I am writing to the board to request the return of TAG in the next school year (Fall 2021). Hamden’s mission to “focus all our efforts to increase the achievement levels of all students” has fallen short with TAG’s removal.

Hamden has a wide spectrum of students and they all require support. Kids on the ends of that spectrum create unique challenges in the classroom which programs like TAG and Special Ed were designed to address. When the board dropped TAG, it dropped support for over 100 students. If class enrichment was supposed to help them, it has not.

Class enrichment, as it exists today, does not support high achieving elementary school students. In December, my son completed the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th and Algebra curriculums in DreamBox (the HPS preferred enrichment program for Math). In January, he finished the Lexia PowerUp curriculum (Reading). Now his teacher has no enrichment she can offer him. So my son, for the last 5 months, has the equivalent of 2 “study halls” when his classmates are doing DreamBox and Lexia. HPS does not have any in-class enrichment options that address the needs of high achieving students but TAG is designed to meet that need.

Subject acceleration offers hope, but administration and staff have been hesitant to offer it. The district has supported (3) Math enrichment programs over the last 3 years: Prodigy, Khan Academy and DreamBox. My son is working at a 7th grade level (or above) in all three. He will be accelerated to 5th grade (Math only) next year, with a specialist citing there may be learning opportunities in that grade for him. This strategy, having a child wait for an educational moment, is not good teaching. Students must be placed in their zone of proximal development for learning to occur. TAG can meet the needs of students when acceleration is not properly applied.

One board member justified cutting TAG for its “history of exclusion”. I would argue that TAG creates an inclusive environment for high achieving students to flourish. This is not about “privilege” but about providing a fundamental right for all students to learn - especially when that learning need exceeds what is available in the classroom. Your support of TAG would come at a fraction of the cost of Special Ed and fulfills the mission to “increase the achievement levels of all students”.

Thank you to all HPS staff for your dedication to excellence this year and I hope you are all well.

Brian Paquin
112 Leatherman Trail