeting.

I'm highly concerned. Agenda item 4.10 shows drastic cuts to GT in all of these areas.

- Middle School Magnet Programs as a topic doesn't say what's being considered. From the other points in the same agenda item, I'm guessing it means a reduction of services or closing of a site. Again, usage shows there's a need here. Closing sites doesn't fit that.

For these changes, there is no upside, no alternative - it is just a budget reduction.

The discussed changes would gut GT in the district. This will severely affect these bright, hard working, and difficult to teach kids. Mainstreaming GT students reduces their engagement and highly increases the ask of their teachers - many of which don't bother. Most teachers either sideline them, make them unofficial student teachers, or throw busy work at them until they stop asking. These students require high engagement from their teachers, and frankly our educators are, in general, not trained to teach them and do not have the time or energy to make their learning successful.

This also doesn't talk about the loss of some of the most talented teachers in the district. They work hard for these kids and are a benefit to all the other teachers they work with. Reduction here is a further brain drain on our educators right when we need them more than ever. How many mainstream remote classes are leaning on materials and training from GT right now? Our best remote teachers are from GT and we would be lost without them.

A student identified as GT does not mean they are better. It doesn't mean they should just be in a higher grade. Their needs are not solely academic; they also have mental and social needs that are 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. When cuts like these are proposed, it feels to me like those making the decisions do not understand the consequences of not having GT.

These students, these teachers, and these programs are an integral part of our school district and should be treated as such.

Please do not reduce GT services. We should be investing in these programs, not reducing them.

Credit to Jeremy Murray for most of these points - thank you for assisting us advocating as parents.

-Stephanie Lee
Parent and Constituent
Golden Valley, Nevada

From: Rebekah Mayne
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 10:17 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GT Education Funds

Dear Board Members,

My name is Rebekah, and I am in the GATE program at Hug.

I wanted to share my experience with you.

I didn't join GT education until my freshman year when I came to the Hug GATE program. Before then I had bounced around public and charter schools attempting to find a good fit, and kept encountering the same problem, the teachers couldn't give me the level of engagement I needed.

In third grade I had placed too high in math and so while everyone else did normal 3rd math, I was given a workbook of 5th grade math, and told to go through it on my own. Being left to learn on my own made it so that when I didn't understand something I would just skip it, a habit I didn't break for many years. My teacher didn't have the time to help me, she had over 30 other students that needed more help.

This became a pattern throughout schools. And in more classes than not, I was either given new material with no instruction, or was left to do whatever I wanted to. This absolutely wasn't any of my teachers' fault either, the school system wasn't set up in a way they could feasibly help me, and even then, many still tried to help as much as they could.

It wasn't until freshman year, in the GATE program, when I finally was engaged. It was the hardest year I had ever had, teachers didn't just let me read or do something by myself, they had the ability to focus in and make sure I was learning. I honestly didn't like it at first, it was hard and I was frustrated with not automatically getting things and being pushed to keep trying. But it was the best thing for me, and I've grown so much because of it.

Without the GATE program, I wouldn't be in the same place I am today. Because of the GATE program I have a clear path for my future, and I feel prepared to be able to work hard for what I want. Something that wouldn't have been as possible for me without the experience GT learning has given me.

The GT programs are incredibly important, and you would be taking away the opportunity to be able to learn for many people if you cut the funding.

Please consider my experience and opinion, and the experiences and opinions of others before you take away very important resources for many students.

Thank you for your time.

From: Kasey Reisinger
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 10:52 AM
To: BoardMembers; Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] A Former Students Perspective on the Longevity of the Gate Institute

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you to ask that the GATE institute is not terminated. It was the best experience I had in my entirety of education and inspired me to follow my career into being a teacher. I would not be achieving as high as I am in college if I did not have this wonderful resource. A rigorous program to keep students interested in school is essential and we should be expanding its reach, not contemplating getting rid of it. Please reconsider getting rid of this program which provides an education I will be eternally grateful for. The teachers and students were the most passionate I ever met. The effort being put in to create a wonderful learning environment is too rich and important to get rid of. As a previous student of the institute, I do not know where I would be without the program and I fear for the students who would miss out on one of the most impactful life experiences out there right now. Thank you!

With gratitude,
Kasey Reisinger

From: Hollie Perocho
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 12:29 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In regards to GATE funding cuts

Dear WCSD Board,

As a parent of twin highly gifted children in the CRES SWAS distance learning classroom, I am writing to express my concerns for potential future funding cuts towards the GATE programs. I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to volunteer in my daughters' classrooms since they were in kindergarten throughout second grade. My daughters' have had wonderful teachers throughout K-2 in general education that always went above and beyond to keep them both engaged and motivated in class. However, hearing and seeing them in their *first* year in their SWAS distance learning classroom, I can visibly see that the SWAS program keeps them considerably more engaged, motivated and *challenged*, something they haven't ever been granted by no fault of their previous general education teachers. The girls love their SWAS learning and it has been the least restrictive environment in terms of learning and growing into their gifted selves and they should continue to be given the opportunities to do so. Further cuts into staffing and locations make it harder for students such as my girls to thrive in an environment that is best suited for them. Also, it would be amiss to not mention that before they were in the SWAS program, they also benefitted from the GT pull out program with Mr. Burkhouse last year. Mr. Burkhouse inspired and engaged the girls and it became one of their favorite times during the year.

Thank you for considering my concerns.

Sincerely,
Hollie Meier
3rd grade SWAS parent (CRES-distance learning curriculum)

From: Jared Lu
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 12:32 PM
To: BoardMembers; Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GT Program comment

Hello, I am Jared Lu.

I am also a former student of the GATE Institute at Hug high school and I would like to voice some concerns and opinions. GT is getting smaller and this is obviously bad, especially since it's the early and middle stages of the program if you follow it all the way through. Having gone through GT's Pull-Out program, Magnet, SWAS, and the GATE institute, I can say that without the larger scope that these programs cover, I would have had less opportunity for a better K-12 education. The importance of K-12 education cannot be argued against, since it is so early in life and establishes all the habits and schedules we eventually follow later in life. So I urge the board members today to make sure they make a decision knowing full well that they can affect the education of hundreds of children that need this program.

Thank you.

From: AJ Salvato
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 1:16 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GATE program Incline Village children

Dear Board Members:

I am writing to you because you are voting on the GATE program. My son, and many other children, are currently enrolled in the GATE program in the Incline Village Schools.

This participation is vital in their education. Cutting the program from Incline Village would be devastating. It is not feasible for these children to be driven to Reno for classes.

Please consider this when voting. Thank you!

Aldo Salvato

From: Thane Houghton
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 1:28 PM
To: BoardMembers; Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Regarding Item 4.10 of Today's Board Meeting

To whom it may concern,

It has come to my attention that Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) programs may come under serious jeopardy due to new legislation discussed in item 4.10 of today's board meeting. While it will no longer directly benefit me to continue the program, as a former Gifted and Talented student pursuing higher education in Nevada I strongly contend that all Washoe County GATE programs should remain in their current form at all institutions, and the GATE Institute should transfer from the old to new Procter Hug high school location once construction is finished, rather than disbanded.

Gifted and Talented Education is without a doubt among the most positively influential parts of me and many others' upbringing. Without it, I know I would be worse off in both my educational pursuits and in my relations with others. While the changes discussed would not entirely dismantle GATE in Washoe county, it would certainly make it far less accessible to many. This is a crime considering how beneficial these programs can be to eager students who would receive support and accelerated education to better suit their needs, students who may miss out on these opportunities due to not being able to reach a school with a GATE program in place. Additionally, each student requires only a small amount more funding than what is already recommended per pupil. It is unjustifiable not to have these programs in place or to cut them down from their current size, seeing as they help propel forward and enrich the lives of future leaders, doctors, lawyers, educators, and Nevadans.

I beg you to reconsider, and to ensure current and future gifted children will receive the education and support that will benefit them to give back to Nevada later down the road.

Best regards,

Thane Houghton

From: Teresa Benitez
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 1:57 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment for Item Agenda Item 4.10 on 1-26-21

Dear Trustees,

We are parents of three children who are currently enrolled in GATE programs. We have one child in S.W.A.S and two in the middle school Magnet programs; 7th and 8th grade respectively. We count ourselves lucky to have these programs for our children. We believe in public education's ability to serve all children, and our experience supports that belief because of the G.A.T.E programs.

We understand budget constraints are forcing this conversation to occur. However, we ask the Trustees to delay this item until the upcoming legislative session ends. The Governor's recommended budget restores the funding for gifted and talented students that was cut during the 31st Special Session. Delaying the decision until summer 2021 will allow the board to work with actual vs projected figures, including restored funding.

We want to encourage the Board of Trustees and Superintendent to continue the G.A.T.E Programs with the following considerations:

1. Maintain multiple SWAS sites. Consolidating the SWAS program to 1 location is not supported by the heat map data. The heat map provided to Trustees as the last meeting supports the current location of SWAS school sites. The heat map data makes an argument for an additional site in the Northeast area.

2. Do not end the high school GATE program at Hug High School. This program alone continues the educational trajectory established in the middle school magnet program. The students are not well served by alternative programs, such as dual credit or CTE programs. These students will be enrolling into universities who do not value community college credits in the same way we Nevadans do. The alternative programs are not merit based, so there is no guarantee this population of children will have access to them. We will most likely have to seek out educational programs outside of WCSD to meet our children's needs.

Thank you for your time, and for considering our input,
Teresa Benitez-Thompson and Jeff Thompson

From: Renee Fox
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 3:42 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Gate Institute

Why were parents not informed about the closing on the GATE institute? Why wasn't the public made aware of this program downsizing? the GATE Institute is not like other programs (IB, CTE, etc). They have specialized classes that aren't offered at the other high schools and a different math and English pathway. They have a unique English sequence that incorporates AP Capstone Seminar and Research so they get English credit for those 2 classes junior and senior year. It's also the only high school level integrated math option for kids on that pathway out of magnet. Many teachers at Hug completed their GATE endorsements and they cluster the kids in the same sections for AP classes whenever possible. They are also able to work out very unique schedules to accommodate dual credit classes.

Ilo,

I am writing to you to express my shock and concern on hearing that the school board is even considering cutting the GT program to almost non existent. My two sons... Haiden who is in 8th grade and Hunter who is in 6th grade both attend Clayton middle school in the GT program. Haiden just learned that with his exceptional grades and MAP scores he was accepted to the GATE institute next year! Now imagine the tears and questions I got when I told them it all might go away... just to save some money. My boys have FLOURISHED in the GT programs, in both elementary and middle school settings. They have found a love for learning, for challenging themselves... they have found friends who are like minded and made bonds over learning and extra curricular ties. Haiden used to read alone on the playground ALONE... EVERYDAY in elementary school because he was the "weird smart kid" .. but when he was in the GT program.. he blossomed into a confident young man. Now the district is punishing the highest achieving students they have.. dangling the "new HUG high school" in their faces.. only to strip it away from them. This year has been incredibly challenging on them already... don't take away the only place they feel comfortable to learn and express themselves and challenge themselves!! I am writing to you because when I voted for you... I voted because I knew you would stand up for the students.. and not give in to the political smoke screens that so many fall to. I'm writing to you... no I'm BEGGING YOU PLEASE DO NOT TAKE GT AWAY FROM OUR SPECIAL POPULATION OF STUDENTS.. would you take away rights from IEP STUDENTS?? From students with special needs.. learning disabilities.. then why the gifted ones? They need stability and security just as much as any other students.

Please be then change I saw in you when I voted for you.

Renee Fox

Second grade teacher at Sarah Winnemucca Elementary school

Sent from my iPhone

From: Beverly Philpott
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 3:45 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GATE

I am writing this letter to try and reverse the proposal to defund this program. I am a retired educator (37 years), and I have seen every possible scenario when it comes to meeting the needs of gifted children. SWAS, Magnet, and the Institute are very wonderful programs. My two grandsons have both benefited so much from being involved. I volunteered in their elementary classrooms, and I have witnessed first hand the difference experiencing higher level thinking can make in a child's life. Please consider all possible avenues to maintain and I would hope improve GATE. Are there grants available? There might be foundations that would step up for our kids. Don't just throw this away. Sincerely. Mrs Beverly Philpott. Sparks

[Sent from Yahoo Mail Friday or iPhone](#)

From: Martin, Melody
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 4:00 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Letter in Support of EL and GT Teaching Positions

To Whom it May Concern;

I am in fervent support of our EL programs in WCSD and as well in the state of Nevada. These second language speakers and their regular classroom teachers need the support of trained educators in the EL programs to help with the learning of English. This is especially true since the new ELA series, Benchmark, didn't include the purchase of any books or materials that align with the series. EL teachers work daily to scaffold and support not only the education of second language students, but we also coach and support their classroom teachers too, through reiteration of daily lessons taught. I have time to coach and work through lessons with key concepts using strategies that regular classroom teachers just often don't, or can't as they are not licensed as language specialists. We need EL teachers in our highly transient district who educate so many children from many different countries and diverse backgrounds and whose parents work in the hospitality industry or as educators at UNR. Please do not vote to end this program nor the GT program that challenges our most gifted students. If that happened it would certainly be considered as reverse discrimination. Our GT students need that special time to explore the different curricula that challenges our brightest students many of whom will be the inventors of our future.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Yours truly,
Melody Martin

Melody Martin, M. Ed.
EL Teacher, Donner Springs Elementary

From: Hollyh
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 4:07 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] No cuts to GT

To Whom it May Concern,

I would like to formally comment on my opposition to the proposed cuts to the GT programs in the Washoe County School District. Both of my children are enrolled in this program and it would be an incredible loss to their learning if it were to be eliminated or funding were to be reduced. This program is a place where they can be with their peers and thrive. Many school districts nation-wide treat GT with the same status as special education. These students need differentiated instruction. We should be supporting and challenging our most capable students who might not otherwise meet their full potential in the future. Supporting these students benefits all of us. Please do not reduce funding to these programs.

Thank you, Holly Hemming

Dear Washoe County School board,

Hi, my name is Lola Skroch, and I am a GT student. Ever since I was little, I was that kid in then back of the classroom. The kid who knew the answer to every question, the kid that was always done with their work first. Everything that the teachers taught I already knew. Once I was done with my work, I was often given extra worksheets or was a tutor. People that were regular ED were often teasing me because I was smart. When I got into the Magnet, everything changed. I was not the smartest kid in the class, and I was often challenged. No one in my class teased me or called me a Nerd. I am among people who understand what it is like to be different. The magnet program helps me connect with people who understand what I am going through. My Teacher Mrs. Roberts or Mrs. Is the most wonderful teacher in the world. Not only does she challenge me in multiple academic areas, but she also pushes me to be better. The magnet program helps me to prepare for success. I will be able to take more advanced courses. In some cases, I would be able to graduate high school with an associate degree. The Magnet program helps educate tomorrows leaders. Without the Magnet program I will be put back into a normal ED class with everyone else. Please reconsider cutting the Clayton Magnet Program.

Sincerely,

Lola Skroch

From: John Michela
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 5:37 PM
To: Public Comments; Church, Jeffrey; Minetto, Ellen; Caudill, Andrew B; Thigpen, Kurt L; Taylor, Angela; Calvert, Jacqueline M; Nicolet, Diane M
Subject: [EXTERNAL] January 26, 2021 Agenda Item 4.10 (SWAS & GATE)

To Whom it May Concern:

We are writing to you to oppose consolidating the School Within a School (SWAS) to one elementary school and the elimination of GATE high school program.

We are the parents of a 3rd grader in the SWAS program at Hunsberger Elementary. The SWAS program is exactly what he needs. He is challenged both by the curriculum presented in his SWAS class and by his SWAS class mates who are all at least as smart as he is. We also appreciate that the Hunsberger SWAS program is not too far from Double Diamond Elementary, where he is zoned. Its proximity makes it much easier for us to accommodate what he needs to effectively learn to his abilities.

We think this accommodation is fair and reasonable. To the best of our knowledge, every other student with special needs, whether it be ESL, an IEP, or other special need, is accommodated at the school where the student is zoned. Our SWAS students' special needs are just as important as other students' special needs. As such, we ask that the accommodation of three SWAS elementary schools be continued.

Additionally, we ask that none of the other reductions, such as the elimination of the GATE high school be adopted.

Taking care of all students with special needs is important. The least you can do is maintain the current accessibility of programs for our SWAS students' special needs and enable them to continue learning to the best of their abilities.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

John and Alicia Michela

Monday, January 25, 2021

Washoe County Board of Trustees
425 East Ninth Street
Reno, NV 89510

Dear Trustees,

I write concerning Agenda Item 4.10 of the upcoming January 26, 2020, meeting. I am a parent to 3 GT students, one a 2018 graduate and two who are still students in the District. I have been involved with the GT community in Reno for almost a decade. I was a member of the Gifted and Talented Advisory Council (GTAC), a group of parents and teachers who worked alongside the GT Administration to improve accessibility and promote a widening of the GT Program¹. I participated in group planning sessions with Superintendent Martinez, who advocated for an expansion of the program. Following the expulsion of Superintendent Martinez and a turnover of the GT Program's Administrator, GTAC was no longer welcome to interact with the staff of the GT Program. Instead, GT Program leadership created the Gifted and Talented Advisory Panel (GTAP); I was a volunteer member of GTAP in its inaugural year of 2016.

For over six years, the District has overseen the steady contraction of the GT Program. I believe the shrinking of the program was intentional and is a direct result of the District's sole reliance on computer-based testing for entry into the GT Program. Even the National Association of Gifted Children advocates, "Tests are common assessment tools for identification, but should not serve as the sole source of identification. Tests often exclude underserved gifted students who are English Language Learners (ELLs), disabled, or from minority or low-income backgrounds. An identification strategy that includes multiple assessments—both objective and subjective—is the best way to ensure no gifted learner is overlooked."

Now that the District has steadily minimized the GT Program by throttling the admittance of new GT students into the program, its administrators and District leadership advocate to further shrink it when faced with budget shortfalls. The thinking of "There are not enough students to support this program" is false and hollow.

Between 2015 and 2019, Washoe County grew by roughly 30,000 (www.worldpopulationreview.com). Year after year, the general population has grown, yet year after year, the GT Program has noticeably shrunk. Even on the District's own site, the data shows a steady decline in the GT student population.

I argue that the District has purposefully downsized the GT Program with the sole intent of ultimately eliminating it. The District is once again lacking the transparency that parents and students have sought from it. The District has purposefully, steadily constrained the number of students allowed to participate in the GT Program with the overarching goal to end the program by claiming there is not enough need for those services.

¹ The Washoe County School District Gifted and Talented Advisory Council (GTAC) serves as an advisory body to the Washoe County School District (WCSD) and focuses on enhancement and improvement of Gifted and Talented Programs in Northern Nevada. GTAC consists of parent, teacher, and administrative representatives from elementary, middle and high school levels. <https://www.davidsongifted.org/search-database/entry/r13118>

My daughter, Millie, who is now in 8th grade in the Sky Ranch Magnet Program, was one of the very last students to receive an in-person test administered by a school psychologist. Her test in late spring 2014 put her in the top 99%, allowing her to go to SWAS when she entered 3rd grade. In 2015, when she entered Jerry Whitehead for 3rd grade, she was part of an incoming class of 18 3rd grade students. When she entered 4th grade in 2016, the incoming 3rd grade class was 10 students. When she entered 5th grade in 2017, the incoming 3rd grade class had roughly 7 students. When she entered 6th grade in 2018, the incoming 3rd grade class had roughly 3 students. In 2019, the Jerry Whitehead SWAS site was shut down.

My son, who was a student in the Mendive Magnet Program, experienced loss in 7th grade (2015-16) and 8th grade (2016-17) when GT electives were eliminated due to the magnet program losing teacher allocations. The shrinkage of the program that started with the loss of magnet program teacher allocations four years ago continues today with the District's proposal to further shrink the GT Program footprint by eliminating two more SWAS sites, shrinking the Middle School Magnet Program, and phasing out the GT Institute – the supposed star in the GT Program's crown.

When fiscal constraint is at hand, students who are designated as gifted are chronically overlooked as not being in as dire of need for services as the general student body. The norm for a gifted student is already so above average that it is easy to dismiss a gifted student's needs as being over and above what a school district is obliged to provide.

I have been told many times my kids will be just fine with less intense instruction; they are already above average. This is a falsehood and those who espouse that point of view are usually people who have had no direct contact or interaction with a gifted student. My daughter's IQ is 140. General education is not enough. It is not challenging enough. It is not intuitive enough. It is not profound enough to satisfy a gifted brain. General education, and the methods by which these subjects are taught, are redundant, repetitive, and so tedious that a gifted student shuts down. I know mine did. Unchallenged academically themselves, gifted students are relegated to helping others in the classroom, running errands for a teacher, or assisting the school librarian. Mine has.

I challenge you to look for another way to satisfy budget deficits. The GT Program was once a thriving entity, full of growth and progress. It was a leader in Project Based Learning, something that many general education classrooms use today. The GT Program is nationally accredited; many families move to Reno to purposefully take advantage of the program. The GT teachers are specially trained and are as high achieving as their students. Please understand the GT Program is literally a life saver for so many students.

The Board would be doing this community a huge disservice to further shrink this program.

Best regards,

Cassandra Grieve

From: Molly Ivans
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 6:05 PM
To: Church, Jeffrey; Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GATE Funding Cuts
Attachments: GATE Statement 26 January 2021.docx

Dear Board of Trustees,

I am deeply concerned about the proposed budget cuts to the GATE Department. As the parent of a gifted student and a GATE school counselor, I have firsthand experience with the unique characteristics and needs of gifted students. Gifted students require gifted programming and GT-specific supports in order to reach their full potential.

My son was in the SWAS program from 3rd-6th grade. He greatly benefitted from receiving guidance and instruction from GT-endorsed teachers and a GT-endorsed counselor who understood his unique strengths and needs. He flourished in his cohort of like-minded, high ability peers. Prior to this program, my son was not being appropriately challenged in his grade-level classroom; and this resulted in him becoming disinterested in school and disengaged in class. He was known to daydream in class (due to boredom) and became disruptive to his peers. Finally, the proposal to limit the SWAS program to one school will be a huge deterrent to families. Few parents relish the idea of their child having to endure hours on the bus to and from school each day.

This year, due to lack of transportation for Magnet students, we opted to stay at our zoned school. Not providing transportation for Magnet students is a huge barrier for students who would otherwise attend the Magnet program. Having said that, it is essential the district continues to offer differentiated instruction from GT-endorsed teachers to students' at their zoned middle schools.

The GATE Institute at Hug High School is the only GATE specific option for high school students. Cutting this program would be a huge disservice to students and families. CTE & Signature Academies, AP classes, Dual-Credit, and IB are not a replacement for the self-contained gifted programming students receive from GT-endorsed teachers at the GATE Institute.

Finally, gifted students have unique characteristics and needs that are supported by GT-specific counseling and support services. Please see the attached document which outlines GATE counseling services.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully yours,

Molly Walker Ivans

GATE Counseling Talking Points

As a GATE parent and GATE counselor, I will address the unique needs of gifted and talented students; and the supports and services existing state funding has allowed us to provide.

- GT students have unique and diverse developmental needs requiring specialized guidance and counseling services.
- Research suggests that GT students share certain characteristics such as perfectionism, idealism, heightened sensitivity, and emotional intensity. These characteristics may lead to increased levels of depression and anxiety.
- Some GT students experience boredom in school when their curiosity and intellectual drive are unappreciated. I have witnessed this lead to disengagement, underachievement, and behavioral issues.
- GT students may find "school unreceptive to and unresponsive to their knowledge and talents (Rimm, 2003). Discomfort related to poor fit may continue throughout the school years. Consequent social and emotional difficulties may arise."
- GT students may experience difficulties in peer relationships due to unusual talents or interests and asynchronous development, which is a discrepancy between emotional maturity and cognitive ability.
- High achieving GT students "may experience high levels of stress related to expectations of self and others, high levels of involvement in activities, heavy academic loads, and decisions related to postsecondary education (Peterson et al., 2006)."

As GATE school counselors, our services are aligned with American School Counselor Association (ASCA) and National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) standards.

- The ASCA Position Statement reads, "The school counselor delivers a school counseling program to meet students' academic, career, and social/emotional needs. Gifted and talented students have unique and developmental needs that are addressed by school counselors within the scope of the school counseling program and in collaboration with other educators and stakeholders".
- Also, NAGC Standards state that, "while educators need to understand the cognitive development of students with gifts and talents, they also need to know about psychological and social and emotional needs that need to be addressed that support talent development in the contexts of school, home, and the larger community."
- As GATE counselors, we advocate for the unique needs and exceptional abilities of GT students. We deliver classroom guidance, small group counseling, and individual counseling to address GATE specific topics such as executive functioning skills, perfectionism, anxiety, stress management, underachievement, social skills and peer relationships, self-regulation, and twice-exceptional students; these students are gifted and talented with a disability.
- Our services include providing GATE specific strategies, interventions, and resources to students, parents, teachers, and administration, as well as facilitating connections between home, school and community.

In closing, please consider the powerful impact GATE counseling services play in supporting GT students in realizing their full potential. Thank you! Molly Walker Ivans

From: Ingrid Meier
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 6:11 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] SWAS Changes

Dear Washoe County School Board,

I am a third-grader enrolled in the SWAS program. My parents told me that SWAS may be relocated to a school that does not have experience with SWAS students. Although I am in the distance learning program, I believe that Caughlin Ranch provides a good learning atmosphere for me. I think it would be difficult for me to move to a different school that has never had SWAS students there. Also, Dr. Luckey is an excellent teacher and I hope she stays in the SWAS program.

Sincerely,

Ingrid Meier

From: Lori Breuch
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 6:13 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] proposed cuts to Gifted and Talented Programs

Dear Board Members,

I am currently working as the in-person GT magnet Social Studies teacher at Clayton Middle school. This is a temporary position for me--normally I am an itinerant with GT. This is a valuable program that serves an often overlooked segment of our student population. The students in the Clayton magnet come from a diverse background. We claim, as a district, to want to know every student by name and face by graduation, the Clayton Magnet takes it a step further. We know our students--who they are, their hopes and dreams, and what their individual educational and social/emotional needs are. We challenge them and offer support and guidance. Many travel quite a ways to attend. This program should be promoted more fully, not cut. This program stands in stark contrast to my work as an itinerant in district middle schools. Providing differentiated curriculum for gifted students not in the magnet program is at the discretion of individual classroom teachers. Gifted students look forward to their time with itinerants, particularly if they are not challenged in their regular classes. Students in middle school crave the opportunity for extra attention the itinerants bring, be it from the itinerant or the regular classroom teacher. Cutting itinerants will lead to less student contact, less "knowing" of our students.

If cuts are needed, they should be kept out of the classroom. Honoring the student-teacher relationship, when we claim this in our mission statement, should be the budget priority.

Thank you
Lori Breuch
Gifted and Talented Teacher

From: Eleanor Meier
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 6:20 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] SWAS Change

Dear Washoe County School Board,

I am a third-grader in the SWAS Program. I was told by my parents that there is a possibility that the SWAS students will be relocated to a school with no experience with SWAS. Caughlin Ranch is an awesome school and even though I am in the distance learning program, Caughlin has a great learning atmosphere. Moving to Roy Gomm would be okay, since I have friends there and it's close. But to a whole new school is just difficult, overwhelming, and altogether a bad idea. My current teacher Dr. Luckey is awesome and I hope she will remain in the SWAS teaching program.

Sincerely,
Ellie Meier

From: Jackson, Maureen
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 6:25 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Fund our GT programs!

This letter is regarding the reductions in GT allocations. Both of my children are currently enrolled in the GT program in WCSD. One is in the GATE program at Sky Ranch and the other is in the GATE Institute at Hug High and has been part of the GT program for 3 years prior.

Before my children started in the GT program, they were not challenged in the regular ed program. They earned all A's while giving average effort. School was easy, dull and redundant. It wasn't until they both entered the GATE programs that they finally were challenged and become part of rigorous education. My freshman is now working her way through the program, including being enrolled in the Human Development Signature Academy and taking PE credits outside of school. She is very motivated and desires the challenge. She is on track to earn the Capstone AP diploma which may be taken away from her if the Trustees don't support our GT programs.

Please continue to fund these programs! They are invaluable to a percentage of students who deserve the best in their education. I fear both of my children will fall through the cracks if these programs are removed.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Maureen Jackson

From: Nancy Telliano
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 6:33 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Please reconsider cuts to GT

Dear Board of Trustees,

I am the parent of a GT student who attended the SWAS Program at Caughlin Ranch Elementary School and currently attends the 7th grade Magnet Program at Clayton Middle School. I am very disappointed to hear you are considering cuts to the GT Program and I beg you to reconsider.

My son was identified as gifted at the end of second grade. This was after a year of countless notes home and phone calls that my child was not participating in class and not completing his school work. When he started third grade in the SWAS program it was like night and day. He was finally in a classroom with other kids just like him, with teachers teaching to his ability and level, and he THRIVED. And he continues to thrive, thanks to his amazing, dedicated, passionate teachers, some of whom I imagine will be out of a job if you cut back these services.

I have heard it said that general education classrooms are a good fit for the 68% of students that fall within one standard deviation of the median, and that those within two standard deviations of the median, ie 95%, still succeed, sometimes with additional services. However, you would never expect those students in the bottom fifth percentile to succeed in a mainstream classroom. So why aren't you applying the same logic to those in the top 5%? These kids think differently. They are differently wired. They NEED these GT programs!

WCSD Strategic Goal 1 states: "To ensure annual student academic growth through a system of curriculum, instruction, and assessment that is aligned, rigorous, and relevant. Instruction will be designed to meet the needs of every child in our diverse student population." Cuts to the GT curriculum will not help meet this goal. It will be a failure to your diverse student population.

I know these are tough times. I understand you have to make cuts somewhere but I beg you, make them somewhere else. Please support these students, ALL of these students, by not cutting back on GT services.

Thank you for your consideration.

Nancy Telliano

From: Josh Meier
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 7:34 PM
To: Public Comments; BoardMembers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GATE cuts

Dear Washoe County School District Trustees:

I am writing to express my concern regarding the planned reorganization of the SWAS and Magnet programs in the district. My two daughters, Ingrid Meier and Eleanor Meier are in the distance learning class for SWAS this year as 3rd graders. It has been an excellent experience so far in their first year with Dr. Luckey. Previously they were enrolled in general education classes at Caughlin Ranch. Even with all of the challenges of distance learning, they love distance learning through SWAS and are thriving. We are extremely fortunate to have the GATE program in our community.

The proposed consolidation of the three SWAS sites to one new site would be detrimental to the needs of the SWAS students. The majority of the students in the SWAS program are zoned from the three current sites. In addition the gifted students are students with unique educational and emotional needs and would likely face challenges in being summarily uprooted and deposited to a brand new school without any experience in gifted education. The reduction from 7 to 3 classes would lead to increased crowding and a restricted education experience. The current number of 77 students probably does not accurately reflect the true number of gifted students as many students have made other arrangements for education outside of the district this year. I am concerned with the rushed nature of these changes, and minimal consultation with parents and students.

I know our daughters would be devastated to have the GATE programs curtailed and to leave Caughlin Ranch Elementary. I urge you to reconsider your plan.

Sincerely,

Josh Meier M.D. F.A.C.S.

From: Charles Boolin
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 7:44 PM
To: Julia.Ratti@sen.state.nv.us; Heidi.Gansert@sen.state.nv.us;
Natha.Anderson@asm.state.nv.us; Teresa.BenitezThompson@asm.state.nv.us;
Jill.Dickman@asm.state.nv.us; Lisa.Krasner@asm.state.nv.us; PK.Oneill@asm.state.nv.us;
Sarah.Peters@asm.state.nv.us; Jill.Tolles@asm.state.nv.us; Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Proposed changes for Fiscal Year 2022 to the Gifted and Talented
Department and Services

Hello,

My family and I have heard discussions about the intent to remove the Magnet Program for our GT students. We have a 13-year-old in the Magnet Program. He attends this program at Clayton Middle School, so we are very concerned. Agenda item 4.10 shows drastic cuts to GT/Magnet programs in our area, but the Middle School Magnet Programs as a topic doesn't say what's being considered. From the other points in the same agenda item, we are guessing it means a reduction of services or closing of a site. Our child benefits from the Magnet program, especially in regards to math.

The discussed changes would negatively impact the Magnet Program in the district. This will severely affect these bright, hard working, and difficult to teach kids. Mainstreaming GT students reduces their engagement and highly increases the ask of their teachers - many of which don't bother. Most teachers either sideline them, make them unofficial student teachers, or throw busy work at them until they stop asking questions. These students require high engagement from their teachers, and frankly our educators are, in general, not trained to teach them and do not have the time or energy to make their learning successful. (Speaking from both our personal and fellow GT parent/student experiences.)

What will happen to the GT teachers at Clayton Middle School, or in this district? They work so hard for these kids and go out of their way to make sure that their student is supported in a way that works for that student and helps them to remain successful. There was notice from the Governor to bring in any Highschool graduate over the age 18 and have them come in as substitute teachers in our schools, yet we have extremely qualified teachers already here, doing their jobs and doing them well and we are now in jeopardy of losing them to budget cuts. We need these GT Teachers. They are essential. Reduction here is a further brain drain on our educators right when we need them more than ever.

A student identified as GT does not mean they are better than other students. It means that their needs are not solely academic; they also have mental and social needs that are served by GT. A student identified as GT needs a different learning environment or they will surely fail. This is special education in every sense of the term. When cuts like these are proposed, it feels to me like those making the decisions do not understand the consequences of not having GT. These students are going to end up suffering the consequences, only because they may learn differently. With attempts to get a handle on bullying within our schools, I can only worry that because these kids learn a little differently, it will not go over well when they are mixed in with kids that just don't understand. I hope that this is kept in mind as the discussions moves forward to cut this program. Consequences for each individual involved in this program will likely be negative.

Our GT student deserves representation, as any deserving group has the right to have. These students, these teachers, and these programs are an integral part of our school district and should be treated as such. These students and teachers are valuable to our society and community in so many ways.

We would me be more than happy to discuss this if it would make a difference. We need to keep our students and teachers engaged as the consequences will be negative.

Thank you,

Charles and Melanie Boolin

Reno NV, 89503

From: Angelina Guerrieri
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 8:43 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Item 4.10 - GATE Program Cuts

Dear Washoe County School District Board Members,

I am Angelina Guerrieri, a junior currently enrolled in the GATE Institute at Hug High School and a previous member of the GT-pullout, SWAS, and Magnet programs. I am writing to you with concern about the proposed cuts to Gifted And Talented Education in our district (item 4.10). As a student who has been a part of gifted education since second grade, I have no doubt in my mind that it has helped to shape me into the person I am today. I know I would not be as successful or driven had I not been academically challenged, which was only possible through gifted education. The truth of the matter is, gifted students will not be as successful in regular education classrooms because GT is a form of special education and gifted students require a specific environment where we can be challenged and understood. Teachers not trained to work with gifted students overlook our needs, to no fault of their own. We require a type of rigorous learning, not sufficed by simply being put in a higher level class or being given busy work. Our specific emotional and academic needs are simply not satisfied by the regular classroom environment. Without a level of challenge, GT students often become bored and less successful. By removing the opportunity for gifted students to get a proper education that fits their needs, you are depriving them of success. Some of the brightest, most intelligent students in this district will not reach their full potential if they do not have access to these specific programs.

I attended the Magnet program at Clayton Middle School from sixth to eighth grade. It helped prepare me for high school and I developed essential time management and work ethic skills. With large presentations and month-long projects, I found myself well-prepared for high school. Being in an environment with other like-minded individuals gave me a sense of community and I still have retained many of my friends from that time, despite it having been many years later. The teachers understood our needs and helped us learn and progress with curriculums meant to challenge and keep us engaged.

After Clayton Magnet, the only logical progression of my education was to attend the GATE Institute at Hug High School, as it was the only high school in the district that would cater to my individual needs and provide me and other gifted students with the environment required for us to be successful. As a freshman I took three Advanced Placement classes and one Honors class, an opportunity I would not have received elsewhere. I have been amazed by the level of scholars at the Institute, and the competition and drive we have. Truly, being in an environment with like-minded individuals has made us more competitive and hard-working. I have met students who chose the Institute over Davidson due to the flexibility in courses, going to prove how important this program really is to gifted students. There is no other program like it in the district and to lose it would be a tragedy. The AP Capstone classes, AP Seminar and AP Research, prepare students for college writing and year long projects, ensuring that we will continue to be successful even after graduation.

My older brother was a part of the first graduating class from the GATE Institute in 2018 and, along with being valedictorian of his class, he was the winner of the National Merit Scholarship. He and I both agree that had he not attended the gifted program at Hug High School, he would not have been able to accomplish such a feat. There are many more students just like him, students who have received full-ride scholarships to prestigious universities such as Princeton, attended West Point Military Academy, or even graduated in their sophomore year of high school. The opportunities are truly endless and that is the beauty of the program. It provides an environment for gifted students to thrive after middle school Magnet and it has produced countless incredible

scholars in only 3 graduating classes. It allows students to take their education to the next level and prepare themselves for further education while still providing them with a traditional high school experience, like no other school in the district.

The alleged goal of item 4.10 is to “ensure annual student academic growth” but by removing GT programs you are depriving students of opportunities to be successful. Regular programs do not support the special needs that gifted students have. They will not be successful. Although these proposed actions will not affect me as I am graduating in 2022, I want gifted students younger than me to have the same opportunities that I had, if not more. It is for these reasons that I respectfully ask you to reconsider the proposed courses of action to the GATE program in our school district.

Thank you,
Angelina Guerrieri

From: Richard Grauvogel
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 8:50 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Clayton Middle School Magnet Program

To our Honorable School Board Members:

I would like to take a moment to share with you a concern I have for my granddaughter. She is currently enrolled in the Magnet Program at the Clayton Middle School and I have heard the Washoe County School district is considering eliminating the program at this school, I hope this is not the case.

This is my granddaughter's first year in the program and I cannot begin to tell you how much she has flourished since joining the program. Where many children struggle to stay engaged while going to school, I have watched my granddaughter revel in what she is learning.

Whenever I have taken her to school in the morning, she talks of nothing else except how excited she is to be going to school and can't wait to find out what new and exciting things she will be learning that day. When I pick her up from school she is so excited to share with me what she did in school that day it is music to my ears.

If someone would have asked me what my expectations of my granddaughter joining the Magnet Program would have been, I would never have believed what I have been experiencing by seeing her reaction to her learning environment. She is motivated, enthusiastic, engaged and excited about going to school.

If this program generates this kind of enthusiasm with children it should be allowed to grow. The Washoe County School District has created a program that is a winner and should try to grow the program, not reduce it.

I know the district is trying to work out a new budget for next year, but do not eliminate a program that is so successful.

Thank you for your time and I respectfully hope you will find a way to continue funding the Magnet program at the Clayton Middle School.

Very Truly Yours

Richard Dean Grauvogel

From: Donald GT Gallimore, Sr
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 8:53 PM
To: aedwards@prochoiceamerica.org
Subject: [EXTERNAL] City of Sparks /Every Voice Counts' Program Tues, Jan 26, 6pm

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Evening

Wishing everyone a happy new year and hope you're well!

On the eve of the convening of the Feb biennial legislative session, police reform (Defund Police pseudonym), along with COVID implementation (including mental health sustenance) and a finalized balanced budget, is front and center.

As a precursor to offering insights to policymakers, the Reno/Sparks NAACP will help lead constituents in creating contingencies for actions targeting new and amended rules and laws this year. By accessing members of law enforcement to discuss how to improve their services to all NV communities, taxpayers can receive answers they have.

The City of Sparks presents the new law enforcement Chief Chris Crawforth and City Manager Alyson McCormick tomorrow, Tues Jan 26 and the Reno/Sparks NAACP fully supports the community outreach and desire for transparency of several Officials of the city,

Moderated by Kelli Gallimore, Esq, the program allows the public Q&A to converse with leadership themselves.

Please include the important 'Every Voice Counts' conversation to your calendar!

Yours

Donald G.T. Gallimore Sr.



Dear Washoe County School Board,

Hi, I am a GT/MAGNET student in 6th grade at Clayton Middle School. On Monday, January 25th, I heard that you are making budget cuts and the GT program may be cut from my school. Then, I heard that my parents are writing letters to you, so I decided to write one too. GT is one of the best things that happened to me when middle school started. In elementary school, I had good friends. None of them were GT. We had some drama in 4th and 5th grade, and I hated every bit of the drama. I got into GT for middle school, and the friends I have now are amazing. They are GT students, like me and we have not had any drama once. If you cut the GT program from my school, Clayton, the kids coming in next year, and in future years, would not have that opportunity to meet new people. For example, my brother would not be able to see and experience the wonderful GT program. He would never meet the core subjects' teacher for 6th grade GT. Mrs. Roberts, or Mrs. is my 6th grade GT core subjects' teacher, and she is one of the best, funniest, and caring teachers I have had. She won teacher of the year at HUG High School. In GT, we have so much fun. We get to learn things that challenge us in good ways. One project we did, was learning about floods, avalanches, and mudslides. I worked with my friend, Wimberly. We got to draw a huge map of a town that had all those disasters, after researching them. In another project, we learned about volcanos. The one we focused on is Mt. Lassen, and 3 of my friends built an erupting volcano and showed why or why not a town should be built in a certain zone near the volcano. The kids in my class feel comfortable with each other, and we laugh and have fun. If GT is cut, we might be separated. My friend Wimberly lives all the way out near Stead Elementary so I would not see her, or my friend Sophie, who lives far away too. Another thing, you all want us to be challenged, to grow academically, and learn new things. If you take away GT, we would not be challenged, not grow academically, and we would learn things we already knew. Yes, we would get good grades because we already knew the material, but I would rather get As and Bs, than know everything in class. GT is important, and you should know that. Just because we are considered Special Ed, doesn't mean we could just be put in a regular class. We are GT students, and we don't want our program to be taken away from us. Please, don't take the GT program away from us.

Sincerely, Kennedy MacAleese

1/25/2021

Dear Washoe County Board of Directors and Trustees,

My name is Alicia MacAleese and I am the mother of a 6th grade magnet student, Kennedy MacAleese, who attends the magnet program at Archie Clayton Middle School. It was brought to my attention this weekend that the magnet program at Archie Clayton Middle School is in jeopardy of being cut for the 2021-2022 year due to budget constraints. While I understand the district needs to be fiscally responsible and propose a balanced budget, I implore this board to look at other ways to save money that does not result in the academic suffering of these students *especially* after all the difficulties these students have experienced due to the global pandemic.

While this is Kennedy's first year in the magnet program at Clayton, I have seen growth in her socially, emotionally and academically that I have not seen in the past. The manner in which the magnet students are taught by the highly trained magnet teachers is truly exceptional. She is being challenged in ways that has not been possible in the past and she is surrounded by students who learn like she learns. She has found "her people" so to speak in this program.

I can see how dedicated the magnet teachers are at Clayton and how well they function as a team. The collaboration amongst the magnet teachers allows for a continuity that is rare and therefore allows the students to continue their accelerated growth and being able to reach their full potential. Please do not take this chance these students have, that my daughter has, away from them. Let them continue to flourish and be in an environment that fosters their love for learning.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Alicia'.

Alicia N. MacAleese

From: Nithya P Mohan
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 9:25 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] NO to budgeting down and reduction of GT programs

Hello

I'm parent of Rithik Rajesh, 7th grade magnet student at Pine middle school. This email is to express how shocking the news of reduction and change in policies may occur to the GT program.

I'm a lecturer at UNR - Electrical Engineering department and my husband is a physician at Renown. We have an older daughter who is a sophomore at Galena high school. She went to the magnet program at Pine middle school, SWAS at Caughlin Ranch Elementary School (and so did my son), and so I have personal experience of what and how much of positive influence the program can have on a child. It keeps these high achieving kids challenged and motivated. Without this, they certainly will lose interest going to school. My daughter had a jump start at high school and is doing well. Being a sophomore, she has taken 5 AP classes and is doing well and all this is because of the SWAS and GT magnet programs.

Me and my husband are first generation parents from India and value advanced-level education. I teach at UNR and I certainly know what impact these programs have on kids when they graduate high school. Education is the key to life and when high-achieving kids are continuously provided with challenging programs, they will only become a better and successful human.

I strongly believe that budgeting and reduction should not happen to these accelerated programs, not just now, but NEVER - if the school district really pursues in making highly successful kids from the district.

I really hope that you reconsider, make budget for the program to just continue, as education is a priority and that is the true treasure, we can give our children. Let us not ruin their future.

Thank you.

Nithya P Mohan, Ph.D.

Lecturer

Department of Electrical and Biomedical Engineering

University of Nevada

1664 N.Virginia St./MS260

Reno, NV 89557

From: Janet Grauvogel
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 9:25 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Clayton Jr High Magnet Program

Washoe County School Board:

I am very concerned that you are considering cutting the Magnet program at Clayton Jr. High School. Our granddaughter attends the Magnet program at Clayton. She loves it there and we are seeing the benefits in her academics and personal growth. She definitely is not bored, but challenged in a positive way. Her teacher, Mrs. Roberts was teacher of the year and is an outstanding, caring, approachable and positive role model. Our granddaughter is thriving at Clayton. She loves going to school there and looks forward to going. She is excited to learn and tell us what she is doing. She loves her teacher and has made many new friends. She is proud that she is in the Magnet program and wants to excel. I understand that this class is smaller than some of the others, but it is working to the children's benefit. These wonderful children need the extra/higher academics to feed their minds and souls. They are bright and their minds are so ready and open for more challenging work.

Why are you looking at cutting this school? It would hurt the children and their educational growth. Could we look at cutting administrative costs instead of this program? The school district should be here for the children. The children at Clayton are happy here and want to stay there. It is a positive environment that is working. Please do not take it away from these bright children.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Janet Grauvogel

From: Sarah Tahlier
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 9:33 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment about GATE programs

Dear Trustees,

I urge you not to reduce staff for the GT programs in our schools. As a parent of a 4th grade student that is in the GT program, I would be very disappointed as would my son that participates.

As you know, GT students need to be challenged. With general class sizes increasing daily, the GT time is imperative for these types of exceptional learners. Small classes with like minded peers that thrive in environments using project based assessments and assignments is essential for GT learners. It allows them to grow to their fullest academic potential.

Please find a way to keep this program running without reducing their teachers. The GT teachers are providing an effective learning environment that allows GT students to be challenged and stimulated intellectually. It is truly a gift to be part of this program. I would hate to see it dwindle away.

Thank you,
Sarah Tahlier

Sent from my iPhone

From: Deanna Logoteta
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 9:34 PM
To: Public Comments; Johnson, Sean; Westfall, Victoria
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment on the SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDATION
Proposed Changes to the GATE Program for FY2022

I wanted to provide public comment on the Superintendent's recommendation to reduce the Magnet Program from 4 to 3 sites and reduce staff. I think it would be a mistake. Please do not ignore these group of students that have especial needs because of the false belief that because they are gifted, they manage everything easily. Problems can arise from the lack of GATE program. No gifted specialists would be available to identify and support the social/emotional needs related to intellectual giftedness.

Studies by the Center for Talented Youth in Ireland show that the gifted, without adequate social/emotional support, can easily suffer from "feelings of frustration, low self-esteem, isolation, difference ... negative social behavior and unfulfilled potential." One article regarding Gifted and Talented Students archived by Stanford University explains that "'negative' factors (such as tension, anxiety, and depression)" can be present during "personal growth and development." Another describes the affective and behavioral traits of "sensitivity and excitability."

From personal experience, my son is thriving emotionally, socially and academically since entering the Magnet Program this year. The instructors have been exceptional, he has been appropriately challenged within a safe and understanding environment, and a program reduction could leave him and other kids behind without a good option. I ask that the Board reconsider reducing such an impactful program.

Sincerely,
Deanna Logoteta
Concerned Parent

From: Ben Tucker
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 9:53 PM
To: Public Comments; Spriggs, Earl; KMcNiell@washoeschools.net; Minetto, Ellen; Tucker, Christina
Subject: [EXTERNAL] EL Reductions - Agenda Item 4.11

Thank you for your service to our district. The decisions you make are not easy and I appreciate your hard work and dedication to our children. Also. thank-you for the amazingly well run Covid shots clinic in Saturday!

I am writing today with great concern about the reductions in EL staff and programs. I currently teach EL at Agnes Risley where 74% of our students receive English Language services. The thought of losing funding for a population that is growing every year in our district (1 in 9 students, projected to be 1 in 4 in 20 years) frightens me. I am currently getting my master's degree in EL and I would like you to be aware of the research I am learning and applying to my teaching, all sighting *Dear Colleague Letter* and the *English learner tool kit*, that share multiple examples of how we cannot take away from the EL program and expect our students to thrive.

- * "when a separate ELD block was used, students scored higher on a standardized measure of English"
- * "process approaches are not sufficient to promote acquisition of the specific skills that comprise reading and writing"
- * "direct instruction of specific skills is important in order to help students gain mastery of literacy"
- * "ELLs have difficulty meeting the challenge of language without additional language supports"
- * "high quality reading instruction alone will be insufficient to support equal academic success"

I have so many more quotes I could share but the bottom line is, we need MORE teachers specifically trained to work in small groups and whole classrooms with our second language learners.

I understand that you think that sharing 1 ELD specialist between several schools is a productive use of time. I do not believe it is. Please interview ELDs that have gone back into the classroom because they felt their teaching talents were wasted- they didn't have time to teach. These teachers are expected to deliver strategies and scaffolds to their staff(s), evaluate students within legal time constraints, ensure legal requirements are being followed, input data, share this data at IEPs, 504s, conferences, CAP meetings, staff meetings, etc., and work with students at more than one school.

"There is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers and curriculum, for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education." (Lau v. Nichols 1974) The Supreme Court ruled that lack of appropriate supplemental language instruction for ELs in public schools violated the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Just because we teach teachers how to teach ELs, it doesn't mean they are provided with the extra time to do it. How many more things can a classroom teacher be held responsible for? You are doing teachers, students, and parents a true disservice when limiting their availability to overcome linguistic barriers by reducing EL teachers and limiting accessibility to the same rigorous content and instruction as English-speaking peers.

I am also concerned that when I contacted two members of the EL Department asking about agenda item 4.11, they knew nothing about it. I would have thought they would have some input or knowledge of it.

PLEASE reconsider your reductions to EL teachers and programs that directly influence our students.
With great respect, I thank you for taking the time to read my concerns,

Christina Tucker

Dear Madame President Taylor, Superintendent McNeil and Members of the Board,

I am writing to you as a parent and School Psychologist to advocate for halting cuts to the existing Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) program (Agenda item 4.10). Oftentimes, cuts to gifted programming are based on a myth about gifted students that I hope to debunk. That is, gifted youth will not need any extra support in their education because they are simply smart and will do fine on their own.

Unfortunately, gifted students, if not challenged, given individualized programming and social/emotional supports often underachieve and drop out of school. They possess unique characteristics, including asynchronous development and heightened sensitivities, which pose unique challenges in their education, and therefore REQUIRE a specialized approach, not unlike special education. It is typical for gifted students to show strengths in interest areas, while average, or even below in another. Much effort locally and nationally has been invested in research and dedication of multitudes of teachers to provide extra certification in these approaches to address these differences.

Personally, both my children benefitted from the challenges afforded from the WCSD pull out, SWAS and Magnet Programs. The Magnet program provided my daughter with acceleration, and the opportunity to improve her skills enough to become eligible for advanced academic programming at a later stage in her life. In her own words, the element that was most beneficial to her was to be around peers to whom she could relate, in other words, feel accepted as an equal with her intellectual peers.

Beyond personal reasons, let me tell you about a student who without the support of a team of trained individuals would not be improving. In my job as School Psychologist, I am frequently approached by teams of School Counselors, GATE teachers and GATE facilitator teachers to support struggling GATE students. This one student started her year with behavioral challenges and failing grades, despite extremely high ability scores. With the team's assistance, we have wrapped around the family, offering a targeted counseling group for building skills, a behavioral tracking plan and support for the parent to learn about gifted characteristics and parenting strategies, in the form of a parent SENG support group. My point here is that the counselors and psychologists working with the gifted program, beyond simply instruction, provide needed support which goes unnoticed, yet is essential for our at-risk populations.

I urge the board to examine the intersectionality between exceptionalities that come with the specific proposed cuts: Cutting specifically Clayton MS will not only eliminate gifted programming, it will eliminate gifted programming access for our most at-risk population: Those students from low income areas. This program allowed students access that will not be able to continue due to transportation issues. This seems incredibly inequitable, even despite the low numbers.

The impact of the downsizing of these programs and elimination of teacher, counselor and psychologist positions will be nothing short of devastating for our students. The Nevada Law is clear on providing the requisite 150 minutes per gifted student per week, which will difficult to meet if these cuts are implemented. I urge you to think beyond the bottom line numbers and see the children and youth who will be impacted. Please do what you can in order to keep funding at current levels.

From: Heather OGrady
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 9:58 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] WUSD Meeting January 26,2021 Agenda Item 4.10

Dear School Board Members,

I am the parent of two children in the district, both of whom are currently enrolled in WUSD's GATE programming: a sophomore at the GATE Institute and an eighth grader in the Magnet program at Clayton Middle School. I am also a Reno native and the Chief Financial Officer for a local manufacturer. As you might expect, I am very concerned about the educational opportunities available to my own children, as well as the availability of highly educated and qualified talent in our local community. The purpose of this message is to express my concern with the reductions proposed to GATE programs in item 4.10 on the January 26, 2021 agenda of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees.

I believe sweeping reductions or elimination of these programs will introduce a significant amount of risk, not only for these special needs children directly participating in the programming, but also for their classmates. These higher level academic programs are a critical component of keeping these high performing students engaged and in helping them to reach their full potential to positively impact our local, national, and global communities. If these special needs students are not engaged and challenged it is very possible that they will grow bored and their academic and social/emotional growth could be stunted.

I also believe that the safety of our children may be affected as these children may be at a higher risk of being bullied because they sometimes have difficulty relating to their peers and vice versa. GATE programming gives these children exposure to other students who have common educational goals and interests. This enables them to feel like they are part of a group and can help mitigate negative social and emotional consequences. A path forward including through high school and to graduation is imperative for these children, in order to have the best chance of success in the school system. The constant uncertainty surrounding funding for this programming is stressful and unhealthy for all involved including the students, teachers, staff, and families.

The teachers in the GATE program are dedicated professionals who embrace additional challenges and work tirelessly to inspire these children to reach their goals. Many of these teachers have undergone special training and obtained additional certifications to help them work more effectively with this unique group of students. The GATE teachers and counselors understand that these children can easily become isolated and lost. They recognize the additional social and emotional stressors common with these students, and their training and experience makes them specially qualified to support the students in dealing with these challenges.

It is alarming that Nevada schools continue to rank near the bottom, yet year after year the curriculum and instruction for gifted students and/or academic high performers are targeted for cuts. It appears that these children are perceived to be at a lower risk of negatively impacting the graduation rate and other metrics, therefore their special needs are considered less important. The fact remains that if not properly served, these children are at risk of failure, dropping out of school, or worse. In addition they may pose a distraction to teachers and other students due to talking, skipping classes, and other more disruptive behavior, which could result in further erosion of the graduation rate and education quality for them and the students around them.

As a finance professional, I understand the budgetary challenges our district is faced with and know that sacrifices will be necessary. My hope is that these sacrifices will not target one group, but rather will be spread more evenly throughout the district. Further, I implore you to consider the ramifications that could result from ignoring the differences and special needs of these children rather than embracing their diversity and fostering a safe environment in which they can learn and grow most effectively.

Thank you for your service to our community and for your thoughtful representation of our children.

Heather O'Grady

From: ramona
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 10:10 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Hi, my name is Ramona Tobey and I am now a senior at McQueen, but I was in the GATE program at Clayton in middle school. Since I'm zoned for Clayton, this program was an amazing opportunity that I would have missed out on otherwise. I am currently a semifinalist for National Merit, and I was nominated to be a Presidential Scholar. I wouldn't have been able to do this without the GT program. Cutting the program would mean that many kids wouldn't get to experience the classes and environment my brothers and I enjoyed. I had amazing teachers and I made good friends, but one of the best benefits was how well prepared I was for high school. I am strongly against these cuts and I hope you'll reconsider.

Sent from HUAWEI Y7 2019

From:
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 10:16 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment for the Meeting of the Board of Trustees

Dear WCSD School Board Members,

I am a sophomore in the GATE program at Proctor R. Hug High School, and have been in GATE since the third grade. I understand that recently the annual talk about cutting back on GATE funding has come up again. I also understand that a very large amount of money goes into funding these programs, and that perhaps cutting back on GATE funding would allow that money to be used elsewhere.

This is a perfectly legitimate concern, and in fact makes sense given the heavy strain already on Nevada's school budget as a whole. However, this budgetary strain will be an issue with or without these programs, and the continued targeting of students such as myself only serves to create more problems and stress for the district, its families, and its kids.

Without the program, these children will be bored in class - doodling, looking out a window instead of listening, and other such things. These actions are warranted due to the fact that these more average-level classes (compared to what is offered in the various GATE programs) move too slowly for a gifted student to be engaged and impact their academic success. Instead of blazing through these classes easily, many past studies have shown that students suffer from the easier work and become less involved.

As a student, I need to feel challenged and to have peers I can relate to. Put frankly, it is difficult to relate to people outside of my classes since I do not have the same interests as them, while in the GATE institute I find people who can relate to my academic experience and thus are much easier to make friends with. The constant stress of budget cuts ruining the friendships and work we as a community have made and put in, respectively, is something that is unwarranted and undeserved for every kid involved.

Please consider the lives of the children who will be affected by this. A single pathway to academic success that everyone will take is simply not possible, and thus the GATE programs must not be cut in this manner. It puts hundreds of kids in a terrible position, which is counterintuitive to the school board's goal to provide good education to every child.

Thank you for understanding,
David O'Grady

From: Jennifer Leng
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 10:17 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GATE, SWAS & Magnet Program Concerns

To Whom It May Concern,

I am Jennifer Leng, a 5th-grade student and participating in a pull-out GT program.

I am glad that I have this opportunity to give a comment to have the GT program not cut down and stay open. When I wasn't in GT class, I was always bored in my regular class because it was too easy for me, but whenever I went to GT class, I was never bored because we had more educational fun projects, for example, learning and writing about endangered animals and making bridges and testing them to see how much weight they can hold from popsicle sticks which I couldn't get a chance to do in the regular class.

I also applied to the Magnet program for my 6th grade. I hope that I can be admitted. I have heard the Magnet program is an accelerated program and is focusing on all four core content areas. I am so looking forward to being in this community.

I just want to say please don't cut the GT, SWAS, and Magnet programs.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Leng

From: Sosaia Talanoa
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 10:35 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Magnet

Hi,

I was a student in the Clayton Magnet Program from 2016-2018, 7th and 8th grade, and I was apart of the GT programs at multiple schools in the district since the 2nd Grade. I happen to be a pacific islander, so when it comes to opportunities to further my education there are close to none; the GT programs allowed me to develop my talents properly. As any GT teacher can tell you, most GT kids who don't get to participate in the program usually head in the wrong direction. We are a "Special Education" program and we need the assistance just like our friends who land on the opposite side of the bell curve do.

From: Clayton Alumni
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 10:35 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Sunsetting Magnet

To whom it may concern,

It has come to our attention that the Washoe School district is interested in removing certain aspects of the G.T department. We for one, wholeheartedly agree, as we all attended the Clayton Magnet program for a minimum of two years. In particular, for the Magnet program at Clayton, there were some positivities but it was mostly a negative experience. While the program did prepare students for some advanced classes in high school, there were many drawbacks. For example, the students in Magnet for often separated from the rest of the school, and it was very challenging for anyone in Magnet to interact with the kids outside. Kids were secluded, were shunned, and were isolated. There were many stereotypes going around about the kids in Magnet, and all of them for cynical. Some of the teachers didn't even make the program feel like it was advanced learning. For example, when we were in Magnet, the previous science department teacher simply took online assignments without actually teaching us herself. We know many classmates who are right now plagued by stress and anxiety because our teachers in middle school simply did not prepare them enough. While there are many emails and people protesting against the sunsetting of Magnet specifically at Clayton, we believe they are simply blinded by nostalgia. In short, the Magnet program at Clayton should be sunsetted because the negatives simply outweigh the positives. Any student outside of Magnet who already strives to achieve the highest grades and classes in high school is still able to make that goal without help from this "advanced" program.

Best wishes,
Clayton Graduates

From: Chris Hsu
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 10:41 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Fwd: GATE program

We wish that our email note to the Trustees, Mr. Church, and Dr. Nicolet, be made available during public comments and presented or read to the Board of Trustees at the appropriate time during the January 26th, 2021, Board of Trustees meeting in considering the proposal for cuts to the GATE program.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Chris Hsu**
Date: Mon, Jan 25, 2021 at 10:30 PM
Subject: GATE program
To: DNicolet@washoeschools.net <DNicolet@washoeschools.net>, <Jeffrey.Church@washoeschools.net> Cc: Julie Hsu

Mr. Church and Dr. Nicolet,

We are writing to you as we have seen the agenda for the board meeting tomorrow concerning the GATE program. We are new to Reno and our daughter was recently enrolled in the middle school GATE program at Pine. Her experience has been outstanding and she has found her "home" because of the special care that the faculty and staff take to the special social, emotional and intellectual challenges of highly gifted children. We moved to Reno from the San Francisco Bay Area where Emilia was enrolled in one of the top middle schools. When we moved to Reno we were really struggling to find the right fit for her until an amazing counselor at Marce Herz suggested that we consider the GATE program. We are so grateful that this counselor pointed us to this program as we have been thrilled with this amazing program. The proposed cuts to the program leave us deeply concerned for our daughter and for all current and future GATE students, particularly those from underprivileged families.

In the United States, gifted and talented students are an underserved population. While federal law acknowledges that gifted students have academic needs that are not traditionally met in regular school settings, there are no specific requirements in place for serving these students. Instead, gifted education is a local responsibility. As a result, gifted students can end up as an underserved population, however, this has not been the case in the Washoe School District as the program at Pine represents the Gold standard for public GATE programs. We are extremely grateful that our daughter has access to this program. The students who are the most let down in the United States educational system are the high-potential children from underprivileged and minority backgrounds whose gifts are badly neglected in today's education system. Pine has been setting a positive example by meeting the highest standard when it comes to GATE and by ensuring equal access for all students. If funding for the GATE program were to be cut, underprivileged gifted students will be hit hardest. Gifted kids from well-connected, upper-middle-class families will generally receive a solid education. This is because their families have the resources necessary to navigate the maze of education offerings and to find alternative ways to provide their children with access to the resources they need. High-ability students who are not from such families, however, are too often left to fend for themselves and are ultimately left behind. Currently, gifted students from all ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds have the ability to participate in the GATE program at Pine if they qualify, and it would be devastating for those families if the funding was cut. Cutting funding would put a brake on upwards mobility for these students. Please do not allow this to happen.

Another important aspect of the GATE program is the social-emotional component. Due to the fact that gifted children demonstrate greater maturity in some domains over others, they may be at greater risk for specific kinds of social-

emotional difficulties if their needs are not met. Research suggests that gifted children are disproportionately prone to social and or emotional challenges. These may include heightened awareness, high reactivity, anxiety, perfectionism, stress, issues with peer relationships, and concerns with identity and fit. Social-emotional needs are at the core of wellbeing and the foundation for achievement. Educators, parents, and caregivers in their lives need to work as a team and stay in tune with these students' specific needs and help shape a strong framework for social-emotional health. These needs are recognized and addressed through the GATE program, and cutting funding would most definitely lead to more negative outcomes.

At Pine's GATE program, these gifted young people are taught in an environment where the teachers are excited and capable of teaching eager, high-achieving students who reinforce each other even as they compete while also providing the necessary resources to foster social-emotional wellbeing. The program not only facilitates individual opportunity and social mobility, but it also cultivates tomorrow's intellectual and scientific leaders across racial and socio-economic boundaries which should be a key element of the education system. Therefore, we passionately ask you to strongly reconsider cutting funding for the Washoe County GATE program that truly fills a gap.

We believe that our school district has an amazing GATE program and it would be a shame if the competitiveness and accessibility of this program were gutted by budget cuts and short-term thinking. We urge you to fully fund and support the GATE program and the access to this program for this underserved population. We hope that the Washoe County School District will continue to set a positive example and ensure access, quality and equity in services for all students.

Best regards,
Chris & Julie Hsu
Parents of Emilia Hsu, 7th grade GATE student at Pine Middle School

Batchelder, Jennifer

From: Harper, Will
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 5:55 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: NO REDUCTION TO EL

BOT and Ms. McNeill,

WEA members received an email stating that, "the WCSD Board of Trustees (BOT) will be discussing reductions in EL and GT allocations at the BOT meeting tomorrow." I am hoping this is a misunderstanding. I am an EL Teacher so I will speak to that. EL population is one of the most vulnerable we serve in education. During this pandemic you have told us how important it is to serve these vulnerable populations and we have put ourselves at risk to do so. "Sight facilitators" and trying to place more responsibility on non-EL trained teachers, in an effort to deal with the cuts to education that have and are coming to education, would have a lasting negative impact on the EL population. Training teachers on how to work with EL students in context of the subject matter they are delivering is being done and is a good practice. It is not the best practice or a substitute for teachers dedicated and specifically trained in serving the EL population.

We should be asking ourselves how we can be providing more support and resources across the board in education but particularly for vulnerable populations like EL. While it is true that potentially all teachers are teachers of EL, there is no substitute for the training, skill and desire EL teachers bring to teaching the EL population. You could make the case that we all teach English so should we reduce the number of English teachers? Of course not.

Please match your rhetoric with actions. Please take the lead on fighting for and helping the legislators understand that THEY need to figure out either how to "do more with less" or come up with revenue streams that let us do more with more. Let our budget issues be the burden of mining, Tesla, Amazon, pro sports teams, casinos, etc. This should not be the burden of the vulnerable EL population or any other in education.

Do the right thing!

Will Harper
EL Teacher/WEA Building Rep/Mountain Bike Team Coach
Spanish Springs High School



From: Bonnie Pillaro
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 6:31 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Agenda Item 4.10 Gifted and Talented Programs

Dear Board Members,

I understand that reductions must be made and that the Board's decisions are difficult with the current economic conditions that have been caused by the pandemic. However, valuable programs must be maintained. Please preserve the viability of WCSD's gifted and talented programs by implementing less drastic reductions than the current proposed cuts to the gifted program.

The proposals outlined in item 4.10 reduce the accessibility of gifted programs to all gifted students, thus denying gifted students access to an appropriate public education. One size does not fit all. Gifted students are diverse and our District's current varied programs offer robust opportunities that meet the needs of as many gifted students as possible. Some gifted students thrive in pull-out programs whereas some are more successful in self-contained gifted programs. Unlike many school districts in the United States who offer just one program, Washoe County offers a wide-range of opportunities for gifted students. The proposed reductions will severely limit access to gifted students. The closing of the middle school Magnet program at Clayton MS will limit access to Magnet Programs for North Valleys and Sun Valley students. In addition, phasing out the GT Institute denies gifted high school students self contained classes crafted to their specific aptitudes and abilities. Lastly, the placement of the SWAS program has not been identified in the public documents presented. I ask that the relocation of SWAS ensures that highly and profoundly students throughout the District have equitable access.

As stated by the National Association for Gifted Children, gifted students need guidance from well-trained teachers who challenge and support them in order to fully develop their abilities. I know this to be true from my own personal involvement with gifted students. I have raised 2 gifted sons and I have taught gifted students for over 10 years. WCSD gifted and talented programs are a notable example of gifted programming. Please preserve the integrity of WCSD gifted programming.

Sincerely,
Bonnie Pillaro

From: Lisa Cronin
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 6:59 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comments in Support of the GT Program

Dear Honorable Board Members,

I have recently read the board agenda and proposed changes to the Gifted and Talented Programs. I understand that with the effects of COVID on our tourism-dependent state economy, that our budget has taken a devastating blow. I see the necessity to make budget cuts wherever possible; however, please keep in mind how valuable these programs are to our gifted students and families. Traditional school, and homeschool, are simply not effective for our gifted students. We depend on the educated and experienced teachers that specialize in teaching gifted students to challenge and engage them. My daughter thrived in her GT class in 3rd grade. She was in a 3rd-4th combo class with Mrs. Pruyn at Sepulveda Elementary. She *excelled* through the 4th grade curriculum. Unfortunately, the program was cut the following year. Although she loved her 4th grade teacher, she was bored and hated school. In 5th grade she attended a GT class for approximately one hour a week. This was simply not enough to keep her engaged. Being able to participate in a full GT program at Sky Ranch has made all the difference. These teachers not only know how to challenge and engage these students, but also have low enough student-teacher ratios to be able to do exciting and involved projects above and beyond what traditional students do. Please keep this in mind when considering cutting teachers and programs. Please keep the quality of GT intact. I am saddened to see that high school GT may be cut; however, I do see that there are other options such as dual credit. Please do not overwhelm our teachers already more than they are. We have a shortage of teachers due to the poor pay and limited respect their profession. We are all here due to the wonderful teachers in our lives. We need to ensure that it is a valued profession.

On another note: I would like to see the board find a way to lobby the legislature to move MORE funds from the marijuana tax revenue to fund our schools. As voters, we were under the impression that the revenue would supply MORE funding to our schools, not just change the way schools are funded. As voters, we feel that we were mislead. I understand that the board cannot lobby; however, there must by a way to get this to the attention of the legislators. I have contacted the legislatures over the past couple years regarding this issue. We need a stronger standing!

Thank you for all you do. I truly appreciate all the hard work that you have put in to keep our students learning during this crazy time.

Sincerely,
Lisa Cronin

From: Tara Sala
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 7:20 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GT Programming

Hello,

I am unfortunately once again writing to the school board in an effort for the members to hear the voices of the community and the students. It has been brought to my attention that the GT program is the next program to suffer cuts due to our lack of state funding. As an employee of WCSD and a parent of two students in the vulnerable GT community I am in the classrooms and personally in the lives of these students. I have a high schooler on the honors track who is hybrid and a middle schooler going everyday in the Magnet program at Swope. The differences in my own children is night and day. My high schooler is suffering. The hybrid situation is a joke, not to mention the emotional toil of not having sports, school activities and interactions with friends. It is my hope that we can ride out the Covid storm and he will go back to his honors classes that challenge and engage him and he can resume a life of a normal teenager. On the other hand, my middle school student is currently thriving, learning, growing, and making the best of the Covid situation. She has excellent teachers who push and engage her and give her the challenge she NEEDS. Without this program, I am afraid my student and many others will be the sad and REAL statistic that we often read about. The emotional consequence for not going to school, or for taking away programs that give students a purpose. This could be a real reality for my family if this program is taken away from her and others.

For those educators on the board, I don't think I need to remind you that this population is special. They are are our exceptional population, although with our special education students. While it is not an option to cut funding to special education, it shouldn't be to cut funding to our Gifted and Talented Programs as well.

I have attached an article I read this weekend in the New York Times. It should serve as a reminder to us that we currently are failing our students and children by taking away school and other programs that are important to them. I am saddened to be a part of this state and its leadership. So many other school districts are going to school EVERYDAY and finding ways to resume extra curricular activities safely. Most of you may have had school aged children but do not have children in the district now. The fight is real. Taking away one more thing is not an option.

Please visit the schools and see what is happening in these GT classrooms. And while you are there, I invite you to wait after school and see what happens when the students leave the school property. They are congregating, they socializing closer than six feet and without their masks. All the things that are being done in the classroom to keep kids apart are un-done the second they walk out the door. This has been going on all year. Many families like mine let our children play club sports and activities outside of the district and let them get together safely with friends because the emotional trade off isn't worth it anymore. Please consider having our students go back to school full time. This is beyond ridiculous.

[Surge of Student Suicides Pushes Las Vegas Schools to Reopen](#)





Surge of Student Suicides Pushes Las Vegas Schools to Reopen

Firmly linking teen suicides to school closings is difficult, but rising mental health emergencies and suicide r...

Sincerely,
Tara Sala

From: Kristen Harris
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 7:24 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Budged Cuts to GT

Dear Washoe County School District Board of Trustees,

As a Social Studies teacher in the Gifted and Talented Magnet program at Pine Middle School, I am writing in regards to the proposed cuts to the GT program. GT students have specific needs, and offering elementary SWAS and middle school magnet programs are the best way to meet those needs. I am concerned with the proposal to reduce SWAS to one school, and the magnet program to three schools. This would make SWAS programming unavailable to the majority of WCSD elementary school students, and many of those who get accepted to the magnet program without going through SWAS will have a more difficult time adjusting to the rigors of the program. I know that cuts are needed due to the current budget crisis, but hope that those cuts will have as little of a direct impact on students as possible. Thank you for your time.

Kristen Harris

From: Jessie Dean
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 8:11 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GATE, SWAS, Magnet

Hello, my name is Jessie Dean, I am an 8th-grade student at Archie Clayton Middle school. I have been in the magnet program there for almost 3 years now. Magnet has never failed to challenge me and push me towards excellence. As a gifted student, I know that we need that challenge and push and that we need programs like GATE, SWAS, and magnet. Magnet has given me so many opportunities that my peers in general ed don't get. I was able to participate in NHD, National History Day, last year, and my partner and I went to state with our project. It was an amazing experience that I want many other students to go through. I have two younger brothers who are very bright and need the challenge that magnet and GATE give their students. The magnet teachers are very dedicated as well and being able to have a normal education right now and be at school every day has definitely impacted my classmates and I for the better. I would ask that you please consider not taking away GATE, SWAS, or magnet. I have already been very prepared for my future and I know this is the education that I need and an education that all gifted students should be given an opportunity to get. Thank you,
Jessie Dean

From: Chris Castillo
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 8:45 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Closing school for a few snowflakes

My name is Chris Castillo on the parent of two children who attend rollan Melton Elementary School. I'm extremely frustrated that school got cancelled today while it's sunny, clear and the roads are all dry. Parenting school children through COVID has been difficult enough, and the cost of all these closed days and distance learning on a kindergarteners and first graders education are tremendous. Added school closures due to smoke have not helped but they're understandable, however closing school when the roads are completely dry outside is absolutely unnecessary. These closures have been detracting from my children's education. We all live in here in the Reno area. We know how to get to work on time we know how to get to school on time, the families around here are perfectly able to adapt to the fact that it's cold outside. We have full-time jobs that we can't get to because you guys consistently are delaying and cancelling school over frivolous reasons.

I have been informed that buses have a hard time driving when the roads are icy. The school district needs get some four-wheel drive buses, or get some bus drivers who know how to drive in the snow. On snowy mornings the children who use the bus stop could go a few minutes early so that the bus drivers can drive extra slow. These are all ways that we can adapt and overcome our situation rather than surrendering to it. And the 80% of children who reach reach school by being dropped off by their parents shouldn't lose 33% of their education because of a little bit of snow. In the case of this morning, there is no snow at all! My kids are losing out on school and I'm not working... for nk reason at all. Nevada schools are 45 out of 50 in the nation and this excuse-making is not helping. Our tax dollars are here to fund an education system, not a list of excuses.

The school closures are unacceptable and I would like to know what Washoe County School District is doing to prevent these from occurring in the future.

Chris

Chris M. Castillo, PhD
Castillo Geophysical Ltd.

From: Wilhite, Addison
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 9:16 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: EL and GT allocations

Dear WCSD Board,

It is with consternation that I see that both EL and GT allocations may be at risk of being lost. Targeting teacher allocations that support the students identified as having the most potential, and students who are most at risk during a time of budget constraints, strikes me as morally reprehensible. Do you want to look a kid in the eye who is a refugee from a war torn area of the world and speaks no English that they won't get extra support to get them ready for the academic rigors they will face in their classes? Or tell the kid who is identified as having extra academic potential and dreams of getting into a prominent university but doesn't get the extra help they need to be prepared for the challenges they will be confronted with? I urge you to take a stand for what is right for our best and brightest students as well as the ones who may be most at risk without the right supports in school to achieve success.

Addison Wilhite, M.A.

From:
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 9:59 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Board Meeting 1/26/2021

Esteemed Board of Trustees:

I am writing out of concern for the extreme cuts being proposed to the programs supporting students in our district who are learning English as a new language (English Learners, or ELs).

I understand that for many reasons, particularly the new funding formula and the pandemic, you and we are facing terrible choices everywhere. However, I would like to speak on behalf of those students and parents who are not aware of what is being proposed or for some other reason are not able to or comfortable participating in this public forum.

I would like to do so by telling you about just three students I happened to meet last week. In my role in the Department of English Language Development, I was asked to go to one of our high schools to test the English proficiency of three students who have recently enrolled in our district. One of them was a 12th grader who only needs to get the credits necessary to graduate and go on to cosmetology or real estate school; she seems secure in her plans.

The next student was a 9th grader whose primary language is Punjabi. He attended 8th and one semester of 9th grade here in private schools but had decided to enroll in one of our public high schools because the private school offered no English Language Development classes. He, his parents, and his former school realized that without explicit English instruction he would continue to struggle in his studies. We developed a plan for him to finish this year in Intermediate classes and move on to the Advanced level next year, along with all the usual graduation requirements.

The last student was a 10th grader from El Salvador. She arrived to the U.S. a few weeks ago, after attending a bilingual school for several years in her home country, and her English was quite good. However, she is planning to attend medical school, and knows that she needs to continue developing her academic language in order to be well prepared for those studies. I was happy to be able to tell her that the school might offer an EL Academic Language Development course next year that would provide her with some of the language background she needs to continue deepening her understanding.

These are just three stories of three random students out of hundreds that we test every year, hundreds who have similar dreams and stories and challenges that most of us never hear about. With the cuts being proposed to the EL budget, the chances of these students – and all the others like them – to get the language instruction needed to be “college and career ready” will all but disappear.

Particularly alarming are the cuts being proposed to middle school EL programming. Middle school is in some ways our “last chance” to help students catch up in their language before they enter the credit-driven environment of high school –

yet there exists the possibility that middle school EL instruction will be completely eliminated within the next few years! A potential 100:1 ratio of EL teachers to EL students (down from 50/60:1 several years ago to 70:1 for the last few years) is sending a very sorry message regarding the value of ELs, as well as the value of the language instruction our EL teachers provide.

The Department of ELD has adapted and will continue to adapt valiantly to all the cuts and changes we are handed, but at some point we must all recognize that diminishing the effectiveness of instruction for ELs does only harm to the students, the district, and the community. I ask that the Board of Trustees and the district Administration take this into account as you debate the heartbreaking budget cuts that are taking place.

Sincerely,

M. Maija Talso, MA-TESOL

Secondary ELD Program Facilitator

From:
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 10:01 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Clayton Magnet Program

Hello. I hope you are doing well. Today I was informed that a meeting is occurring soon which could remove the magnet program from Clayton. I have been in the program since 2nd grade, and I cannot express how much it has impacted my education. Recently I took a test to attempt to get into the Davidson academy - an IQ test. The results were shocking - a final 151 overall score. I, and many of my friends, have achieved so much because of the program. It allows lower income families and minorities to get a truly enriching learning experience. Removing the program would have such a negative impact on the lives of so many - and with Nevada already struggling in our education program it would be nearly impossible for those who are gifted to learn their potential and learn at their level.

--

Thanks, Gus
8th Grade GT at Clayton
GT since 2nd grade

From: Annelies Ransome
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 10:09 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Agenda Item 4.10 for Jan. 26th meeting

Dear Washoe County School Board,

Our family wishes to request that the GATE Institute at Procter R. Hug High School be fully funded and supported by the School Board as a permanent, on-going program within the school district.

The teachers and staff at the GATE Institute at Hug High are an incredible team. My student, like many other gifted students whose academic needs are not being met, was at risk of dropping out of high school. When she transferred to the GATE Institute, she found support in her academic community, led by Mr. John Kocian. Her love of learning in the classroom returned and her teachers have become valued mentors. She joined GATE Institute and Hug High activities and was invited to become a member of the National Honor Society. Most importantly, she started dreaming about her future again with the support and encouragement of the teachers and staff involved with the GATE Institute.

The GATE Institute's enrollment has suffered due to parents' fears of funding cuts or the program's elimination. Having the full support of the School Board would allow for these often-underserved students to enroll in the GATE Institute with confidence, knowing that they will be in a program that can support their educational goals for their entire high school careers. The GATE Institute should be a model for other school districts around the country, not a program that has to worry about its future.

Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,
Annelies Ransome
Current GATE Institute Parent
~~~~~  
Annelies Ransome

Reno, NV 89511  
~~~~~

From: Garecht, Emily
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 10:13 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Reduction in GT

Dear Washoe County Board of Trustees,

My name is Emily Garecht. I am a current educator in the district and I am also a mother of a child attending the Magnet program at Clayton Middle School. Her name is Jessie Dean. She has participated in Magnet for almost three years. The program has truly enriched her education in a way that no other program can offer. Throughout her educational career, the Magnet program has taught her how to create valuable short term and long term goals. It has pushed my daughter to achieve high levels of testing and performance in all subject areas. Her educational track for future colleges and goals are possible due to this excellent program.

As a teacher, I am fully aware of the value of class size and creating individualized learning plans. The teachers in the Magnet program are with the students for three years in a small cohort. The teachers know the students so well, that they have created an incredible learning environment with attention to individualized educational plans for these special children. They deserve an IEP just as much as any child who requires a special education.

As a parent, I entrust the district to provide the best education possible for my daughter. The Magnet program is that opportunity. I have a son who may be eligible in a few years for the Gifted and Talented program. I want to see him being challenged and enriched in the same setting. Please do not take away this opportunity from my son. Please do not take away this enriching program to any child!

Please do not defund this program. The teachers and the program are one of the most valuable educational platforms this district has. I want to entrust our district to enrich our highly performing students. They are an important part of our future. We must protect our future! Thank you for your time and I hope you consider my plea and keep Magnet and GT alive in our district.

Emily Garecht
Third Grade Teacher
Mamie Towles

From: Beedle, Wendy
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 10:19 AM
To: Public Comments
Cc: Guevara-Lopez, Amy
Subject: Reductions of staff for EL & GT

Dear Board of Trustees,

I am writing today because of my concern regarding the potential to cut teachers for student programs that are essential for our public education. Students needing EL support provided by a trained professional should not be lost during such an historic time as we look forward to ending a worldwide pandemic. The educational repercussions will continue far into the future and the need for education specific to EL students should not be eliminated due to our fiscal crisis. These students have been especially hard hit by Covid-19 and their needs should be addressed by teachers specifically trained in education that supports their reaching their educational potential. My fear is that the classroom teacher will again be told by administration that it is their responsibility to fill in the gaps from losing our EL teachers and need training that isn't equivalent to that which our EL & GT teachers specialize in for our students. Ultimately, our students & families lose valuable teachers who provide & equip them toward our goal of career and college readiness for the 21st century. Please reject this proposal and ask the school district to look at other ways to trim our budget. I know they will certainly find some alternatives that don't include losing essential staff.

Respectfully,
Wendy Beedle

From: Adele Hu
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 10:29 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Please Save GATE

Dear WCSD Board members,

It was almost exactly one year ago to the date that part of the SWAS program was placed on the chopping board at a WCSD Board meeting. On January 28, 2020, the Board members listened to the "Saving SWAS" pleas made by teachers, students, and parents (me included) and agreed to keep the SWAS programs where they were for the next two years.

Who could imagine SWAS and the overall GATE program are under assault once again, and so soon? Why is it every time when the state faces a budget shortfall, the GT students become victims of a budget cut? I agree with many experts' point of view that the GT education is a special needs education. The GT kids' needs for a more rigorous learning environment and to be with like-minded peers should be respected and protected.

I know the pandemic has made it difficult for the state budget planning. However, the pandemic will pass, our state economy will recover, but these gifted minds will not have a second chance at their childhood and at their primary and secondary education. Please don't shortchange them. They are the future of our state and our country. Please come up with some creative ways to raise money for education. The WCSD may organize some fundraising campaigns to fund the GATE program.

Born in China, I came to the US to pursue graduate education, because back then the US did and still does boast the best higher education in the world. But not until I gave birth and raised kids in the US did I realize the pre-college education in this country is rather lacking, often as a result of inadequate funding. Thankfully, we have the wonderful GATE program in the region, and all my three kids have benefited greatly from it. Two of them are now at Davidson Academy, and the youngest is a thriving 3rd grade SWAS student at Roy Gomm.

People outside China often marvel at China's meteoric rise from an impoverished socialism economy to the second largest economy in the world in a short span of four decades. However, it's quite evident that education has played one of the most significant roles in this miraculous transformation, even back when China was dirt poor. A popular motto there goes like this,

"Being broke, break not the education; All sufferings, suffer not the young minds."

I hope the state legislators in Carson City and our distinguished trustees will hear this, act in the best interest of all GT kids, and keep the GATE program as intact as possible.

Respectfully yours,

Adele

From: Sara DiLuna
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 10:36 AM
To: Public Comments
Cc: Johnny DiLuna
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment: Agenda Item 4.10 for the 26 January 2021 WCSD Board of Trustees Meeting

WCSD Board of Trustees,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed actions for today's meeting. Our family has been consistently pleased with the District's execution of ensuring education needs are paramount to our community during a global pandemic.

We are concerned, however, with proposed changes related to the GATE Department -- specifically around the School Within a School (SWAS) program. The documentation shows strategic alignment with this program is to "Ensure annual student academic growth through a system of curriculum, instruction, and assessment that is aligned, rigorous, and relevant. Instruction will be designed to meet the needs of every child in our diverse student population."

We submit the following three (3) comments for consideration to support the strategy to the benefit of the community, students, teachers, and staff:

1. Now is the time for stability rather than change. Organizational psychologists are already warning of long-tail impacts of COVID19 on mental health and wellness, resilience, and burnout. Society's recovery and return to normal will transpire over multiple years.
2. Social intermixing of the students in each elementary school across the whole student population is good for all. (The children feel like members of the current schools, as well, not just of the SWAS classroom).
3. A small percentage of students currently have access to GATE resources, yet many other students qualify as high-achieving and could benefit from this program. Consider expanding access to provide more opportunities to match the teaching and facility capacity rather than reducing capacity to meet current demand. This is a beneficial way to utilize the current facilities at each school, rather than unintentionally showing that there is not a need for these classrooms.

Again, thank you for the chance to voice our concerns as parents and members of the Reno community.

Kind regards,

John and Sara DiLuna

Parents of a 3rd grade CRES SWAS (Huffaker-zoned) student and a 6th grade MHMS GEMS student

From: Leah Ryan
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 10:50 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Agenda Item 4.10 - GATE

To the Board of Trustees:

Today, you will be discussing and possibly taking action to reduce the WCSD GATE program. I am here to explain to you why this is a horrible idea. I am a GT Magnet Teacher at Clayton Middle School. I have been in this position for three years and have long term subbed in the GATE department for three years prior. I am very familiar with the program and how much it benefits the GT children here in WCSD. I love my job. I love the students. This program is magical and the students are able to use this foundation to exceed in life.

GT students are not like normal students. Yes, they are academically gifted, but they are much deeper than that. They are a special education because their social and emotional needs are considerably higher than a general student. Before you make your vote, please become familiar with the information for Administrators on Gifted and Talented Kids by the National Association by Gifted Children found here: <https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources-administrators>. Specifically, you should review the “Myths about Gifted Students” found here: <https://www.nagc.org/myths-about-gifted-students>. In this article, it states that “A national study conducted by the Fordham Institute found that 58% of teachers have received no professional development focused on teaching academically advanced students in the past few years and 73% of teachers agreed that ‘Too often, the brightest students are bored and under-challenged in school – we’re not giving them a sufficient chance to thrive.’” If you put these kids in general education, you are stunting their future.

But wait, I bet you are under the impression that you aren’t cutting students out of the program. Well, with the current superintendent recommendations, you unfortunately will. By minimizing the GATE program and eliminating sites, you will be excluding children that don’t have the resources to move to different locations. Let me explain in more detail:

SWAS: For SWAS, you are proposing to reduce the number of teachers from 7 to 3-4. With the state laws, each teacher can teach up to 20 GT students at a time. You are now capping the number of students at SWAS from 140 to 60-80. You are currently at 77 BEFORE fall testing. So at most, you can take 3 students? That sounds like you will eliminate future students. Further, only having one SWAS school is going to impact transportation. Even if you picked a school in the center of our population, students from Spanish Springs, Cold Springs, and South Reno may still be traveling up to 45 minutes to get to school, not including all of the stops. Let’s not even imagine if we have a SWAS student that lives out in Pyramid Lake. They already are on the bus for their zone school for over an hour. It isn’t fair for these kids. Lastly, if you limit the number of students in SWAS, you will be lowering the number of students in Magnet and then the number of students in the GATE Institute. This cascade of events will eventually eliminate the entire program.

Magnet: I teach Magnet at the school you are proposing to cut – Clayton Middle School. We are a *very* diverse program, with students of vast races and socioeconomical status. We are much more diverse than the other magnet schools. Many of our students are zoned for Clayton and do not have the resources to relocate to a different school, and unlike SWAS, you all do not provide bussing to these programs. They would be forced to go to Clayton as a general education student. Yes, I understand that our population is low, but Swope Middle

School is overcapacity. If GATE capped their population, I bet many of the families at Swope would have the resources to travel to Clayton.

One note: On the slideshow for this board meeting agenda, it says that you would be eliminating 5 teacher positions. One of our GT teacher positions here at Clayton is grant funded. Would you be eliminating another teacher at another site as well then to reach 5?

GT Institute: There is no doubt that you would be eliminating students from this program as you are cutting the entire program. You may say that there are other advanced programs for these children, but not to this quality. Where else will you have one school with Dual Enrollment Pathways, Comprehensive GT Internships, Medical Pathways, AP Capstone diploma, and GATE Support (including GT Endorsed Educators, GATE HS Coordinator GATE HS Counselor, and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) for Gifted Learners). It doesn't exist. They could go to the IB program, but it wouldn't be the same. These students need a special education and you would be eliminating the *only high school GATE program*. Their needs don't end after middle school. Further, for the current 8th graders that we encouraged to apply for this program, they will be losing a teacher every single year. How many classes are taught by GT teachers at Hug? If you eliminate a teacher a year until it is eliminated, *how many subjects will the final two teachers teach in 2024-2025?!*

Itinerants: Okay, lets imagine that you do cap and cut these programs. What happens to these GT Students that cannot be relocated? Well, they go to general education and are pulled out for a minimum of 150 minutes a week with an itinerant. This will increase the number of students on each itinerant's caseload. Not only are the itinerants overworked already, but you want to eliminate two of them while also increasing their numbers? That is ridiculous.

Ideas: I understand, your budget is tight, but there are always options without impacting our student's potential.

First, I would suggest lowering the percentile on the CogAT and Naglieri tests needed to receive GT assistance in WCSD. Why can't we lower our percentile from the 98th to the 96th-97th percentile? I would hypothesize that if we lowered the percentiles, then the students on the cusp of getting GT assistance now would greatly appreciate being given the opportunity of being in these programs. Further, I know our district is trying their hardest to help identify gifted and talented students of different race and socioeconomic background, but it is still lacking. Lowering these percentiles would help. For more information on why and how there is a bias in GT identification, please read the NAGC's article on identification: <https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/gifted-education-practices/identification>

Second, I would suggest that the GATE's administration be evaluated. I bet there are some positions that could be dissolved in other positions to save a lot of money in this department without impacting students.

Third, move the location of the Magnet schools. Clayton and Swope are only 4 miles away from each other. There are no Magnet schools in South Reno – Pine is the closest. Instead of eliminating one of the 4 magnets, could you move them so they are more spread out? That could help more students have the access to these programs as well and would boost the population at the GATE Institute.

Finally, eliminate the money from somewhere else. These kids need this program. These kids THRIVE in this program. Please do not eliminating their future.

This GATE program is nationally recognized by the NAGC. Why would you slash one of the best things about our district? Finally, if you are willing to cut special education, what won't you cut?

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Leah Martinez
GATE Teacher and Concerned Citizen

From: Austria, Michael
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 10:53 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: For the EL Teachers

To whom it may concern,

I fully support our EL programs and I am against cutting EL Teachers. These students and their teachers need all the support that they can get. At what point will these students learn how to read, write, listen, and speak if they don't get the chance to do that in a mainstream classroom?

EL teachers help students build foundations in their language, something that they might not be able to get in their mainstream classroom. Our students come from many different backgrounds, some are refugees, as stated in the presentation. By removing EL Teachers from schools, you are giving more work to their mainstream teachers at a time where they are already being spread thin.

Michael Austria
English Language Development
Earl Wooster High School

From:
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 12:40 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Magnet Parent's Comment for 01/26 Meeting

Hello,

Good Morning.

My name is Arun and my daughter, Yazhini, joined the Magnet Program (in Pine Middle School) just 2 days ago. She was originally a GATE student in Carson Middle School and we moved to WCSD just because her CMS teachers endorsed that Magnet as the best challenging program in NV. To get into it, my daughter has to wait months to get the Psychologist's available (pandemic restrictions) to test her IQ and then finally found eligible in the mid of the school year.

While we are just settling down, I came through the [Agenda of the Jan 26th meeting](#). It is really concerning to see there will be a reduction in the Magnet program.

I hereby request to voice my below comment on the Tuesday, 01/26th meeting.

Comment:

It is unfortunate to see NV at 45th rank in education ([Reference](#)) . I always seen NV in the last 5 -7 positions at the national level. (For a student) Coming from this low rank state, I wonder, how tough it will be to compete with other State students in Grad Schools or how will the Professional skills be compared to the peers from other states.

At that time, I learned about the Magnet program and I see it as the solution for helping the kids who has some vision to shape a better tomorrow. This Magnet program shed some light on my kid's future. I firmly believe, only through education, a kid from mediocre background can go places. Only through education a kid can dream and reach their goal. So, this uplifting program needs to be protected and enriched rather facing some downsizing. If there is a low enrollment in a site, perhaps the root cause(s) for the low enrollment need to be identified and possible improvements need to be pursued rather closing that site or imposing some reduction in the overall program.

I thank the board for allowing my comment. I believe there are many comments from other parents and hoping this board will not pursue any reduction on Magnet program.

Finally, saying "Thank you" to the Magnet team is an understatement. We always OWE them for tirelessly helping our kids.

Regards,
Arun
(A helpless parent of a hopeful child)

Thanks & Regards

Mohana & Arun

From: Chad Walter
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 11:29 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GATE Department Cuts

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you today to comment on possible cuts in allocations to the Gifted and Talented Education Department. I am an itinerant teacher in the department who currently provides services to 7 different schools. Many of my students tell me that GATE days are their favorite days of the week because they get to work with like minded students on engaging and challenging curriculum. I know that many people feel these students will do well in the regular classroom, and in some cases that will be true. However, Gifted Students do require special attention just like the students who receive Special Education services. If these services were to go away, many of our brightest students will be left behind.

I can speak to this first hand, because I am also the parent of a child who went through both the School Within a School program and the Magnet Middle School program. My son thrived under both of these settings unlike the times before and after he was in them. In early elementary he was given nothing to challenge him and would spend most of his day either reading a book or being asked to help students who were slower to grasp the concepts he had already mastered. When he joined the SWAS program he was finally able to achieve his full potential as a student. As he moved to the Magnet program, he accelerated even further, making great strides in both academics and socially as he was surrounded with like minded peers. Once he got to high school and was no longer being challenged in the ways he was used to, he became frustrated at the lack of meaningful work and the behaviors of his fellow students that kept his teachers from being able to do their jobs.

I urge you to think of students like my son who need the challenge and highly engaging curriculum to be successful in school before cutting the GATE Department allocations.

Thank you,

Chad Walter

From: Jennifer Shukla
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 11:29 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Objections to GATE funding cuts

I am writing to you today as a parent of a student currently enrolled in the School Within a School (SWAS) Program at Hunsberger Elementary School. In addition, I am writing as an individual who received gifted services in elementary and middle school, as the spouse of an individual who received, albeit little, gifted services from Washoe County School District, and as an educator who taught gifted children.

When my husband, Dr. Sanjai Shukla, was a student in Washoe County Schools (1984-1997), he received one day of gifted instruction per week. He had to get on a bus at Brown Elementary and ride to Caughlin Ranch to receive services. The hour and a half that he spent on the bus each week was instructional and experiential learning time lost. Meanwhile, in rural East Tennessee, I was receiving gifted education once a week in my elementary school with my fellow schoolmates. When we were in middle school, Sanjai endured a G/T class at Pine MS with a teacher that expected the students to “just figure it out” because they were gifted. Back to rural Tennessee, in middle school, I was enrolled in Advanced Literature class for one period a day with other gifted students in which we learned to read and unpack literature at a high school level. In addition, the G/T department facilitated after school activities to continue our growth beyond the classroom. It is shameful that Reno, a much larger city, could not provide even comparable services to a small Appalachian town. One might argue that while Sanjai received woefully few services as a gifted student, he’s done “just fine” for himself. However, an educator’s focus should always be looking to grow every child to their full potential. What more might he have achieved if his growth was better fostered at an early age?

The GATE program of Washoe County Schools has progressed mightily since my husband was in school. In 2016, my husband had an opportunity to take a job at Duke University in North Carolina. The strength of the GATE program and primarily SWAS is one of the reasons I objected to the move. Having been a teacher in one of the best school systems in North Carolina, I was aware that even they did not have a program as special and targeted for gifted kids as SWAS. You see, the SWAS program was a contributing factor to keeping an educated professional in Reno.

I have read the proposal to condense the SWAS program to one site that serves the entire district and assert my extreme opposition to this idea. This idea returns us back to the days of my husband’s experiences with gifted education. Hours of each week would be lost to the transportation of these students to/from school. Those hours could be spent learning and playing, building important skills to help them navigate the world around them. Many SWAS parents have made housing decisions based on the existing locations of the programs.

As an educator, I am uncomfortably aware that inequity exists in all current education systems. These proposed changes threaten to widen that equity gap even more. The locations of existing SWAS programs already limit the access of students residing in the Eastern part of the District. The answer cannot be to further limit the availability of gifted services by choosing one location within the over 6,000 square mile area of this district.

As a parent, I have had the privilege of volunteering in my children’s classrooms at Hunsberger. I watched my older child, Arjun, struggle to make friends in his general education 2nd grade class. He was despondent upon coming home, bemoaning the perception that no one wanted to play with him. He whined that he didn’t like school and didn’t want to go. I watched him complete work early and search for something to do. Because he adored his teacher, he resisted the urge to get into mischief. However, this “in-between” time is a place where

many gifted students struggle. Some children disrupt other students. Other children, like my second grader, will just tune out and fail to tune back in at the appropriate time. When Arjun moved into his 3rd grade SWAS class, his complaints about feeling left out disappeared. When I volunteered in his class, he was happily engaged in challenging work with classmates at or above his level. He had found a place where he belonged and could thrive.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education requires that “the State must have in effect policies and procedures to ensure that public agencies in the State meet the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) requirements.” Our gifted children are not neurotypical, therefore they classify as “differently-abled”. Gifted education is Special Education. It is restrictive to their growth to place them in classrooms meant for neurotypical learners. This district continues to increase the qualifying NNAT percentile score needed to receive GATE services. In doing so, they are excluding hundreds of young minds from receiving services that might help them to grow as learners.

Having served in education, I understand that money is a difficult resource to secure. However, trying to balance the budgets by cutting services to exceptional students is folly. If we are only thinking of money, then consider my earlier anecdote about our family choosing to remain in Reno because of the gifted education the district could provide to our children. The GATE program should be treated like a feather in the cap of the Washoe County School District. It should be regarded as an enticement to lure or retain young, educated professional families to our great city.

I know I have written a great deal here. So, my main points are as follows:

1. Gifted Education is Special Education
2. Moving SWAS to one location is wrong because it will further limit access to the program and decrease the amount of meaningful time students need to learn and grow.
3. Decreasing access to gifted services is a violation of the IDEA Least Restrictive Environment requirement.
4. The GATE program should be celebrated and funded in order to attract families to whom education is a priority to our city.

Thank you for your time in reading my thoughts and objections to the proposals to cut services with the GATE program of Washoe County School District.

Sincerely,

Jennifer

Shukla

From: Rossi, Christa
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 11:58 AM
To: Taylor, Angela
Cc: Curtis, Jeana; Biersdorff, Debra; McNeill, Kristen; BoardMembers; Public Comments; COVID Questions
Subject: Re: Addressing Agenda Item: COVID-19 Update Re: Use of Playground Equipment

Good morning Dr. Taylor,

Thank you for your correspondence regarding use of playground equipment.

I hope that Dr. McNeill and the COVID meeting she attended last week were able to discuss this item.

I know there are many things going on for everyone and that the use of playground equipment may not be on the top of everyone's priority list, but the policy regarding this needs to change.

Is there any information from the COVID meeting that can be shared with staff at schools? Can a model or plan be shared that is like Caughlin Ranch's regarding playground rotations? We have a very good one that limits interactions between classes.

What must be done to allow the use of playground equipment at elementary schools?

If staff are willing to sanitize and use the equipment as part of a rotation model, why can't that occur?

Children need active engagement and opportunities to play (in and outside of the classroom). Play is a way for them to develop language and social skills. Outside play (using equipment) also supports gross motor development.

I have heard many teachers state, "The district doesn't want to change current protocol regarding use of playground equipment because the process is working." Teachers are beginning to believe that the administration from the school district and board members have a "if it's not broke don't fix it" mentality.

As a parent of a pre-k student and a teacher I hope this is not true.

P

*Christa Rossi, M.Ed
Washoe County School District
Caughlin Ranch Elementary School
Kindergarten Teacher*

From: Taylor, Angela <ATaylor@WashoeSchools.net>

Sent: Friday, January 15, 2021 2:05 PM

To: Rossi, Christa

Cc: Curtis, Jeana <JCurtis@washoeschools.net>; Biersdorff, Debra <DBiersdorff@washoeschools.net>; McNeill, Kristen <KMcNeill@washoeschools.net>

Subject: Re: Addressing Agenda Item: COVID-19 Update Re: Use of Playground Equipment

Dear Ms. Rossi,

No problem at all with you sharing your thoughts, ideas and concerns. I've spoken with Dr. McNeill. She confirmed that this is an agenda item for today's COVID meeting and it so it will be further discussed and re-evaluated today. I'm certainly not promising any outcome, but I do want you to know that it's on the radar.

I really do believe that the vast majority of the WCSD admin and leadership would like to give all students as all of the support, activity opportunity and resources they can; especially during such difficult times.

Thank you again.

Have a great weekend.

Angie Taylor

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Dr. Angela D. Taylor, Vice President

WCSD Board of Trustees | District E

ataylor@washoeschools.net

www.washoeschools.net

Board Office: 775.789.4648

"If you think education is expensive, try ignorance." **Derek Bok**



DAILY REMINDER

- **Wear Face Coverings At All Times**
- **Maintain Social Distancing**
- **Wash Your Hands & Use Hand Sanitizer**
- **Help Keep Our Facilities Clean**
- **Perform a [Self-Screening](#) every day before school**



**Washoe County
School District**

From: "Rossi, Christa"

Date: Friday, January 15, 2021 at 7:13 AM

To: "Taylor, Angela" <ATaylor@WashoeSchools.net>

Cc: "Curtis, Jeana" <JCurtis@washoeschools.net>, "Biersdorff, Debra" <DBiersdorff@washoeschools.net>, "McNeill, Kristen" <KMcNeill@washoeschools.net>

Subject: Re: Addressing Agenda Item: COVID-19 Update Re: Use of Playground Equipment

Dear Dr. Taylor,

Thank you for your response and gathering the information. If I may, I would like to share some background information, address some of these points, and ask some follow-up questions. I apologize as this may very lengthy.

At the beginning of this year our principal informed us that we had the opportunity to create a plan, that would work for our school, to ensure proper social distancing during break times, lunch, specials, etc. We were given the opportunity to have autonomy in creating our plan to best fit the needs of our students. Our plan had to be submitted for approval, by whom I can't recall. Based on what was proposed and what we have been doing I can assume our plan was approved.

Questions and information related to your statements, in no particular order:

"The second issue is the requirement to maintain social distancing on such equipment, particularly with elementary students. The Governor's Directives require this so it is not something that we can waive."

Specific to the school I teach at, Caughlin Ranch, students begin arriving at school at 8:40. They immediately come to their classroom. At each movement break time we (the classroom teachers) take our students to a designated area of our playground in order to maintain social distancing guidelines set forth by the Governor. **Each hallway has designated times so the whole school population isn't in the playground at the same time. At most, 6 classes are in 6 different locations at each movement break.** We are doing the majority of the "duty" with our class to ensure this. Each class, in their own way, has already provided items and activities for their students to engage with at recess (recess bags with bubbles, jump ropes, tennis balls, chalk). Then when use of shared equipment was permitted we included hula hoops and kick balls. ***I'm not asking for the Governor's requirement to be waived, I'm asking that if a school was given the autonomy to create their own schedule to maintain social distancing why can't they be given the autonomy to add the playground equipment into the rotation of where their students are permitted to go on the playground?*** As it stands now, our students are permitted in the following playground areas (intermediate basketball court, field, hopscotch and four square, US map, primary basketball courts and the primary dirt area). ***Why wouldn't it be feasible to move a class from the primary dirt area to the playground equipment next to it?***

"The first is that we do not have staff to sanitize playground equipment on a regular and frequent basis during a school day. As you know, this is an important step in keeping our surfaces safe and clean."

At the beginning of the year staff was informed we would need to clean student surfaces with the approved cleaner. I was completely on board with doing so, but because of other teacher input (throughout the district) and possible concern for safety, the cleaning solution was removed from our rooms and we were given soap and water to clean and disinfect student surfaces and items they touched. As I stated in my first email, I would be happy to disinfect the play equipment after my class uses it. If soap and water isn't permitted I would do it with the approved cleaning solution if I can have it back.

Additionally, the CDC states the following on their website: "The targeted use of disinfectants can be done effectively, efficiently, and safely on outdoor hard surfaces and objects frequently touched by multiple people (e.g., handrails, benches); make sure disinfectant has thoroughly dried before allowing children to play."

The CDC also states that hand washing is imperative to helping stop the spread of COVID. As I have stated students are washing their hands each time we come in from outside play because of the allowed use of shared balls, hula hoops, etc. Hand-washing will remain a standard of practice.

“Finally, with the above challenges in mind, Area Superintendents worked with elementary principals to get their thoughts and input. While some did want to open equipment, the majority did not. Again, citing the above concerns. I know this is difficult for both students and teachers. To help, elementary schools have worked to put in place games and activities for recess that follow safety protocols.”

I appreciate the hard work of our area superintendents and their communication with principals. ***Has this conversation regarding use and opening of playground equipment been revisited?*** Also, specific to my school and stated above, some classes have provided items and activities for their students to engage with at recess (recess bags with bubbles, jump ropes, tennis balls, chalk). Then when use of shared equipment was permitted we included hula hoops and kick balls and older students with the skills engaged in playing basketball, football and soccer.

Interestingly enough, our school spoke of this yesterday in a virtual staff meeting. Some teachers mentioned that the WEA also stated the same concerns with social distancing and sanitizing. I don't know if the WEA input is a major factor in consideration of using playground equipment. As a teacher who is not a member of the WEA I hope that it isn't.

If this is a legal issue related to risk, then again, is there a way to work with the district's legal department to develop a waiver for parents to sign if they are ok with their child/children using the playground equipment? In the same waiver it could be stated that all social distancing, sanitizing and hand washing protocols would still be in place. Is this an option to help ensure the legal safety of teachers and the district?

I'm not naive enough to think that all teachers would be on board with having to sanitize one more thing, but for those that are I am hopeful that permission can be given. Perhaps the use of volunteers (1 or 2 per school) could be utilized to sanitize the equipment if teachers want to have their class use it, but don't want to sanitize. Yes, Caughlin is unique in the fact that we have parent volunteers willing to help (myself included- I would happily give up my 20 min. prep or my contractual 30 min. lunch to sanitize my son's playground so his pre-k class could use it).

Caughlin Ranch teachers are doing the majority of their own duties which hasn't been standard practice before COVID. I am happy to continue this model to maintain social distancing and small group sizes throughout the school day. ***If schools were given the autonomy to create their own plans to maintain social distancing and sanitizing then why can we not re-adjust those plans to include the use of playground equipment?***

What is the purpose of saying schools have autonomy if it can't be used in every aspect within the given guidelines?

I sincerely hope this is discussed at today's WCSD COVID meeting. I am interested to see what the members of the committee have to say regarding the American Association of Pediatrics published an article in October stating, "Reducing classmate interactions/play in Pre-K aged children may not provide substantial COVID-19 risk reduction." Similarly, they also stated, "Reducing classmate interactions/play in Elementary school-aged children may not provide substantial COVID-19 risk reduction to justify potential harms."

As you are, I am also hopeful for positive and new changes to be made that will impact our students in a positive manner.

Again, thank you for your time. I sincerely appreciate your thorough response. I know you and all others are incredibly busy. So thank you for addressing the advocacy I'm trying to provide my son and my students.

Kindly,
Christa Rossi

(Mom and Parent)

Christa

Christa Rossi
Kindergarten Teacher
Caughlin Ranch Elementary School

On Jan 14, 2021, at 10:27 PM, Taylor, Angela <ATaylor@washoeschools.net> wrote:

Dear Ms. Rossi,
First of all, thank you for your service to the students and families of the WCSD, especially during such a challenging past 10 months. Thank you for your email. I've asked staff for information so that I can accurately respond to your comments.

I've learned that there are three primary issues (in no particular order) that challenge the opening of all playgrounds on our school grounds.

The first is that we do not have staff to sanitize playground equipment on a regular and frequent basis during a school day. As you know, this is an important step in keeping our surfaces safe and clean.

The second issue is the requirement to maintain social distancing on such equipment, particularly with elementary students. The Governor's Directives require this so it is not something that we can waive.

Finally, with the above challenges in mind, Area Superintendents worked with elementary principals to get their thoughts and input. While some did want to open equipment, the majority did not. Again, citing the above concerns. I know this is difficult for both students and teachers. To help, elementary schools have worked to put in place games and activities for recess that follow safety protocols.

The Superintendent is planning to place this on the agenda for the next WCSD COVID meeting, which is tomorrow. Should anything change, that information will go out right away.

Thank you again, for sharing your concerns. I know this is one more thing that has been impacted by this pandemic. I'm hopeful that better days are ahead - soon.

Sincerely,
Angie Taylor

=====
Dr. Angela D. Taylor, Vice President
WCSD Board of Trustees | District E
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www.washoeschools.net <<http://www.washoeschools.net>>
Board Office: 775.789.4648
"If you think education is expensive, try ignorance." Derek Bok

DAILY REMINDER

- * Wear Face Coverings At All Times
- * Maintain Social Distancing
- * Wash Your Hands & Use Hand Sanitizer
- * Help Keep Our Facilities Clean
- * Perform a Self-Screening <<https://www.washoeschools.net/SelfScreening>> every day before school

On 1/12/21, 8:23 AM, "Rossi, Christa" <CMRossi@washoeschools.net> wrote:

Good morning,

Welcome to the new board members. As a teacher and a parent I look forward to working with all of you in efforts to support our students and children in every aspect of education.

In this correspondence I am hoping that teachers and parents will be receiving a timeline for use of playground equipment at elementary schools.

If students have been permitted to share balls, jump ropes, hula hoops, etc. then the use of playground equipment should also be permitted.

My son is in a pre-k program but can't use the playground equipment. Kindergartners can play with tennis balls on a ball wall (all touching the ball), 4th graders can play football (all touching and catching the same ball), the 6th graders can play basketball (all touching the same ball), but can't use the playground equipment. I also would add that the football and basketball games are played in rather close proximity because that is the nature of the game, but they still can't use the playground equipment.

My question still remains, why is the playground equipment still off limits if other games and balls are already being shared? Stating that social distancing can't be maintained is absurd as students are playing games together anyway. All students are still required to wash hands after touching the shared balls, hula hoops, jump ropes, etc. The protocol would be the same with playground equipment. I know for a fact that if my students (Kindergartners) had the opportunity to play on equipment they would also be willing to help wipe it down after to sanitize.

Or is it a matter of teacher comfort? Could schools and/or teachers at schools have the autonomy to decide what they would like to do for their students? Or is it an a factor of liability? Could schools, with the help of the district legal department, develop a waiver for students to use the equipment with verbiage that indicates that all sanitary protocols for use and hand washing would still be in place?

My son's class is unique as they are the only ones who would utilize the playground equipment on the playground they use, so sanitizing it isn't an issue. As a parent who also works at the same school I would volunteer to sanitize it for them if required. They also wash hands so often throughout the day that their hands would be clean after use of equipment.

To further support the use of playground equipment for young children, the American Association of Pediatrics published an article in October stating, "Reducing classmate interactions/play in Pre-K aged children may not provide substantial COVID-19 risk reduction." Similarly, they also stated, "Reducing classmate interactions/play in Elementary school-aged children may not provide substantial COVID-19

risk reduction to justify potential harms.”

I am aware and have been told that many community members, teachers, administrators, doctors, and pediatricians are a part of the COVID re-opening committee for our district. Is this being discussed? When can pre-k and elementary aged students expect to be allowed to interact and play again? If it's being worked on and discussed this is fabulous! Providing teachers and parents with a date and/or timeline is even better and deserved for our children.

Thank you for reading and have a great day.

Christa Rossi
(Mom and teacher)

From: Kara Denney
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 12:07 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GT Reduction

To whom it may concern:

As a parent of the Magnet program, I am concerned about what the future holds for this program. We have heard that once again there will be cuts to the program. Two years ago, the first cut impacted my child drastically as her school's program was cut from Whitehead Elementary and was moved to SW Reno. My child was not able to attend that year because of transportation issues.

The year she had to go back to regular Ed effected her immensely. She was bored and was not challenged. She hated attending school because there were no longer any hands on activities for her to engage in. She also missed attending with like-minded students.

I understand that budgets will be cut in every program. My request is that the cut will not be from the Magnet program again.

Thank you for your time,
Kara Denney

Sent from my iPhone

From: Sara Skroch
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 12:10 PM
To: Public Comments; BoardMembers
Cc: julia.ratti@sen.state.nv.us; heidi.gansert@sen.state.nv.us;
natha.anderson@asm.state.nv.us; theresa.benitezthompson@asm.state.nv.us;
jill.dickman@asm.state.nv.us; lisa.krasner@asm.state.nv.us; PK.Oneill@asm.state.nv.us;
sarah.peters@asm.state.nv.us; jill.tolles@asm.state.nv.us
Subject: [EXTERNAL] WCSD GATE funding concern

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my concern over the proposed budget cuts to the WCSD GATE program. The cuts appear to be aimed at the most at risk and diverse special education locations, including Clayton MS Magnet. This is a deeply concerning lack of equity to me, as time and time again, we see the most vulnerable populations taking the brunt of reduction in services and social programs. Not only is GATE programming crucial to meeting the education needs of children who require a different pathway to success, it has also been designated by WCSD as so necessary, that students were prioritized by being sent to school full time instead of being on a hybrid program like much of the rest of WCSD middle and high school students.

Every governmental agency maintains areas of their budget that do not operate in the most transparent and efficient manner, examples of which have come to light nationwide include excessive furnishing budgets, government employees who also charge their employer for "independent contractor" hours, excessive administrator positions, wasteful duplication, improper or fraudulent credit card usages, and lack of a competitive bidding process on contracts, just to name a few. ***Please consider a transparent and impartial, third party, full budget audit before proposing budget cuts to essential education services.***

Thank you,
Sara Skroch

From: Christine Niho
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 12:28 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Fwd: From a SWAS parent

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Christine Niho**
Date: Tue, Jan 26, 2021 at 7:05 AM
Subject: Re: From a SWAS parent
To: <Jeffrey.Church@washoeschools.net>, <EMinetto@washoeschools.net>, <Andrew.Caudill@washoeschools.net>, <Kurt.Thigpen@washoeschools.net>, <ATaylor@washoeschools.net>, <Jacqueline.Calvert@washoeschools.net>, <DNocolet@washoeschools.net>, <BoardMembers@washoeschools.net>

Dear Washoe County School District Board Members,

My name is Christine Niho and I am a parent of a Caughlin Ranch Elementary School 4th grade SWAS student. My understanding is that there are proposed funding cuts that are to be discussed at today's meeting that may decrease the current scope of special programs such as SWAS. I write today to strongly discourage any funding cuts as they will negatively impact my daughter's education and mental health.

In the two years my daughter has participated in SWAS, she went from being a child with low self esteem and anxiety who was not confident and very hypercritical of her mistakes to a child who is now able to process mistakes and learn from them. She went from needing weekly therapy sessions (since she was 5 years old) with a licensed clinical social worker to only going in every other week. She is also now surrounded with a peer group of like minded students and friends and feels like she has a place in her school. The teachers at SWAS have made a tremendous impact on her educational processes and she has thrived under their special advanced training to work with gifted children. I was unaware that these gifted children come with their own unique special needs and challenges such as "uneven development, perfectionism, adult expectations, intense sensitivity, self-definition, and alienation". (taken from Davidson Academy website)

It is my argument that taking away these special services from these children is no different from taking away special services from children with other disabilities that impact education. Many of the kids in the SWAS program cannot progress effectively in a regular school setting and do need special services and instruction from teachers that specialize in working with these kids. We often talk about the special needs of children in the classroom on one side of the bell curve, but please do not forget about the special needs of children at the opposite end of the bell curve. Again, I strongly discourage any funding cuts to SWAS and please do not deprive them of the services they need in order to achieve.

Thank you for your time and consideration as I know that this past year has been incredibly stressful and challenging to you all

My sincere thanks,
Christine Niho

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Christine Niho, OTR/L, CHT,
Co-owner & Managing Member of Nevada Hand Therapy, LLC

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Christine Niho, OTR/L, CHT,
Co-owner & Managing Member of Nevada Hand Therapy, LLC

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From: Geno Ferretto
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 1:08 PM
To: Public Comments
Cc: Johnson, Sean; Westfall, Victoria
Subject: [EXTERNAL] January 26, 2021 Board Meeting Public Comment re: GATE and Magnet Programs

Dear Washoe County School District Board of Trustees:

I was recently made aware that the Washoe County School District Board of Trustees is considering reducing the services offered by the District's GATE and Magnet Programs. I am extremely disappointed to learn this and am adamantly against any reduction in these programs.

My daughter is a 6th grade student currently attending the Swope Magnet program in-person. This program has exceeded any and all expectations she had as a student, and I had as a parent, by a mile. The class structure, student count, curriculum, and teaching staff are a perfect fit for my daughter and her peers. She has always enjoyed school, but this year I have seen a side of her that surprised me - she loves school and is self driven to work harder, do more, participate in in-class discussions/interactions, and learn at a high level. She does this all on her own with NO "push" from her parents. She did well in elementary school, but was not self driven, lacked confidence, was bored, and she was simply lost in the sea of so many students. She now has developed thriving relationships with her peers and teachers, which is clearly improving her ability to develop as a student and person. The non-Magnet teacher/student environment of teaching to the lowest common denominator would never work for my child and many others that need the Magnet type programs. I can't say enough positive things about the Magnet program and specifically the Swope 6th grade Magnet teaching staff - they are incredible, care so much for their students, and a perfect fit for my child. They are different from all other teachers my children have had in the past. Their passion for teaching at a higher level, the small and focused class size, and their communication with students and parents has led to my child becoming confident and excelling in school to a level I never imagined.

Should the Magnet program be reduced, I would be forced to explore other options for my daughter's education, which would be heartbreaking for her. I understand the Board has difficult decisions to make on a daily basis and we as a community continue to struggle to NOT be one of the lowest ranking school districts in the nation. However, you have a choice to provide a higher level of education and NOT cutback the GATE and Magnet programs. Do the right thing for our children and community and keep GATE and Magnet intact.

Regards,

Geno Ferretto

From:
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 1:16 PM
To: BoardMembers; Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Fwd: Agenda Item 4.10

Dear Trustees,

I would like to share my thoughts with you regarding agenda item 4.10, the proposal to reduce services for Gifted and Talented students. My two sons have both experienced elementary pull-out, SWAS, middle school Magnet, and the GATE Institute. One is a very successful 2019 graduate who was able to achieve his dream of attending the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and the other is currently a junior at the GATE Institute and is also enrolled in the Health Science Academy. His goal is to earn a PhD or MD/MPH and work in public health. I have no doubt that he will be successful in his endeavor because he has had the academic preparation and emotional support from his amazing teachers through these GATE programs. They are not unusual when compared to their gifted peers—many are equally capable and ambitious.

I feel the GATE programs have been the driving force for my children's happiness and academic success. Gifted children, particularly highly and profoundly gifted children, have different learning and emotional support needs that are not satisfied by simply skipping grade levels or taking rigorous courses. Truly, they are as "out-of-the-norm" as the children with learning disabilities and other special educational needs. It is not an exaggeration to say that SWAS completely transformed life for both my kids. One experienced social isolation and extreme frustration from inadequate academic rigor and the other was completely disengaged from school because of the lack of academic challenge in their general ed classrooms. There is nothing more heartbreaking than seeing your children face these struggles at 6 and 7 years old. Their lives were immensely changed within the first few weeks in SWAS, where they felt accepted by like-minded peers and had teachers who understood how to educate and support gifted children. They realized their academic potentials and thrived socially through the SWAS and middle school Magnet programs, and the GATE Institute.

The GATE Institute has the potential to be a shining star for our school district. Admittedly, there have been struggles with enrollment at the GATE Institute in these first few years of its existence. The main comments I hear from other GATE parents is that Hug has an old, rundown campus and concerns about Hug being a safe environment for their students. I thoroughly believe that the new high school will dispel the "Hug is unsafe" myth and can offer our gifted high school students a fantastic opportunity at a new state-of-the-art facility. With the unique math and English pathways, the GATE Institute's curriculum is already the ideal continuation for kids coming out of the middle school Magnet programs. Many teachers at Hug are highly supportive of gifted ed and received endorsements to adapt their practices for that population. Please do not give up on it now that it has a great chance to succeed!

While my children will "age out" before these proposed changes would go into effect, they and I feel like it is our obligation to support the gifted children coming up in the future. They deserve to have the opportunities my children had and are entitled to an appropriate education to serve their needs. I know the District faces a grim outlook for the budget, but please do everything in your power to minimize the proposed cuts to GATE programs. These proposed changes will truly be devastating for many of our children and their families.

Sincerely,

Melissa Gillis

From: Danielle McIntosh
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 1:19 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Gifted and Talented Program

Dear Board Members,

I am writing today to share my disappointment and sadness at the idea of our students losing more.

My son has been a part of the GT program since 3rd grade. When my son was first accepted into the GT program, he was invited to attend the SWAS program. We talked about it extensively and he did not want to attend because he did not want to be away from the friends he had made or the comfort of his school. Instead, he participated in the itinerant program which allowed him to grow academically in a way the general education classroom would not have allowed him to do. Though I believe the SWAS program would have given him even more, as is the case with many gifted students, change was no something he was ready for at that point. At that time, the SWAS program was located at a school near our house. This factor, had he chosen to attend, would have made all the difference. Our family would not have been able to get him to a school that was not near us. We have utilized Before and After program for all the years our children have gone to school. Both my husband and I work full-time so we would not be able to get our son somewhere that was not our zoned school, that did not offer before and after school programs.

In proposing the reduction of the SWAS program from 3 schools to 1, how would the school district ensure students continue to get the same level of service they can through the SWAS program? These are highly gifted students ... classroom differentiation will not cut it. One, maybe two days a week with an itinerant teacher will not provide them the same structure these students have come to expect. How is the district equity lens being applied to this situation? Students deserve to receive the education they need.

Today my son is in 7th grade and he attends the Middle School Magnet program at Sky Ranch Middle School. My son worked extremely hard in GT 3rd – 5th so that he could attend the Magnet Program. We were so fortunate that the Magnet Program ended up being at his zoned school. He can utilize district transportation AND still sees his peers from elementary school at lunch and during electives times. I cannot have imagined a more perfect scenario for his middle school years.

When I heard there could be cuts to the Magnet Program, I was sick to my stomach. How could this happen? My son is a part of a community. A family that includes his peers and teachers. He has a peer group that supports each other with the rigorous curriculum, as well as hangs out and shares like interests. He has educators who understand his needs and work with him to ensure he is successful. He is established. Middle School can be such a challenging time for students, and I am thankful that my son has this program and feels he has found his place. For him to lose all of this ... that would be devastating. After the events of the past, almost year, these kids do not deserve to lose even more! I asked my son what he would want to do if his program was no longer at Sky Ranch. He said, "I guess we would have to see what my friends decided to do." I didn't have the heart to tell him we wouldn't be able to get him to another school. He said, "Mom, I think I would get bored in my classes. I wouldn't like that." He has worked hard to be where he is! I know that he is not alone in the words that he has expressed.

In proposing the end to some of the Magnet Programs, how would the district ensure that students were not lost? How would they ensure students had a place where they got exactly what they needed? The Magnet program is about more than just accelerated curriculum. It is about more than just offering harder content. It is an entire set of philosophies; it is a way of learning. These students work hard and will be prepared for what high school and even college has to offer BECAUSE they were a part of this program. How can the district be okay with taking that away from these students?

I know that we are in a budget crisis. But please, do not make that budget crisis the fault of our students. Do not take away their future. Do not take away more than this year already has. This crisis should not be on their backs. There must be a better way.

Thank you for your time,

Danielle McIntosh

From: Scott Hernandez
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 1:26 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comment to Agenda Item 4.10

I write in opposition to any reduction in WCSD's gifted and talented programs. I currently have a child who attends the SWAS program at Roy Gomm. This program is invaluable to him; he has high-level academic needs and the accompanying social and emotional needs typical of gifted children. I am skeptical that his academic needs would be met in a traditional classroom, and I request that the trustees do what they can to preserve the current SWAS program.

If the trustees have no option but to reduce the number of SWAS sites to one, I encourage the trustees to select a new site that addresses the economic, racial, and geographical diversity of the existing gifted and talented student body and the potential gifted and talented student body whose needs are not currently being met due to locating all three SWAS sites within the most affluent communities in the district. Selecting a single SWAS site in the geographic center of Washoe County's primary population centers, near the interstate freeways, would be more equitable than providing mere convenience to those least in need.

Regards,
Scott Hernandez

From: Allison Platz
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 1:31 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Fw: Fiscal Year 2022 GATE programming changes

Dear WCSD Board Members:

The GATE programming and possible changes is on the agenda tonight. I have been seeing comments regarding the possible cuts to the GATE programming for 2022 online and pleads to support those kids. Honestly, it is devastating for any school program to be cut. I know it is not an easy decision for any of you nor are there any winners.

I have 2 children in the district currently. They are very good students-however, not GT members. I am in favor for possible cuts if we can salvage programs for the majority of your students. The kids in the middle are the ones that have suffered the most during this pandemic. They need consistency and let's be honest, they will need some bolstering of content after this last year. I feel like the kids in the middle often get the shaft. There is a significant difference between the level of student capability in that middle group. Some need significant help/assistance-they are closer to students in special education. There are also the students at the top of that group that could rival any GT kid. And as everyone knows, GATE does not get you an automatic pass for honors/AP classes in high school.

Whatever the decision regarding the program changes to GATE, please keep in mind the needs of the kids in the middle. They are the ones that cannot afford to have more taken away from them.

Other ideas for GT/available for all kids:

After school based clubs heavy on science or math

Electives heavy on science or math/experiments

Mandatory science fair submissions

Book clubs with in depth discussions

From: Lana Robinson
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 1:37 PM
To: Public Comments
Cc: Porter, Lindsey; Johnson, Sean
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Agenda item 4.10 GT

The GT program is an asset to the Washoe County School District and to our community. The elimination or reduction of services provided to these children could be detrimental not only to the students and teachers but also for the district.

I have two school aged children; one whom is enrolled in the Magnet program at Sky Ranch and one who switched to homeschool after a few weeks in the current school year. We only kept my son enrolled in Washoe County because of the GT program and its benefits such as; smaller classes, teachers that are educated and understand the minds and emotions of gifted kids, the communication and resources from The GT directors and staff. These are all necessary things to create an opportunity for these brilliant minds to achieve academic success. Our kids and young adults have a great positive impact in our schools and our communities. Not only with their test scores but with their leadership and behavior. If these things are not available, my son (and I'm sure many others) would not be able to thrive in a regular school setting. This would cause us to withdrawal from Washoe County Schools and use a private online program for gifted students.

I hope you reconsider and do not approve changes that are proposed during this meeting. These children deserve an opportunity to have the best possible education available to them, not be punished because of their brilliance.

Sincerely,

Lana Robinson

Monday, January 25, 2021

Dear Trustees,

My name is Millie and I want you to know that the GATE program is one of the most important programs the District has. I am so very grateful it exists, but as an 8th grader who has been in GT since 1st grade, I feel like the GT Bridge is burning up behind me and I cannot get across it fast enough.

Washoe County School District is one of the nation's largest with top numbers of enrollment, and yet every year that the District grows, the GT program has shrunk. When I was in the 3rd grade, I attended the School Within A School program at Jerry Whitehead and was able to have bus service from my zoned school. When I left Jerry Whitehead, one of my friends' younger brother was entering 5th grade SWAS. That was the year the SWAS program was removed from Jerry Whitehead, so his only choice was to go to a SWAS school in Reno with NO bus service, or drop out of the program. His parents decided they could not make that school run and after 3 years in SWAS, he returned to General Education. Those budget decisions limited his ability to access the program.

The SWAS program is amazing and when I entered it in 3rd grade, I felt like I was home. I was with my peers; something all students strive for. We learned at an accelerated rate that kept us engaged and made school interesting and exciting. In a general education classroom, the teaching is focused on students who are in the middle of the learning bell curve. The students on either ends of the bell curve – the special education students – are usually left to find their way. Those to the lower end must fight for services, as do those on the higher end. Yet, while special education is written into the budget, GT is not. It is a vulnerable program. But it shouldn't be. GT isn't for rich kids; it is for extremely smart kids. Smart kids can have any skin color, but sometimes, only white kids' parents can afford the time and gas to travel across town.

In GT, every student has a similar intellect, so the curriculum is made to fit our needs. The workload is challenging, but the challenge was the best part. After SWAS, I entered the Middle School Magnet Program at Sky Ranch. In 7th grade, I was encouraged to read and analyze books meant for seniors in high school and college freshmen. I had already tested off the MAPS scale. I was taking Algebra and Geometry. I had already finished high school biology.

Also at Sky Ranch, I was reintroduced to general education for my electives. I had not been in a general education classroom for 4 years, so I was excited to mix with friends who were not in my GT classes. I was instantly bored, and it was strangely difficult to focus. I was not engaged at all. I felt like I was just wasting time sitting there. I already knew much more than the other kids. The work was too easy. I regularly fought the urge to give up. The elective teachers tried to compensate by giving me extra work, which only added stress. More is not better.

These elective classes showed me how fortunate I was to have the option of being in the GT program all these years. The GT program has benefited me so much more than I had realized, and it makes me very sad that there may be students who will miss out on the opportunity to be challenged if the GT program is cut any more. Cutting the program will lead to students who should be challenged by academics, slowing down their academic pace to almost a standstill. Their intellectual abilities will no longer be challenged and tested,

they will be unable to excel because the teachers are not there; the coursework is not there. The curriculum will be gone.

The District's motto is, "Every child, by name and by face to graduation." But if we continue to shut out those with gifted abilities and lump them in with everyone else, a more accurate motto would be, "Average children by name and face to graduation."

Thank you,

Millie Grieve

8th Grade Student, Sky Ranch Middle School

Dear School Board, Hi I'm
Stewart and I'm in SWAG
3rd grade, this is my first
year in SWAG and I would
be at Caughlin Ranch
if I was in it. I was
really excited to get
in to SWAG last year
because I learned
a lot in the gate program
at my previous school.
My parents told me
that SWAG might be cut
I hope that doesn't happen
because Caughlin Ranch
is already 20 minutes
away. My mom used to
drive more than 2 hours
in the car getting me
and my sister to two
schools on different
sides of town which
will happen again after
COVID. If you move all
the SWAG kids to one
school and we have to
drive even further, I may
not be able to stay in the
program. Please don't cut SWAG!

Sincerely, Stewart Davis

From: Ken MacAleese
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 10:31 PM
To: Public Comments
Cc: BoardMembers; Martinez, Leah; Roberts, Janet; Tanner, Nathan A; Turnipseed, Rhonda; Shults, Leslie
Subject: [EXTERNAL] 1.26.21 Board Meeting Comment-GT Clayton Middle Magnet Program

Dear Board of Trustees-

I have significant concerns about the potential removal of the Clayton MS Magnet Program for the Clayton "family" of students, teachers, families, and administrators. My family has one student who currently attends this program as a sixth grader, and it is her world. She loves learning and her school. Her teachers this year in the GT program, Mrs. Janet Roberts and Ms. Leah Martinez, have challenged my daughter intellectually...and did so in the middle of a pandemic having to shift their teaching styles from in-person to digital instruction through fires and pandemic closure. Having also been working from home, I have witnessed first-hand these teachers talents in juggling new middle schoolers. They have created a social environment that encourages a safe place to learn, celebrated the diversity of their student population (we are very proud of this in the old Northwest), and allowed the formation of social friendships among those who are "different" from their peers. They also have had the time for some parent "customer service" sending detailed, helpful emails about how our student learns and works through problems so we can better help her at home. The students from this group need different types of challenges and supports than students in the general population and a specific, specialized program to support their cognitive development. The Clayton MS Magnet Program's teachers and the Clayton MS administrators that support them help create the right environment for my daughter to learn.

As our state and region continue to diversify from a gambling and tourism *only* economy, we see the courting of the technology companies by our legislators and governors. Repeatedly, we have to sell these groups on our schools and their educational track record. Our GT Programs as a whole are not only critical infrastructure for our student communities but are also for our state and region's businesses and technology pursuits. It is odd the Board would cut the programs that support our community's long-term growth and our region's ability to attract and maintain jobs. I believe these decisions are inconsistent with our elected state officials and business leaders' intentions.

As a parent and business-owner, I would urge the Board to consider any other ways to trim other district costs or delay the initiation of non-essential projects as a way to meet requested budget reductions. Ideally, programs and administrative costs that are not specifically directed toward students could be other places to review.

Sincerely,

Ken MacAleese, father to Kennedy MacAleese (Clayton Middle School GT 6th Grader)

Ken MacAleese, Ph.D., BCBA-D, LBA
Advanced Child Behavior Solutions, LLC

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Dear School Board,

My name is Eleanor and this is my second year in the GT Magnet at Clayton Middle School. I heard that the GT Magnet program at Clayton might be cut or reduced in some way. I want to tell you how important this program is to me. In the GT Magnet last year on site and this year distance learning, all of our GT magnet teachers are AMAZING. They always have interesting projects and lessons for us, and I can finally say that I really look forward to school every day.

In the general education classes, some of the teachers have no idea what to do with students who are in higher math and reading, and even if they want to, they don't have time to make separate lessons for us. In 5th grade when I was in a regular class, every week my teacher had us take a math pretest and when I got 100 percent, she would make me spend the whole week tutoring the kids who were failing math. I wanted to be helpful to my classmates, but they did NOT want me to tutor them, so it was a big waste of time for all of us. It was very frustrating not to be able to learn anything new. When my mom asked my teacher if she could give me more challenging math work to do, she refused. She was completely overwhelmed already by the class and said she didn't have time to give

ne special treatment. So 5th grade was a completely lost year for me in math.

I don't want special treatment. I just want an education that is appropriate to my skill level. Every kid deserves that. The GT Magnet program is challenging and I know my teachers in the magnet care about whether I am actually learning. Please don't cut the GT Magnet program!

Sincerely,
Eleanor Davis

From: Laura Duffrin
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 2:20 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Wcsd Meeting January 26, 2021 Agenda item 4.10

Dear School Board Members,

I have two grandchildren currently enrolled in the Washoe County Gate Programs, i.e., Gate Institute (Hug) and Magnet (Clayton). I am dismayed that the Gate programs are once again being considered for elimination and/or reduction.

These GT programs of instruction were implemented pursuant to Nevada Revised Statute for the purpose of servicing students with gifted and talented abilities. The Legislature (NRS 388) declared there were pupils enrolled in public schools whose needs were not being met. The Gate Programs were designed to address the different and distinctive academic learning styles of these gifted pupils.

Many of these students are at risk of being bullied, singled out for being different and often cannot relate to others. Currently, their "special needs" are met through the Gate Program allowing them to be challenged and exposed to pupils with similar goals and ideas.

Unfortunately, Nevada's education system ranks close to the bottom and has an overall score of D+. It is disconcerting that this pattern continues year after year. Yet, the Gate Program continues to be targeted and the special needs of its students are of little importance.

The Gate Program/Institute has allowed its students the academic and social needs to best serve them. Without the program and its educators, these pupils will be at risk for failure.

Thank you for your service and support.

Laura Duffrin

Sent from my iPad

From: Clinton Toledo
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 2:33 PM
To: Public Comments; BoardMembers
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Return to Distance Learning/Protect GATE Programs

Board of Trustees,

Today I'm reaching out to you regarding two topics. 1) Rethink your position on distance learning, and 2) to vote against the removal of the GATE program at Hug HS.

Currently, our COVID trends in the region are on the decline. According to a recent RGJ article, this can be attributed to the fact that students and staff have been learning from distance, as student and staff related COVID cases have declined over the period of distance learning. That is evidence that distance learning was serving its purpose: to lower the test positivity rate and the infection rate here in our state. We have a collective responsibility to ensure that our communities are protected and safe from this virus. Placing our students back into school puts our most vulnerable communities at risk of contracting the virus and spreading it unknowingly to other individuals within the community. WCSD and the Board of Trustees has a responsibility to ensure the safety of Washoe County as a whole and must do everything within their power to protect the livelihood and the safety of the people who call Washoe County home.

Secondly, the Gifted and Talented programs throughout WCSD serve a purpose to the students who need them most. They aren't simply AP classes, but targeted programs that are aimed at meeting the needs of students who need them most. Eliminating these programs is creating a disservice to these students and puts their academic futures at risk. Students who aren't adequately challenged face higher risks of dropping out or falling behind in schools. We have a responsibility to those students to ensure that we set a high academic bar, and that we meet the needs of those students. Furthermore, getting rid of the GATE program at the only Title I high school in the city of Reno is a disservice to the majority black and brown students who call Hug High School their home, and will serve as a means of increasing educational inequity in our public school system.

Thank you for your time,

Clint Toledo

From: Vanina Coudriet
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 2:43 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment - GT programs

To Whom It May Concern,

GT programs are invaluable to our community. Gifted and talented children who are not challenged will tend to perform lower than average. It would be devastating to our community if our gifted and talented future industry leaders were to disappear due to lack of development.

My son attended GT at Brown Elementary School, SWAS at Hunsberger ES and is currently a student at the Davidson Academy. Our daughter is also in GT at Brown ES. These programs have given our children an opportunity grow and develop at their level.

A society that ignores any part of the population is in danger. Gifted and talented people who are not properly developed and challenged won't reach their potential, thus eliminating talent and opportunities for the community as a whole.

Thanks for your consideration,

Vanina Coudriet, MBA

From: Selena La Rue
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 2:46 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] agenda item 4.11

Hello,

I am writing to express my concern about the changes proposed for the EL program in Washoe County School District. I would like some clarity on what will happen to the EL teachers who are being phased out and who will pick up the slack of their work.

Currently, our EL teachers are providing indispensable supports to our students with the greatest level of need. The work they do every day is vital both to our students' success and to the success of our general education teachers in teaching our EL students.

I am concerned that taking away EL teachers and placing the load of EL instruction entirely on our gen ed teachers will be adding one more thing to our plates without taking anything off. You've all seen the staff surveys that show we are burned out, stressed, exhausted, and literally cannot complete the current tasks on our workload. Adding complete ownership of EL instruction will push educators over the edge.

I am also concerned about what will happen to our EL teachers. They went to school and got certified to teach English as a second language and support our EL students. It would be unfair to just place them into random new positions for which they are untrained or uninterested. There needs to be some guarantee that these teachers will remain within their chosen field and still have a place in our district.

The overarching issue here is of course the issues with the new funding plan, SB 543. I urge the board and the district to stand with their staff associations in fighting for changes to SB 543. As it stands now, this funding plan is only creating new winners and new losers without improving education as a whole. Please add your voices, publicly, to the chorus which is calling for dramatic changes to the bill and fight with us to ensure our students with the most need are still able to access the supports upon which they rely.

Thank you,
~Selena La Rue Hatch
WCSD Teacher

From: Aaron Gumns
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 2:46 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Possible Cuts to the GATE program and specifically Clayton Middle School.

Hello,

My name is Aaron Gumns and I am writing this as a concerned father.

My experience with education in Nevada is pretty extensive considering I was born in Carson City and have spent a majority of my life in the state. I am a graduate of Carson City High School and I have attended University here in Reno. I remember all too well the struggles I personally had in school, especially elementary school. I remember being so bored that I couldn't engage in the activities the curriculum put in front of me as a student.

That being said, Both of my daughters experience the same thing. Before my youngest daughter, Wimberly, began attending the GATE program, she would be so bored with her classes that she would find ways to do other activities to keep her brain active and engaged. Some of them being more social than she should be and getting her into trouble with the teachers. It was at that point that she was introduced to GT. She tested in and it has changed her academic path. Something that is rarely understood, is that these children are "special", and they require special education to be engaged and excel. When you can challenge a student to learn and they are engaged you are on the right side of history as it were. If you take a child who has been engaged and put them back into a regular classroom, you are creating the reason why Nevada is ranked 45th in the nation in education. Additionally, why are these cuts so specific and to the GATE program when realistically we should be looking at the overall bloat in administrative costs and not at the programs that are creating engaged and well-adjusted students. It seems to me that providing quality education in programs like these should be more important than adding another administrative assistant to make sure that someone's car is washed or their laundry is dropped off at the cleaners.

I humbly suggest that cuts to education be the last thing looked at when we have so much bloat in other parts of the budget including money that is allocated to projects that haven't even taken flight. There are millions and millions of dollars that are just sitting that could and should be moved to the next fiscal year where we will hopefully be back in a better financial state because the pandemic should be behind us.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Aaron Gumns

Tuesday, January 26, 2021

Dear Trustees,

I am a senior at TMCC HS; Class of 2021. I will graduate this May with my Associates of Science before I receive my high school diploma. I know that TMCC HS is not specified as a school for the Gifted and Talented, but I would not be at this school if it were not for the GT Program.

I tested into GT when I was in 3rd grade. Mr. Steinmetz was my GT teacher and I saw him for 3 hours once a week in the Quad, along with a handful of other students in the pull-out program at Spanish Springs Elementary. Mr. Steinmetz introduced some crazy things during those 3 hours in the Quad and he got my brain working in a totally different way. My brain seriously hurt after our sessions. I had to go home and take a nap sometimes. I would probably not have attended the GT sessions if I had to travel to a second school; having it in my zoned school made GT accessible.

Mr. Steinmetz encouraged me to apply to the Middle School Magnet Program at Mendive and I got in. Even though it was not my zoned middle school, Mendive was still in Sparks, at least, and my parents changed their schedule and joined carpools so I could attend. Middle school hours are challenging for parents, no matter what, but when there is no bus service and the school is not your zoned school, the school run is a more serious issue.

I attended the Magnet program for 6th, 7th, and 8th. It kicked my butt. It was GT all the time, every day, and it made my head spin, but in a good way. Instead of coasting through, I had to sit up and take notice. I had to participate. I had to move. I had to move off my very, very comfortable spot of being the smartest kid in the classroom. My world went from black and white to color. The teachers pushed me. For the first time, I was surrounded by others who were smarter than me. Smarter than me – there were kids smarter than me? Yes, indeed, and I found that out tenfold in 7th grade when the SWAS kids came over. Wow. I had to pick my game up again. The teachers expected it and, eventually, I came to expect it of myself.

In 9th grade, I returned to General Education and went to Spanish Springs High School. I was a freshman in Honors Geography, Chemistry, and Honors English. Although they were advanced classes for my age and grade, they were noticeably easy compared to the Magnet Program. I took my foot off the gas. I got straight A's for the first (and only!) time and I didn't even have any homework. Life was good, but, admittedly, a boring. I was not challenged.

In 10th grade, I was accepted into TMCC HS and the pace was what I remembered at Middle School. But instead of being overwhelmed, like many of my peers, I was energized. This was a pace – a level of expectation – that I was familiar with. This was normal for me. The teaching staff at TMCC HS are excellent and have taught me many skills, but I credit the GT program and the awesome GT teachers for giving me the vision that picking up my game was even something that could be done.

The GT program gave me the gift of the Open Mindset, when mine was clearly – and comfortably – closed. And there is no closing what has been opened. If the GT Program is cut further, it will limit accessibility. It will not be able to serve all those who need it, and those minds may stay closed as a consequence.

Yearly the District seems to limit the GT program. Each year it seems something has been eliminated or curtailed. It is almost as if the District does not want the GT Program to exist at all. There are three misconceptions about GT that I'd like to dispel: 1) GT is not just for rich kids, 2) general education is not enough for GT kids, and 3) GT kids do not need more (work), they need deeper levels of teaching. Especially those who were like me: quite okay with the status quo.

The District will truly limit accessibility if they continue to eliminate sites, busing, and teacher allocations. Please find another way to meet the budget cuts that are necessary.

Sincerely,
Miles Grieve

From: Meredith Whelan
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 2:55 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] proposed cuts to GATE programs

Please consider placing special fees for GATE kids and reaching out to the WCSD families for fundraising before cutting SWAS and MAGNET programs. Many of us have the means to pay \$500+/year for our children to be in these programs and are willing to participate in fundraising or crowd funding for these programs. Thank you for your consideration,
Meredith Whelan

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Meredith Whelan Music Studio

From: Dallas Hulsey
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 2:57 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment on 4.10 and 4.11

Dear Superintendent McNeill and members of the board,

SB543 is causing a funding crisis that will affect the quality of education our students receive for many years to come. As you all know, many of our students are under-served and increasingly under-prepared thanks to outrageous class sizes and the COVID-19 pandemic. With that in mind, it's important to note that many of our students are in special populations.

Our EL students are particularly vulnerable to being under-prepared for adulthood and need as much support as they can get. Similarly, our GT students need to be challenged so that they can rise to their full potential to serve their communities properly in the future. Without EL and GT educators to teach these students we under-serve not only them, but ourselves. We are missing out on making these students into the best version of themselves and the value they could bring to our community.

As we lose crucial educator allocations in the areas of EL and GT, other educators cannot help but ask if their jobs are on the line next. If SB543 comes to fruition we could see as many as 1 in 8 educators lose their jobs and see our class sizes balloon to unprecedented levels. If you think we have an educational crisis now, wait until more educators and support staff quit in droves at the unfair labor conditions they will face.

I ask this board to rally behind their educators to demand proper educational funding to secure our collective future. We cannot afford to lose some of our most precious community resources: our future adults, our educators, and our support staff. We must have the funds to operate well, not at the bare minimum. We NEED funding.

With empathy and respect for your position,
Dallas Hulsey

*Please note that these opinions are my own and are not reflective of any official stance by the Washoe Education Association.

From: Warr, Sherry
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 2:58 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: I CARE ABOUT STUDENTS

I see this decision as a vote for the sucess of students or not. I think we could find other places to cut the budget. .

I care about the sucess of all students before the 6 digits pay checks some are receiving.

Sherry Warr
Special Education
Desert Heights Elementary

From: Corinna Grassi
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 3:02 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Proposed GATE budget cuts

While I understand that the state and school district are facing budget shortfalls due to COVID-19 I believe that budget cuts to the incredible GATE program offerings through WCSD will be a shortsighted solution that will cause problems further down the road for an often underserved population. At the end of this year, my children will have all moved on from the WCSD GATE programming, but I believe these programs are important for future families and our community as a whole.

I moved to Reno, in part, because of the unique educational offerings available for GT students. My children have attended SWAS elementary programs, the middle school magnet program, the GT Institute and The Davidson Academy (which is outside of WCSD). As my children apply to colleges and prepare for their adult lives, their academic preparation has made it possible for them to compete with top students throughout our country. The WCSD GATE teachers are all trained to handle the special needs of the gifted population. These children, like all students, are entitled to a free and *appropriate* education. In the case of gifted children, this does include programming that is designed to move at a faster pace and be more in-depth than the typical student could handle. This isn't a matter of GT students receiving a better education, but rather the education suited to their educational needs. Please do not take this away from them.

In addition, one of the most important parts of the entire GATE experience is the existence of a peer group. It is incredibly hard to be in the 1% on either end of the educational spectrum and there is a lot of comfort to be found in knowing and conversing with people who are like yourself.

I'm incredibly grateful for the educational opportunities my own children have had in Washoe County's GATE programs and I hope you will find a way to preserve these opportunities for all the bright minds of the future.

Regards,

Corinna Grassi

Batchelder, Jennifer

From: Molly Rezac <molly@peterezacphotography.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 3:16 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] WCSD Board of Trustee Meeting 1/26/2021 Agenda 4.10

01/26/2021 Public Comment

Dear Board of Trustees:

I am writing regarding Agenda Item 4.10 regarding proposed changes to the Gifted and Talented Department and services. Please do not move forward with the proposed reduction in the services provided by GATE. Children with *special* needs will suffer as a result of such action. As a mother of two children who have been through the SWAS program and the Magnet Middle School Program (one currently still attending Clayton Magnet), I understand first-hand the value of the GATE programming at WCSD. The funding reductions suggested in this agenda item must be rejected. First, it does not appear that any research went into the effect of these cuts on the students in need of these services. No parents, teachers or other experts were consulted prior to recommending these cuts. Indeed, GATE has been said to be the “crown jewel” of the district. In a state known for its abysmal public education, WCSD’s GATE program is internationally known and recognized as a leader in education. Other school districts look to this program as the gold standard in Gifted and Talented education. With these cuts, potentially taken without any due diligence, you are sending a message that you don’t believe in what has proven to be a great success. Second, many of the GATE students are twice exceptional. Special gifted education is needed for these students. Even those gifted students who are not twice exceptional, without GATE, would be set on a path where their dropout, depression and suicide rates have been shown to be much higher than the rates of other students. Third, this decision has a disparate impact on many protected students. At-risk, minority, low income and EL families will suffer the greatest harm by reducing this funding. Families with resources will find a way to get their children the education they need by leaving the district and enter private education or home schooling. Those without such resources will not those options, and their educational needs will not be met, further exacerbating the division between these groups. Moreover, there is no plan for the students who will no longer be offered GATE services; instead, there is only a plan to take away funding for the program that meets their needs. Such lack of planning highlights the lack of research done prior to this recommendation. I urge you to reject this recommendation and study other areas for budget reductions—do not take money away from the students who need these services to succeed.

Thank you.

Molly Rezac

From: Michelle Taylor
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 3:18 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GT Funding

This email is regarding the proposed funding cuts to the GT program - Item 4.10 for tonight's School Board Meeting.

I have learned that the WCSD Board will be discussing cutting funding to the GT program. I have three children attending Washoe County Schools: a sixth grader in Clayton's Magnet program, a fifth grader in Melton's AAP program, and a kindergartener who will likely attend the GT program in the future.

When we moved to Reno several years ago, my oldest child was placed in a regular, non-GT classroom. His teachers struggled to give him course work that challenged him because they were trying to meet the needs of so many different students. He started to dread going to school because he was so bored and he was not being challenged academically. The following year we moved and he started attending Melton. After meeting him and seeing his high test scores, the principal moved him into the AAP (Advanced Academic Placement) class. He thrived in this more rigorous class and began to love school again. He is now attending and thriving in Clayton's Magnet program. The GT teachers know how to work with gifted students and help their minds flourish.

Students identified as gifted need a different learning environment. The GT teachers know how to work with gifted students and help their minds flourish. Students need the GT teachers and program to help them succeed. Please do not reduce GT services. We should be supporting these programs, not reducing them.

Thank you,
Michelle Taylor
michelle-taylor@hotmail.com
801.360.8532

From: Fox-Howells, Haiden
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 3:23 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: GATE Program Cutting

To Whom it may concern,

I am Haiden Fox-Howells, a student at Clayton Pre-AP Academy, and am in the 8th Grade Magnet Program, a program that has helped me challenge myself like I never have before, I entered in the sixth grade, and have been there ever since, but before this, I was bored in school, I wasn't being challenged by anything, but when I got accepted, I was excited to be able to do math that challenges me. The program has also helped me socially, before I would just read a book when I was done eating lunch, this is because no one had the interests I did, but in the MAGNET program, I have friends, I talk to people now, before I was in a shell, but the program made me come out of that shell. I don't just want you to keep the program the way it is for me, but for younger GATE students as well, such as my brother, who is in 6th grade at the MAGNET program at Clayton, and I want him to have an education where he is challenged, and this can't happen at another school, because my parents don't have time to drive him there every morning. I recently learned I was accepted into the GATE Institute next year; this justified all my hard work! Now that will be taken away from me, and all my hard work will seem for nothing, why would the school district take away from the students who show up, work hard, get high test scores and boost graduation rates? The other options for high school are not guaranteed, they are the luck of the draw to get in. My zoned high school will not offer me the AP classes and challenge me to the best of my abilities. Please don't take this from me or the upcoming students who are finding themselves within the GT programs. There are many other reasons, but these are the main ones, thank you for your time.

Haiden Fox-Howells

Here is a petition signed by MAGNET students that oppose the cutting of the program:

 [Petition against cutting the GATE Program](#)

From: Evan Humphreys
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 3:23 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GATE changes?

Dear WCSD,

As there's been no direct communication as to what changes are being proposed, I've heard only rumors, but they include significant cuts to programs that I believe help this community greatly. As a parent, I can attest to the value of the SWAS programs, the Middle School GT program, and the GT institute at Hug HS. In a time of funding crisis, I can understand the argument that critical resources should be directed to the students most in need of assistance, and the GT students don't fall into this category.

However, I would submit that there is a larger value to our community and our society, by keeping these students and families from needing to seek private school options, or leaving our county altogether, in order to provide the educational opportunities appropriate for these students. I believe our society benefits in a material way by sending the message that all our students belong in school together, sharing this experience together, rather than dividing us further. Our families should work together to make these school communities stronger, rather than sending (intentionally or not) a select few off to a silo elsewhere.

Furthermore, having these programs housed in our schools (especially some of our schools with a less-advantaged population) allows for more opportunities to bridge some of these gaps, to identify other students who could benefit from these programs, who might be more willing and able to transition into a program housed in their school, than if it required a bigger logistical and social hurdle to go elsewhere.

Tough budget decisions are necessary, but rather than canceling programs altogether, please consider the value of keeping our public schools a place where all our kids can get the best education possible.

Evan Humphreys, Hug HS parent

From: Brendan Casey
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 3:27 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GT Budget Cuts

Dear Washoe County School Board Members,

I don't think that the GT budget should be cut because there are many things that students get out of it. We get to be in the same class with a lot of kids who share the same interests as us. We are challenged instead of sitting in a classroom being bored. And we get to be more prepared for the world when we come out of Junior High and are ready for High School AP classes. I think that the GT program is a community and it shouldn't be cut away.

From,
Brendan Casey, Clayton Middle School GATE Magnet Program

RE: 01-26-21 Board Agenda Item 4.10

January 26, 2021

Dear WCSD Board of Trustees,

I am writing to address proposed changes to the Gifted and Talented programming in WCSD. I find the current board agenda item disturbing due to the lack of transparent communication around whatever proposals are being put forward. It is my understanding that “changes in programming” across all levels are on the agenda. In speaking with teachers in gifted programs (magnet & the Institute) in the district, I am concerned that the community is lacking a strong understanding of what the board is being asked to consider today. From an outside perspective, it feels as if this is a “budget conserving” measure that has not been informed by all the stakeholders who deserve input into the process. Over time, it has been my perspective that the WCSD has done an increasingly better job of identifying underrepresented populations and ensuring that students in GATE programs have teachers who, with G/T credentials, are “highly qualified” in meeting their needs. It would be my hope that these continue to be priorities in whatever changes are being proposed. I currently work at Hug HS and am grateful that after receiving a newsletter from the Institute reflecting this agenda item, I was able to walk over and speak to three teachers in the Institute. I wonder what other parents even know about the proposed changes?

I respectfully request that the Board of Trustees delay making a decision on any substantive changes to alter GATE programming pending a more widely surveyed community of stakeholders to ensure there is both understanding of what is being proposed and the opportunity to have a voice in the process.

Thank you for your time and consideration in ensuring that the needs of ALL learners in WCSD are thoughtfully addressed.

Sincerely,

Kelly Humphreys, Ph.D.
WCSD Parent & School Psychologist

From: ERIKA STANCLIFF
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 3:28 PM
To: Public Comments
Cc: Lombard, Judith; Slater, David; Dale Stancliff
Subject: [EXTERNAL] January 26, 2021 Parent question for Board Meeting

Good Afternoon, I will like to share the following regarding today's board meeting:

I am writing because I am concerned about the proposed changes for the GT programs that are going to be discussed during today's Board meeting. Specially the one where they are proposing to phase out the Hug Gate High School Institute.

I think the board should consider how much damage and setbacks these changes can cause to our kids.

My experience as a parent of 2 GT students:

During 2-4th grade my oldest was constantly getting distracted and I cannot remember how many times we needed to go to the school to talk to his teachers. The teachers were constantly trying to keep him focused. We moved and he was zoned for Hidden Valley, everything was going about the same, until his Principal had the brilliant idea to have him take more advanced classes to see if his behavior was due to him being "bored". The following year he took the test and entered the GATE program.

To make the story short, he is currently at the GT Institute at Hug with Dual Enrolment with the Health Science Academy. He is planning to become a Trauma Surgeon.

I still ask myself, what would have happened with my kid if he did not have the chance to be part of this program. I wonder if he would have gotten himself together with the wrong group and into trouble.

His younger brother is now at Pine GT program and he is planning to enter the Hug Gate Institute next year. He is also interested in becoming a doctor. So, my question is: What is going to happen to students like him and the ones coming right after? Are they going to go to regular classes, according to the grade they are in? If so, this will set them back tremendously.

One important fact is to understand that the kids in this program can thrive because they have GATE teachers who are prepared and are giving the tools and correct environment to work with kids that need to be challenged. The current program setting takes them all the way from elementary to 12th grade. Why cut the path?

Washoe County School District should be thinking of how to give kids more opportunities not how to take them away from them.

Sincerely,

Erika

From: Fox-Howells, Hunter
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 3:30 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Gate

Dear Washoe county school board,

GT is essential. It challenges us to be the best, helps us connect and help others. When I came into this program I had no friends but through the program that you kindly fund I met people who understand me and I understand them. All I ask is that you continue to fund this great program so that I and others can fit in.

Thank you,
Hunter Fox-Howells

Greetings,

My name is Craig Burkhouse, father to Sequoia, a 6th grade student at Clayton AP Academy, and a 6th grade ELA and Science teacher at Swope Magnet Middle School. I am writing to you to express concerns over proposed changes to the GT program before the Board. The lack of transparency in the decision-making process on this agenda item is disheartening to me, my colleagues and fellow parents.

As a teacher, I have been fortunate to work with three models of the GT program, the GEMS model, being an Itinerant, and now at a Magnet school. I have seen the way that these models have assisted in meeting the disparate social and academic needs of Gifted Students.

As a parent of a GT student, I have seen the amazing benefits these programs; allowing her to feel part of a unique community of learners. Sequoia's teachers understand the unique needs of their students and provide enriching activities and options that challenge the students to be passionate about their academics, something that is often lacking in general education classrooms. I fear with a loss of this program she will lose her passion for learning as well as her supportive community. Often this can lead to a downward spiral of issues that GT learners face including self-harm, depression and dropping out.

Within my role as an Itinerant Teacher, I found that most of the students thrived in the environment that allowed them to work with intellectual peers. Students frequently noted that it was the only time that they were challenged that week and felt comfortable sharing the SEL challenges they faced. It was often the only time that they were able to be themselves without judgement of being the "GT kid" in the class and let their true "Freak Flag" fly.

During the last year of DL, the Board considered the GT students in the group of "At-Risk" students and allowed for full time in person learning models. Initially I was not a fan of this choice, fearing health concerns over Covid exposure. As I worked with the students, and again as a parent, I recognized the need for this choice. Gifted students face unique Social and Emotional needs such as perfectionism, asynchronous development, self-understanding and peer relationships that in-person learning with similar peers has helped to address. In addition to the Social needs are the Academic needs, Gifted Students need to be challenged through engaging differentiated lessons while being surrounded by academic peers.

While I am not envious of your position to have to make cuts based on the proposed budget, I hope that you will reconsider your decision on reductions in GT. The services provided to these students are not a perk, they are essential for students with unique academic and social needs.

From: Loar, Christiane
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 3:30 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Secondary ELD Programming

I have been an ELD teacher at the secondary level for the last 8 years. I can't adequately express how much of an honor it is to work with such hardworking and determined students.

It is for this reason that I want to advocate for ELD classes at the secondary level. I'm concerned that moving toward the ELD Site Facilitator model will mean that, given funding limitations, we will have less ELD-specific courses in our middle and high schools. I'm concerned that ELD funding will go toward Site Facilitators instead of ELD Teachers. This would be a serious mistake. Courses that target ELD students are so important for them. These are the classrooms where students feel comfortable pronouncing new words, where less bullying (or fear of bullying) occurs due to cultural and linguistic differences, and where students get focused and understanding assistance in navigating our complicated school system. Many ELD students move to the U.S. during their middle and high school years, so they have not received the benefit of learning English at the elementary level. Removing the availability of these courses at middle and high schools would lead to so much heartache for students who are already undergoing upheaval and trauma.

Our responsibility as public school educators is to provide the most appropriate education for each and every student. This does not mean the same education for each and every student. ELD students should be able to take a class that addresses their specific needs during at least one period of the school day, which means making sure there are ELD teachers providing the needed instruction. A single ELD site facilitator should be in addition to these focused courses, not as a replacement for them. High quality Tier 1 instruction in every class does not mean that ELD courses wouldn't be needed.

We all know that in Nevada we are operating at less-than-ideal funding ratios. This vulnerable population is not the one to target when cutting services. These students need us to advocate more for their hard-earned education, rather than watch us take any of their learning away.

*-Christie Loar, M.A.
English Language Development (ELD)
North Valleys High School, room 208
cloar@washoeschools.net
775-321-3250, ext. 32639*

"Do you know what a foreign accent is? It's a sign of bravery." -Amy Chua



From: Ficarra, Bridgette
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 3:37 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: EL Program suggested changes

Hello members of the Board of Trustees,

My EL colleagues and I were notified only last night about the issue being discussed tonight regarding reduction in force possibility of EL teachers. As a second year EL teacher, I am already well aware that the pace of high school learning is extremely demanding for multi-language speakers. This is, of course, intensified for short-term learners.

From the thumbnail sketch of the "Three Year Proposal", the desired transition appears to scale down to fewer personnel to serve the EL population. The addition of ELD Site Facilitators would be a positive addition to each site! But the elimination of the Newcomer program doesn't make sense. Neither does a 1:1 ratio of one EL teacher to one high school.

The academic language development classroom as a separate place to learn is invaluable because the students are afforded smaller classes where they speak daily in class. Students' daily practice and emotional connection helps build their academic language. This learning should be in addition to, not instead of, the collaboration in planning for language content between all teachers.

Bridgette Ficarra

From: Salls, Jenny
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 3:42 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: GT Program Cuts

I am very concerned about the proposed cuts to the Gifted and Talented Program. I am a district teacher. I taught at Reno, McQueen, and Sparks High Schools and was the District Math Coordinator. I have been with the Gifted and Talented Program for over ten years, teaching mathematics at the Clayton GT Magnet until this year.

However, I am also a parent. My three sons graduated from WCSD schools and were a part of the GT Program. At that time, the elementary school component consisted of a one-day pull-out to a common site, there were no services in middle school, and there were only internships and occasional field trips in high school. The two positives of the program were (1) my sons were excused from the repetitive, boring work at their home school once a week, and (2) they got to be with other gifted students, so they realized they weren't freaks, as one student at their home school called them. Unfortunately, they needed support and challenge in middle school and high school, which simply wasn't there.

When I went to the GT Magnet at Clayton, I realized the social, emotional, and academic needs that were not met for my sons. But they were being met by the Magnet. I had students tell me that they were so happy to be part of the class, rather than stuck in the back of the room doing math packets grade levels above everyone else. They talked about being with other students who understood them. When they were bullied, as were my sons, they felt comfortable enough to talk to us, something that did not happen with my sons.

We had a number of students who struggled emotionally, particularly with anxiety and depression. We were able to utilize our GT Counselor to work with them. School counselors have so many other duties, it's difficult for them to devote the time needed to help our students. Our GT Counselor was essential to helping some of our students see how to cope with their lives; without a dedicated GT counselor, these services will not be as readily available and some of our students will be lost.

Our students grew tremendously academically. Not only did we accelerate their learning in some classes, the program promotes critical thinking, creativity, study skills, research skills, and risk-taking. Many of our students were not accustomed to failing, so helping them see that failure is the first step in growing was critical. We taught our students to actually read and make sense of what they read and to question the content of their reading, rather than just skimming through to answer the questions at the end of the section. Our students learned how to articulate their thinking and advocate for themselves and others. In summary, we were able to challenge our students in ways that wouldn't have happened in a general education setting.

I think from this description, it's obvious why GT students are categorized under the Special Education umbrella. They are a vulnerable population, just on the opposite end of the IQ graph. They struggle socially, emotionally, and academically without teachers trained to work with them. When they are able to participate in a strong program, they flourish and gain skills that help them succeed in high school and beyond. Why would WCSD cut funding for a vulnerable population? This is an equity issue that needs to be addressed.

The GT program was a wasteland when my sons participated. Now WCSD has developed one of the strongest programs in the state; we see it by the number of GT students who go on to be successful in high school and college. Did you know that the Board's high school liaison last year attended the GT Magnet?

I understand that WCSD's budget needs to be cut drastically, but I don't think the deficit should be made up by cutting programs like GT or ELL. I urge the Board to look more closely at the proposed cuts to GT. I see these cuts as ultimately leading us back to the wasteland my sons experienced. Consolidating the SWAS program and removing the magnet at Clayton and the High School Institute has the potential of losing a number of students from the program, which would ultimately result in fewer numbers, leading to more cuts. SWAS students may choose not to attend because of a potentially long bus ride. This might be particularly difficult for our twice-exceptional students (students who are both gifted and classified as special ed). Many Clayton Magnet students walk or bus to school – if they have to go to a different site without transportation, they will not go. They will return to boring packets where they are not asked to share their thinking and draw on their creativity to respond to assignments. Clayton Magnet is one of the more diverse magnets; dropping the magnet will decrease the diversity of GT. Losing the high school Institute will remove a highly innovative program taught by trained GT teachers. This also gives our students the social and emotional support they need in high school as well as opportunities to take advanced mathematics classes at UNR. The other signature programs offered by WCSD (TMCC, AACT, and the IB program at Wooster) do not offer the services provided by the Institute.

Our Gifted and Talented students deserve better from WCSD. Please reconsider these recommendations.

Dr. Jenny Salls
Mathematics Facilitator
Gifted and Talented Program

From: Gretchen Korver
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 3:50 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] wcsd gt program

I have two children in the WCSD who were part of the GT program. It has been essential to their educational experience.

When my son, Henry, was in grade school, he began having behavioral issues at school because he was bored. His transfer to the GT program at Hunsberger was a godsend. From there he ended up enrolling in the Davidson Academy. He is graduating this year.

My daughter, Madeleine, was in the GT program at pine. Her academic growth was exponential. She still speaks glowingly of the teachers she had at Pine GT.

I can't imagine how our family would have been able to stay in Nevada if these educational opportunities had not been available to our children.

Please, continue these essential programs for these special needs kids.

Sincerely,
Gretchen Korver, MD, PhD

Sent from my T-Mobile 4G LTE Device

From: KELLY KARPCHUK
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 3:50 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Gifted and Talented Budget Considerations

Dear Esteemed Board of Trustees,

I understand the need to watch our budget, but I also understand the importance of meeting the educational and overall learning needs of Gifted and Talented students. All students deserve an education that is created to meet their needs. I would like to propose some considerations in order for the GATE program to continue in a successful manner for all concerned.

I believe that the elementary school programs have done a wonderful job thus far, but need to be revisited and reorganized. One central location could be a start so that this population could make transportation issues less of a challenge both for the district and also for the students, as well as receiving the necessary support on-site from the Principal. Currently, some students are on the bus to SWAS locations and back home for up to an hour both before and after school. This makes a long day for any student, especially those in 3rd or 4th grade. I am familiar with Gomm Elementary School and the SWAS program, and students would also benefit from their model which includes art instruction, computer instruction, and physical education. These speak to the needs of our gifted population as they touch on all aspects that these students look for in interest and/or creativity.

I would also suggest grade-specific classrooms for 3, 4, 5, now that 6th grade will be attending a middle school campus. Having more than one grade level in a classroom presents challenges with cognitive development, maturity, and academics of the students, and also a unique challenge for teachers to deliver more than one grade level in some areas given the limited time of a school day. I would suggest that rather than separating SWAS and students being served once per week by Itinerant Teachers, that these students be blended to better served by gifted teachers all day and every day. I have seen this done at the Coral Academy of Science conducted in a manner in which mastery of concepts is achieved. Students need to be instructed for more than a few hours each week and the blend of these two groups lends the opportunity for students to experience gifted students at varying levels and brings different contributions to the discussion through higher-level thinking. With the current SWAS setup, we have rather created a "bubble" of those only in the 99th percentile, limiting thoughts that could be found by having a blend of gifted students. Classrooms benefit when students are learning from other students, and when teaching to the higher level students, others will follow along and rise to the occasion. Perhaps taking a look at the Matrix and/or considering an application process similar to the Magnet Program could help get the kids into a full-time classroom setting.

This is an essential department fulfilling the needs of a special population and it would be devastating to see it diminish or disappear. We are one of the few states that offer this type of education in all three educational settings. I hope that your decision is to keep the program, but possibly make some changes in the structure of the classrooms and possible location for these teachers and students.

Thanking you for your time and considerations,

Kelly Karpchuk

From: Wiebe, Jacquie
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 3:56 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Potential Funding Cuts to EL and GT

Esteemed Board Members,

I realize that the budget *seems* to be out of your control. You must know how awful it looks to the community when you cut funding for English Learners (this is an equity issue: how will they ever catch up to their English-speaking peers?) and Gifted Students (how will they be challenged so they do not drop out of school?). I URGE you to stand up to the legislature and REFUSE to cut funding within our district. Period. Please, join with your teachers to advocate for the students of your district. We simply cannot continue to provide the highest possible level of service to our students, nor can we expect them to perform at even the average level, when the budget continues to be cut. We cannot, and will not, continue to do MORE with LESS. Please, think of your students. Fight the good fight for ALL of Washoe County's students.

Sincerely,

Jacquie Wiebe
Fifth Grade Distance Learning Teacher
Katherine Dunn Elementary

From: Laack, Kimberly
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 3:58 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: GT Cuts

As someone who was recently certified to teach GT and as someone who has a child just out of SWOPE magnet, I think it is important to understand that these students will struggle emotionally and socially unless they can have a special program. Mental health problems, substance abuse, depression, anxiety are very common among this special population and they deserve just as many resources as other populations. Not to mention, their superior skills often take them naturally to places of power and leadership. Why not make sure they are ready for what the world has in store for them?

Thank you,

Kim Laack

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

From: Herrera, Ana
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 4:00 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: GATE Program at Hug

Good afternoon Board of Trustees,

My name is Ana Herrera and I am a teacher at Hug High School. I have been teaching at Hug since 2012; before the GATE Institute was started on our campus.

I was surprised to find out that one of the items being discussed today is “phasing out the GATE Institute” at our school. Having the GATE Institute on our campus has changed the Hug Community as no other program or initiative has ever done before. Through the GATE Institute, I have seen a student from our feeder school, go to Princeton on a full scholarship awarded through the Gates Millennium Scholars Programs (1 of 1000 of the 50,000 applicants). I have seen students graduate from High School, before completing their four years of high school, with only a few credits short of a bachelor’s degree. I have seen students max out on the number of AP science and math courses that they must concurrently enroll in College/University Courses to meet their interest in science and math. I have seen students compete and earn regional, State, and National recognitions. I have seen students from different backgrounds interact, help each other, and build lifetime friendships with people from diverse backgrounds. I have also witnessed the expansion and access to AP and rigorous courses by ALL students.

In Biology, we teach students about “keystone species” in ecosystems. In an ecosystem, a keystone species is a species on which the other species in an ecosystem largely depend; removal of this species often results in the change of interactions among different species and may even result in the collapse of the entire community. This is exactly what our GATE Institute means to our Hug High School Community.

The GATE Institute has brought so many opportunities that extend beyond the benefits our GATE Population receives. For example, in science and math, it allows us to be able to offer all AP Courses available. This increases exposure to rigorous and challenging courses for ALL students. I have witnessed firsthand the increase of student enrollment in AP Courses and the increase of AP scores of ALL populations. In the mission statement for Equity and Diversity, it is stated that WCSD “will provide assurance of access, representation and meaningful participation for all.” Furthermore, it explains why “equity and diversity in WCSD is needed;” stating that our district’s goal is to “close the achievement gap among diverse populations of students.” “Fading out” of the GATE Institute on our campus would result in a decrease of those rigorous courses; directly denying ALL students on our campus of those opportunities and possibly widening the achievement gap.

Another way that the GATE Institute at Hug has influenced our community is that it has resulted in an increase in professional development for our teachers. Teaching gifted and talented students requires additional training. Our gifted and talented students need classes and programs that challenge them all while meeting their needs. On our campus, our teachers must be able to meet the needs of students that need extra academic support all while meeting the various needs of our GATE population. Having the GATE Institute on our campus has resulted in teachers seeking more professional development opportunities to meet the needs of the diverse population we serve on our campus.

Removing the GATE institute will not only be academically detrimental but will also impact the community we have created in the last 5 years. Please reconsider the impact “fading the GATE Institute” at Hug will have on our community, because like ecosystems, we’re all interconnected.

Respectfully,

Ana Herrera

AP Biology/Honors Biology Teacher

Hug High School Science Department Leader

2014 High School Teacher of The Year

From: Courtney Hamilton
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 4:03 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GATE funding

I sent a longer email to the Board members. I feel strongly you should involve parents in the decision-making and ideally solution identification. I also feel strongly for those schools you remove programs, that you allow currently-enrolled students to finish out (in a similar fashion to what you have proposed for the high school).

These are certainly programs that would be nationally ranked... At some point, they just collapse from the chipping away.

Thank you and the best, Courtney Hamilton

From: Ana Sanchez
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 4:09 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GT Services

Dear Members of the Board,

We need the support of the GT department. Our district is heavily focused on getting our students up to standards, yet the GT population is underserved. We need to meet the needs on both ends of the spectrum.

Since the wide GT screening for 2nd and 5th students were implemented, I have consistently had students that qualify for services. As a teacher we need additional support to enrich and enhance their learning experiences. I have also noticed that students that are highly gifted artistically/musically are not screened. A budget cut will prevent further outreach for our students' and we need to increase the budget, so that artistically/musically gifted can be included.

There is still room for growth in the GT department. After middle school, GT services are non-existent in high school unless they attend the Hug GT Magnet School. Yet none of the feeder SWAS elementary schools are zoned for Hug...hmm. Nor is transportation available for vulnerable populations. In fact, the magnet schools are in high socioeconomic areas. As a parent, I found it troublesome that I had to seek testing for my son, before screening was universally done, then once he qualified, I had to request services. The GT department has come a long way since this.

My son is gifted academically, artistically, and musically, and guess what resources I have been receiving from the WCSD GT Department since high school started for him, none, zip, nada, zilch. We can do better to increase the budget and not decrease it.

Sincerely,
Ana Sanchez

From: Vega, Stephanie
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 4:25 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Public Comment for Agenda Item 4.09

For the record, my name is Dr. Stephanie Vega. I am a parent of a WCSD kindergarten student and a teacher at North Star Online School.

I wish to comment on Item 4.09 The Proposed Expansion of North Star as the Only Distance Learning Model for WCSD in 2021-2022. The 2021-2022 Distance Learning Plan must address the diverse needs of our Distance Learning students across the district. The plan must also be able to withstand a higher than expected enrollment of Distance Learning students.

These are unprecedented times and it is difficult to forecast the number of students that will opt for Distance Learning next school year. The presentation indicates that there are over 15,000 distance learners. The proposal is to expand North Star to 2,000 students. I, too, hope that the vaccines will help us return to in person activities, decreasing the need for distance learning.

How will the school address demand for distance learning if the need is higher than the 2000 expected in 2021-2022?

Can we expect one school and administration to serve 5,000 students and still make the high-quality relationships and connections with students? Part of North Star's success can be attributed to the small school size and frequent communication between teachers and students. North Star teachers, counselors, and staff have continued to form and maintain relationships with students despite already quadrupling in size in one year. Let us not forget that North Star started this school year with over 1,300 students and **ONLY** 13 teachers.

We need to deeply consider the equity/access issues for families and students that are related to North Star's Model.

North Star's success is highly dependent on the students' support structures at home. North Star's model works if the learning coach (caregiver/parent/guardian) is able to spend 3+ hours PER SCHOOL DAY helping the students. The learning coach is the home teacher. There are lessons that the learning coach implements (experiments, discussions, read alouds, hand-on math demonstrations). For full-time working parents or parents who want their children home (health reasons) but aren't comfortable with providing this type of instruction, this is very challenging to do. By limiting distance learning models to North Star only, we will face access and equity issues-especially for working families, caregivers who are English Learners, and caregivers with differing levels of educational attainment and past experiences of academic success.

North Star's model is successful for independent, self-motivated learners with caregivers who are able to provide a specific type of support for each lesson. North Star shouldn't be expected to fit every distance learning students' needs. This proposal/expansion assumes this. Distance learning models at brick-and-mortar schools vary to serve the students in their zone, in their community—using a blend of synchronous and asynchronous approaches. North Star as the only option limits opportunities for differing models for our range of students in the district in addition to overloading North Star. Students who do not have the type of support needed at home for North Star will be at a disadvantage. The needs of our distance learners cannot be addressed with a one-size-fits-all model.

From: Debra Rowland
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 4:16 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Cutting Gifted and Talented Programs

I am a retired Education Specialist. I have worked with Severely disabled students to gifted students. I believe strongly that all special needs students deserve the best opportunities to succeed as the general education students are afforded. I believe a lot of the services provided special needs services are protected under federal and state laws. Not necessarily so with the gifted programs. They need to be protected by you as their advocates. Please do not cut back on these services.

Debra Rowland

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

From: Shader, Robert
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 4:27 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Re: Possible cuts to GATE program

Hi,
Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this critical issue.

I have been a GT teacher for the past 6 years out of 18 in the district, and to be honest, it saved my career. I always loved teaching but it wasn't until I became part of the GATE program that I realized how rewarding the profession could be.

These kids will go as far as you take them and there's really no topic or subject that they don't enjoy. We've had debates on Plato's version of reality, talked about the birth of the universe, read the great authors of the world, learned calculus, and on and on.

These kids NEED this instruction. The one thing I learned in the GT certification process is that there's an absolute plethora of information and data that proves that once identified, these kids will no longer be engaged in learning that isn't deep and accelerated. They may not realize it at the time, but the number of kids who come back to visit me express their gratitude and appreciation for their participation in my classes tells me that on some level, it was crucial to their academic careers.

I understand that these are tough times. I've said for years that it's perplexing to me that the county never raises taxes for education, other than the most regressive and painful in the form of sales tax increases. I would be in favor of raising property taxes and I don't even have children.

Please find another way to make cuts. These kids will suffer greatly with a reduction in GATE funding.

Thank you,
Rob Shader/Swope GT Magnet

From: Jenny Snaza
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 4:28 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Red For Education

Dear Dr. McNeil and WCSD Trustees,

As always, thank you for your time, work, and dedication to improving public education in Northern Nevada. I am a WCSD parent and enjoy following the board's process in decision making. I know it's not always, if ever, easy. You are appreciated.

I wanted to write today regarding two issues:

1. The first is in regards to the upcoming Red For Ed event on February 15th. I received an email notification from the NEA promoting the national RedforEd movement. It made me question the lack of involvement of the district in the promotion and open support of the movement, as its primary goal is to promote support of public education. The more I think about it, it seems natural and essential that the district be involved with this event. Public education is at the core of our democracy, as such, there is little reason for me to think that this could be considered a political act. WCSD can be a part of the solution in gaining community support for measures that could drastically improve funding formulas.

Additionally, I think this could be a huge step in the right direction in repairing some of the culture damage in WCSD. Teachers need to feel appreciated and heard. It seems crazy to me that teachers will be attending this rally without the explicit support of their employer...especially when this employer is the largest provider of public education in our region.

Questions: Why isn't the district more involved as the leader of public education in Nevada by promoting RedforEd events? What can the district do to show their support of teachers and this event - internally and publically?

2. Secondly, I was relieved that the Federal Government is taking a stance on LGBTQ+ and minority discrimination in our country through executive order. It was painful to watch the board have to grapple with these issues without national guidance. The damage that is being done to students and staff by preventing expression in support of minorities and LGBTQ+ communities is enormous. I hope that you will take your duty to do your part to root out discrimination and injustice as described by the executive orders to heart.

Please, as soon as possible, solicit clear guidance from the US DOE and make lasting and empowering changes to WCSD policy so that you can openly support all staff and students.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Best,

Jenny Snaza

WCSD Parent

From: Rick Meier
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 4:44 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GATE programs

Dear Washoe County School Trustees,

I am writing to support the WCSD Gate Department to continue with the current programs for 21/22 school year.

The current programs have been nationally recognized as a GOLD standard of GATE success.

These exemplary students deserve the special challenging curriculum not found in a regular classroom.

The GATE students go on to be exemplary leaders, thinkers and outstanding students of knowledge.

Why would consider eliminating a source of pride in our public education?

These students are learning how to think and solve the pressing challenges of lives.

Please don't abandon these students to mediocrity and teach them to be average bored students.

These students hold the hope and aspirations of our school district.

Sincerely,

Richard F. Meier OD FCOVD

From: Jonathon Chatham
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 4:56 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Reduction in GT programming

Dear board,

I'm doing my best to understand where it says that cutting GT would be a good idea. I've been through the program my whole life, I've been helped tremendously by the program, as have literally thousands of others. I watched the entire presentation earlier today, I am trying to understand why we are cutting GT programs at all levels when between the FY20 and FY22 there is a net increase in funding for GT programs, as well as a larger focus on those same GT programs. Cutting these programs will result only in disenfranchisement of hundreds of students now, and thousands to come. I've scoured your presentations of financial difficulties facing this district, I understand that our district needs help, however, it is blatantly clear that cutting the GT programs that exist now is not useful for anyone, and will only serve to harm students who may sometimes need the most help. There is no benefit to these cuts, only harm.

Further, you suggest Hug GT students go to a CTE program, or do dual credit, or do IB, but importantly, none of these are appropriate. GT at base level functions different from IB, CTE, and Dual credit, they are all just fundamentally different programs. CTE is focused on a specific field, GT is not. Dual credit is extremely costly to the individual, making it almost entirely impossible for some to even attend dual credit classes. IB I will admit is close, however, it, too, is costly, and it functions differently, focusing more on the IB program itself, rather than being a support system to allow students to exceed, as GT is. You, the board, have offered no reasonable alternatives to the GT program, thus disabling students from being able to participate in a meaningful manner.

The suggestion to cancel the GT program is just downright insane, and I say that in the nicest way possible. It is a decision not based off of evidence, facts, or reason, it is one based off of fear of underfunding, a reality that has existed for well over a decade, and that the GT program has flourished throughout. The supposed benefits of these cuts are unreasonable and unfounded, as are the suggested benefits of these cuts, as are the suggested alternatives for students because of these cuts.

I wish, I desperately wish there was something, anything that justified these actions, but there quite honestly just aren't. Your powerpoint for this item, 4.10, doesn't include justifications, and neither does anything ever published.

-Jonathon Chatham

From: Arisha M
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 5:01 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] The Fate of the GT Magnet Program

Good afternoon Washoe County School Board,

I am Arisha Mohiuddin, an 8th-grade student in the Washoe County School District part of the Magnet Program of Pine M.S. I have heard recently that the future of the SWAS, GT/Magnet, and GATE programs are to be discussed in a board meeting today. To be discussed are the cutting of the GATE Institute and some SWAS and Magnet schools. I am emailing with reasons not to cut the GT Programs. The GT program provides students with a space for collaborative and high-level learning. We have teachers and curriculums that push us to our limits and help us catch on to topics and deep understandings of the world that we might not have learned in the regular school programs. We are able to put our minds together with people of our age, people who have about the same analytical ability, people that have the same learning mindset as us, and we are able to be competitive and get a head start in life. We, 8th graders and high schoolers have reached close to the end of our schooling, and we have all highly benefited from being students of the GT Program, but we think of the current SWAS students and those who are to come into the GT Program, who deserve a chance to also rise in the ranks as fast as their brain takes them. We need to think about those students who have high hopes that the Washoe County School District will keep programs such as the GT programs open to all age students. We need to think about the high schoolers, or middle schoolers going on to high school, that want to stay with their Magnet peers and want to continuously be challenged. Please take all this into consideration and make the ultimate decision. Please don't take away the programs we have benefitted majorly from all this time. Please don't cut the GT Programs.

Thank you,
Arisha Mohiuddin

From: Long, Tatiana
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 5:05 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: EL Program

I have been an ESL teacher in our district for more than 20 years. My colleagues and I created this program which is helping so many EL students to master English and find their new home. We teach them not just the language! It is SO MUCH more. We have so many success stories of the students who now own businesses, work at schools; they are lawyers, mechanics, nurses... I believe cutting funds to this program is the worst decisions the state can take. We have to do EVERYTHING WE CAN to continue and develop the EL program.

Tatiana Long
ESL teacher
DRHS

From: Karen Illg
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 5:05 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] SWAS program

Dear Board Members

I am the parent of a 4th grader in the SWAS program at Hunsberger Elementary school. I strongly believe that the program should remain at Hunsberger. We commuted last year from Incline Village and that was a challenge as the drive is not short (and the school district does not provide transportation from Incline Elementary) , but having to drive all they way to Caughlin Ranch would be out of the question.

I also believe that consistency is important for our SWAS kids, and making them move for 1 year (in our case, 5th grade) to a new school in a different neighborhood, is a lot to ask of our kids. Please keep the SWAS program at Hunsberger so that students in South Reno and Incline Village can have reasonable access to the program.

Thank you,
Karen Illg
Parent of a SWAS Student and a GEMS student

From: Tamara Wall
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 5:29 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Cuts to GT program

Good Evening--

If not for the COVID-19 pandemic situation, my preference would have been to deliver these comments in person. However, I would like to express my support for the GT program, and the invaluable services it provides to this vulnerable population. Particularly in these times of great uncertainty, this population, already at greater risk to mental and emotional health issues, needs the stability of this program to be ensured. Both of my children have benefited greatly from the services provided by the GT program. The loss of these services, particularly the middle school and high school programs, would be highly detrimental to this special education population. For those GT students from low-wealth populations with historical and structural inequities to overcome, the loss of full services from this nationally recognized program and its contributions to enhancing the diversity of students in STEM fields of study would be a great loss.

Sincerely,

Dr. Tamara Wall

From: Miranda Wall
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 5:30 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GT Program Cuts

As a eighth grader who has been in the GT program since I was in second grade, the GT program has been hugely important to me. I was also just excepted into the GATE institute and Hug and it is so important to me that I get to go to a high school where I feel I fit with the students and I feel I am challenged and learning as much as I can.

Thank you.

From: Kaesa Aanestad
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 5:32 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In support of Gifted programming

I second the public comments of John Kocian, site lead for Gifted Institute at Hug High School. Like John, I am a WCSD teacher and see the beneficial impact gifted programs have on identified students. Unlike John, I am also a parent of gifted children, and I know first-hand the detriments to identified students when they do not get the programming they need.

There are no equitable alternatives within our district; please consider keeping the continuity and programming that we have intact.

Kaesa Aanestad

From: Yoon-a Zheng
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 9:05 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] About cutting funds for GT program

Dear Sir or Madam:

I heard that tomorrow the board will vote for cutting funds for SWAS and Magnet. It was a very sad news for parents and students.

My child is in the GT program, and he has been enjoy the challenge and joys that the program brings to him. In the program everyone is at a similar level, that way they can learn new things they do not know or need help with instead of learning things they already know. The kids can also have fun and learn at the same time.

Please do not cut the program!

Best regards,

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

From: Miller, McKenna
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 6:19 PM
To: Public Comments
Cc: Lee, Kayla
Subject: GT Defunding

GT students are required to conform to a standard that tests their academic abilities through a refined learning environment. While it may not seem like a significant aspect of identifying as GT, gifted students genuinely thrive in a correctly set learning environment. Correspondingly, every attempt to cut the GT program's funds directly infringes upon students' education; a curtail in the program's funds is unacceptable. Although some insist that GT students should be able to work in any set environment (such as a General ED classroom), the right to proper education applies to every student; if restrictions are set, then that liberty is endangered. To illustrate, many GT teachers have worked cohesively to promote the highest potential of learning in the GT program and discharging even one of these teachers would interfere with the GT system's learning protocols. Additionally, students will have to adjust to these changes, which may cause interference with their academic focus.

Furthermore, GT programs are necessary for students who require a faster and more challenging learning pace. When this is taken away, students are stripped from the valuable learning resources they need to propel their desire to learn.

Beyond the disruption in the GT program's stability, there are other considerations for why funds should not be cut from the program. Through funds, GT students have a renewed focus on academics— with new technology, active experiments, access to better learning materials, and a more refined classroom. Especially the teachers, who scrape together their own personal funds from their low wage to support the students, will find it much more arduous to do their work.

In our GT environment, we are challenged by our teachers to critically examine our academic subjects. In contrast, our experience in General ED classes reflects the difficulty of learning in an environment that does support your academic needs. At our previous schools, we were not academically challenged, and we did not feel the need to try hard in school. We were simply bored, and we knew the material that was being covered in class. While we are not criticizing General ED, the learning environment was difficult to conform to as we needed a more academically challenging setting. Gifted students learn in a different way and Gate teachers are trained to make sure they are engaged in school.

We understand that this topic is slightly controversial, but all students have different learning capacities. To illustrate, you cannot expect every student in one class to perform equally to one another. While other students can understand a concept immediately, some students require much more help to grasp that same concept.

Defunding GT programs is not fair to us. We deserve to learn at the same financial level as every other General ED student. A cut in the GT funds would deprive GT students of getting the kind of education that they truly need. We speak on the behalf of GT students, who would be devastated if their program were to be defunded or, even worse, cut altogether.

Our future rests in our education and what we learn now. Please do not restrict our future and 'what could have been'.

Sincerely,
McKenna Miller and Kayla Lee

From: Andrea Hughs-Baird
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 6:48 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] GATE program

January 26, 2021

Dear WCSD School Board Trustees,

Washoe County School District has been a leader in gifted education not only in Nevada, but also in the United States. The district started the gifted education program 48 years ago in 1972. The first school-within-a-school (SWAS) classroom was created in 1980.

From 1993 to 2005, parents in the district made recommendations for changes to improve the program to better meet the needs of the gifted students. In 2005, the district hired a full-time GATE Program Coordinator who partnered with parents to create a top-notch gifted education program within the next 10 years. It went from a program that addressed the needs of 2 grade levels of students to a comprehensive program for students from 2nd through 12th grade offering programming that utilizes the only gifted programming intervention that is proven effective by research: acceleration. The level of acceleration needed by highly gifted students requires stand-alone classrooms in elementary schools, clustered core classes in middle school, and the flexibility to enter high school taking junior/senior level classes with early access to college-level courses. This allows these students to accelerate their academic learning while continuing to have their age-based social-emotional needs met. It allows gifted students to be academically challenged without entering college early. There are very few districts in the country that offer a comprehensive, highly effective gifted program like WCSD.

The WCSD gifted program was developed with no state funding dedicated to gifted education. The program was developed because previous WCSD school boards believed in addressing the needs of ALL students in the district – not just providing an adequate education as required by law. Previous WCSD school boards have partnered with parents to create a world-class gifted education program. The WCSD gifted program inspired the initiation of dedicated state level funding for gifted education approved by the Nevada State Legislature in 2015.

Covid-19 has taken a huge toll on our nation, our state, and our county. We have all suffered personally and our economy has been devastated. In this environment, it is understandable that participation in the gifted program this year has decreased considerably, and it is understandable that the district needs to make drastic budget cuts to respond to deep cuts in the state budget. However, district leadership has a choice to make. Do district leaders make budget and programming cuts in a silo or do they partner with the parents of gifted students to limp through the next biennium together? Do we support each other and work together toward a common goal? If the district will commit to returning the GATE program to its present, high level of programming once the impact of covid-19 is behind us, the GT community would be able to direct its passion and voice toward helping the district restore the state funding for gifted education and return our program to being one of the best gifted education programs in the country.

Thank you for your time,

Andrea Hughs-Baird
WCSD GATE parent since 2007
former chairman of WCSD Gifted and Talented Advisory Council (GTAC)
former president of Washoe County GT Parent Connection
former member of WCSD Gifted and Talented Advisory Panel (GTAP)

founder of Parent Leaders for Education

member of the Nevada Advisory Council for Family Engagement

doctoral student in Educational Leadership with an emphasis in Gifted Education at UNR

From: Samantha Kurashewich
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 7:53 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Item 4.10

Dear Board of Trustees-

My daughter is in her first year of the Magnet GT program and I am proud to report that she has been successful and engaged, even with this school year being a difficult year of learning for many students. The wonderful teachers in this program have supported her academically and are keeping her at pace with the challenging coursework of the GT Magnet program.

The middle school Magnet program allows my daughter and her peers to work at an accelerated pace. This helps them stay engaged in their academics during an age when many students disengage in academics. This is especially true during social emotional times for youth.

My daughter was part of a pull-out GT program in elementary school and this opportunity gave her time with students with similar perspectives and needs. I feel the times when she has to work one-on-one with students in GT have been very meaningful for her academic growth.

These students in the Magnet program are already part of the Washoe County School District and would still need to be part of the middle schools within the District. The District does not incur an additional expense for additional teachers since they would already be in classrooms within the District. Please continue to support their unique educational needs in order help their future educational success.

I am thankful for the GT program and the educational opportunities it affords my daughter.

Thank you for your time and understanding.

Kindly-
Samantha Kurashewich

From: Alex Ryan
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 7:52 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Hug High GATE Institute

Hello. My name is Alex Ryan, and I am currently a junior enrolled at the GATE Institute at Hug High School. I recently heard about the plan to phase out the GATE Institute starting in 2023. I believe that this will negatively affect many students within the GATE program.

As previously mentioned, I am a member of the GATE Institute. I personally greatly benefited from the GT program. What it seems like Washoe County School District does not understand is how detrimental the lack of a GT program can be for students like me. I started my freshman year in Honors Biology and very quickly fell behind on the work, although I learned all of the material. I had an F in the class within a week. Very soon, I requested to switch to AP Biology. I was able to get into the class, and learned the material at a much quicker pace. Because the class was more rigorous and engaging, I was able to earn a grade of A in the class and a 4 on the AP exam. Without the GATE Institute, I would not have had this opportunity, and likely would have failed honors biology. Similarly, I most likely would have been put into an Honors English 3-4 class at any other school, and again would probably have fallen behind. Instead, because of the GATE Institute, I was able to take AP Literature my freshman year and had the honor of being one of 6 freshmen in the United States to earn a 5 on the exam. I also would have stayed on course to be in AP Calculus AB by my senior year, but now because of the GATE Institute I will be able to take AP Calculus BC and earn 6 college credits. Again, in all of my grade-level or otherwise non GT-oriented classes, I struggled to maintain As and Bs, but in each advanced class I have taken I was able to not only survive but excel. I have also been able to meet many other students with similar struggles and abilities to me, which has greatly benefitted my social and emotional well-being. Our collaborative and constructive community provides much-needed support for students engaged in advanced and rigorous academics, which would not be as easily achievable without the GATE Institute. For all of these reasons, I ask that you do not go forward with the plan to phase out the GATE Institute.

Sincerely,
Alex Ryan

From: Jenna R
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 8:05 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Agenda 4.10

Good evening,

My name is Jenna Ryan and I am a student at Hug High School in the G.A.T.E. Institute. I do not think that agenda 4.10 should be carried out. I switched into the Institute the second semester of this year and my experience has already been much better than that of my previous school. Closing the G.A.T.E. Institute without providing a different outlet for G.T. certified students will only result in more issues. While there are alternate programs for these students, they do not work as intended. I speak from personal experience, as I was put into classes with students at least one grade older than me and this made it difficult to connect with my peers. Community is just as important in education as the coursework itself. The expectations for students become more intense as they progress in their school career. Because of this, I was held to the same expectations as upperclassmen even though I am currently a freshman. My GPA the first semester of this year was the lowest it has been in my entire school experience. I was in S.W.A.S. and M.A.G.N.E.T. and in both cases being in a community with people of a similar mindset as mine drastically improved my overall success in school. Being in a G.T. specific program introduced me to like minded people with similar values and a new approach to academics. This widened my worldview and pushed me more than anything else in education ever has. My peers encouraged me and helped me grow. Being in an environment with other gifted students showed me that I wasn't alone. Other students who I was in the S.W.A.S. and/or M.A.G.N.E.T. program with have had similar experiences to mine at the high school level. They have been placed in classes that are not to their academic level and they are not with the peer group that suits them best. To close the G.A.T.E. Institute is to eliminate the best option for many G.T. students while not providing a program with the same accommodations for this group.

Sincerely,
Jenna Ryan

From: Kemin Tsung
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 8:23 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Gifted programs

WCSD,

I understand that there are some severe budget constraints this year. However, I would like to say that cutting back on SWAS, magnet, and GT programs is a serious mistake.

Gifted students are capable of becoming the most productive members of our society. But they need to be nurtured in order to achieve their potential. Imagine Michael Jordan just playing with the neighborhood kids year after year, and never having the opportunity to grow and develop. What a waste that would have been! That's exactly what will happen to our brightest students, if you take away the opportunities they have now.

Please, for the sake of our children and our future, do not cut back on these crucial services for our gifted students. Please find another way.

Thank you,
Kemin

From: Fran M Ryan
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 9:08 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Hug GATE Institute

Dear Washoe County School District Trustees,

I am writing to ask that the board preserve the GATE Institute at Hug High School. We have three highly gifted children who are or have been enrolled in Washoe County Schools, and have attended SWAS at Whitehead, Magnet at Sky Ranch, TMCC HS, and the GATE Institute at Hug. The differentiated learning that my children experience at Hug has been life changing for them. In our family's experience, fully immersive GT programs provide not only a more appropriate pace and enhanced rigor, but also a community of learners and a safe place to learn. Many highly gifted children struggle socioemotionally and having GT certified teachers and peers to whom they can relate is critical to their personal and educational growth. What the GATE Institute provides for this group of special-needs learners is not replacable by AP and Honors classes.

Please do not close the GATE Institute at Hug High School.

Sincerely,
Fran Ryan

Fran Ryan, Ph.D.

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