



Center for Educational Progress

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Oregon Voter Survey

Support for Dedicated Gifted Education Funding

Findings



Introduction

Oregon public schools enroll more than 36,000 officially identified talented and gifted (TAG) students, defined by state statute as “children who require special educational programs or services” to realize their “outstanding ability and potential.” Yet although these students comprise 6.7% of Oregon’s student population, barely a tenth of one percent of its K–12 education budget goes toward supporting their unique instructional needs.¹ Because Oregon provides no dedicated TAG funding to school districts, districts are left to fund these programs themselves. Many TAG students are fortunate enough to live in districts that choose to invest in their needs; many others —particularly those from rural, low-income, and racially diverse backgrounds— are not.

TAG spending trends have been disconcerting. While Oregon’s total education spending continues to rise, total spending on TAG programs and services fell from \$7.7 million in 2000–01 to \$6.5 million in 2023–24, shrinking from just over 0.3% of the K–12 budget to little more than 0.1%. Moreover, in 2023–24, 101 of 197 Oregon school districts either identified zero gifted students or reported spending nothing on TAG services at all.²

Twice in recent years, lawmakers have had the chance to change this. Senate Bill 595 (2023) and House Bill 3420 (2025) would each have earmarked state funding specifically for TAG instruction. But in both cases, the bills died in committee. The Center for Educational Progress commissioned this survey to learn whether these legislative defeats reflect public opinion on TAG education. The central takeaway is that they do not: Oregon voters show strong bipartisan support for dedicating a share of state K–12 to programs and services for talented and gifted students.

A majority of voters in every party say too little is spent on gifted education; nine in ten agree that gifted students need more than typical Oregon classrooms can provide, and majorities of Republicans, Democrats, and Independents would all support a ballot measure earmarking 1% of the K–12 budget to TAG programs and services. This majority support even survived after respondents heard arguments against the measure. The results should be encouraging for TAG students in Oregon and their advocates in the state. Supporting talented and gifted students is already popular, and we urge Oregon lawmakers to appreciate that increasing investment in TAG education is not a partisan issue.

“The lack of dedicated funding for gifted education means Oregon’s gifted students from rural, low-income, and racially diverse backgrounds are most likely to be overlooked. Half of Oregon’s 197 school districts either identify no gifted students or report no spending on TAG services.”

— Margaret DeLacy
President, Oregon Association for Talented and Gifted

“These results speak to a growing body of evidence that policymakers have underinvested in advanced education, often drastically. For our economy, our culture, and the lives of students and their families, we must find ways to help more of our students perform at advanced levels.”

— Jonathan Plucker
Director, National Research Center on Advanced Education
Professor of Education, Johns Hopkins School of Education

¹ Oregon Department of Education, *Oregon Statewide Report Card 2024–25* (Salem, OR, November 25, 2025), <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/schools-and-districts/reportcards/Documents/rptcd2025.pdf>

² Margaret DeLacy, *Still Wasting Our Talent: Data Submitted by Oregon Association for Talented and Gifted*, Oregon Legislature, 2026 Regular Session (February 1, 2026), <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2026R1/Downloads/PublicTestimonyDocument/233337>



Voter Support for Gifted Education

Oregon voters have grown increasingly dissatisfied with their state's direction. Sentiment has trended downward since 2018, when optimists about Oregon's trajectory still outnumbered pessimists. Now, two-thirds of respondents disapprove of the path the state is on. This increasing dissatisfaction with current policy priorities writ large is reflected in the electorate's views on gifted and talented education policy.

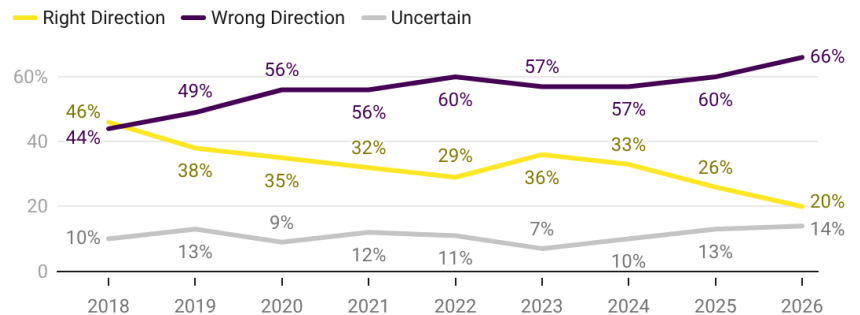
When asked their opinion on the current share of the K–12 education budget that goes to gifted education programs and services, majorities of Republicans, Democrats, and Independents all responded that it is not enough. More than twice as many voters said spending was “too little” (56%) than said “about right” (21%), and *eight* times as many answered “too little” as “too much” (7%).

Even among Republicans, who were most likely (14%) to say that “too much” is spent on gifted education, there were still four times as many (56%) who say “too little.”

The most decisive margins in the survey came when respondents were asked whether they agreed with the animating principles of Oregon's TAG law. 92% agreed —61% strongly— that some children require more than typical classrooms provide, and 91% agreed —62% strongly— that gifted students need and deserve a challenging, engaging education at Oregon public schools.

Two in three Oregonians say state is on wrong track

Share of respondents who say Oregon is headed in the right or wrong direction.

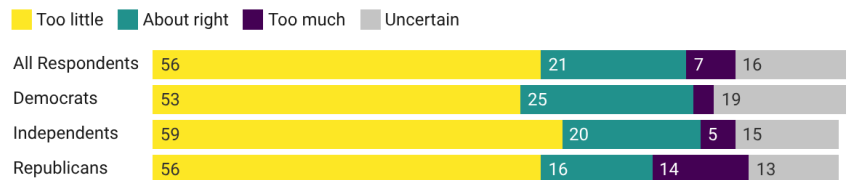


2026 data: N = 860. Earlier years from prior FM3 Research Oregon surveys.

Most Oregon voters: too little spent on gifted education

Oregon spends more than \$7.5 billion per year on K–12 education. However, **less than 0.1%** of that spending supports programs and services for the **6.7%** of students who are identified as gifted and talented.

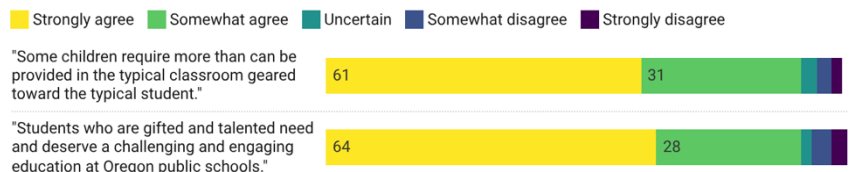
Majorities in every party say this budget share is not enough.



N = 860. Democrats (n = 327), Independents (n = 292), Republicans (n = 241).

Overwhelming agreement: some children need more than typical classrooms can provide

When asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements below, voters agreed in a landslide.



N = 860.



Nearly as decisive is how strongly voters object to eliminating advanced classes. 83% disagreed —61% strongly— that schools should eliminate advanced classes and group students of mixed ability levels in the same classes. Across every party, at least 82% of respondents disagree, including at least 54% who disagree strongly.

Notably, this finding marks a clear mismatch between public opinion and the ‘detracking movement’ dominating current education-school discourse. Oregon voters across party lines reject the elimination of ability-grouped classrooms by more than five to one.

Support for Dedicated Gifted Education Funding

Our survey then directly tested voter support for a ballot measure that would require Oregon to dedicate at least a certain amount of its K–12 education budget to programs and services for gifted and talented students, without raising taxes. To see how the framing of cost affects voter support, the survey used a split-sample design describing the same total in two ways: one half of respondents were told that the measure would dedicate “1% of [Oregon’s K–12] education budget” and the other half were told the measure would dedicate “\$120 million.” Each half was asked whether they would vote “Yes” on the measure, then asked again after hearing arguments in favor of the measure, and then a third time after hearing arguments against the measure.

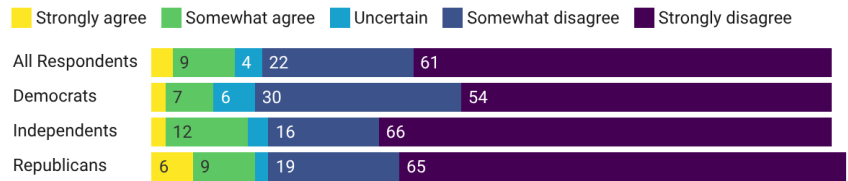
Initial support stood at 60% across the combined sample, with majorities of Democrats, Independents, and Republicans all voting in favor; ‘Definitely Yes’ was the single largest response within every group. Support rose among all voters

after hearing arguments in favor and then receded after hearing the argument against, but never fell below a majority across any party affiliation. Even beyond being simply encouraging, this combination of breadth and durability suggests that this support is politically actionable. Dedicated gifted education funding commanded majorities across the political spectrum. Moreover, whatever sway the arguments against dedicated TAG funding may have held over Oregon legislators in the past, for the voters they represent these arguments were far from conclusive.

Oregonians decisively reject eliminating advanced classes

Large majorities in every party disagreed with the following statement:

“Schools should eliminate academically advanced classes and have all students mixed together in the same classes.”



N = 860; ±3.5 pp (larger for smaller subgroups). Democrats (n = 327), Independents (n = 292), Republicans (n = 241).

Funding support by party: combined sample

Respondents were first asked the following:

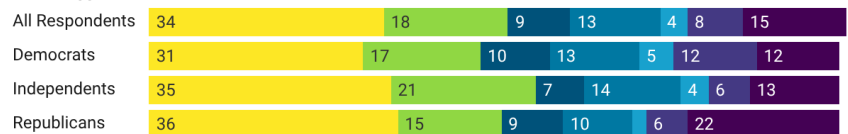
“Some have proposed a ballot measure that, without raising taxes, would require Oregon to spend at least 1% of its K–12 education budget / \$120 million on services and programs for gifted and talented students. Do you think you would vote ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ on this measure?”

Next, respondents heard statements in favor of the measure and were polled again.

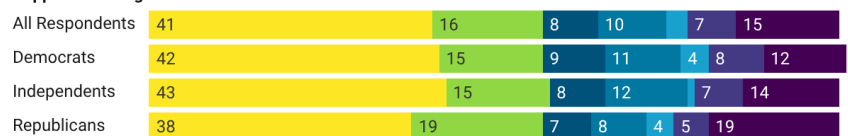
Finally, respondents heard statements against the measure and were polled once more.

Legend: Definitely Yes (yellow), Probably Yes (light green), Lean Yes (dark blue), Unsure (light blue), Lean No (medium blue), Probably No (dark purple), Definitely No (purple)

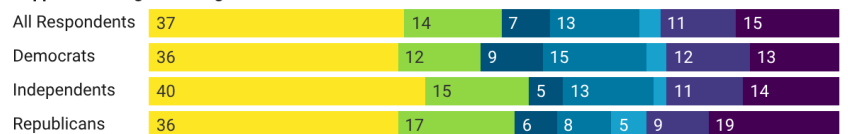
Initial support



Support after arguments in favor



Support after arguments against



N = 860. ±3.5 pp (larger for smaller subgroups). Democrats (n = 327), Independents (n = 292), Republicans (n = 241).

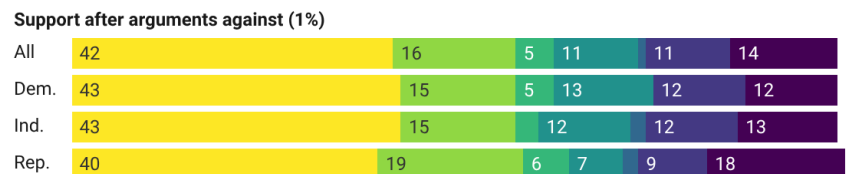
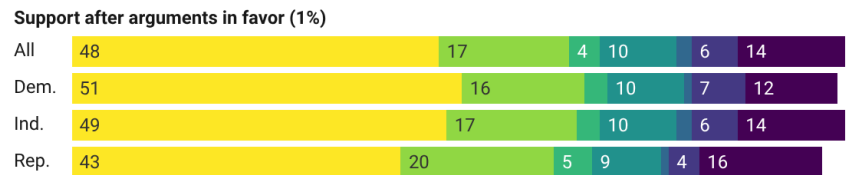
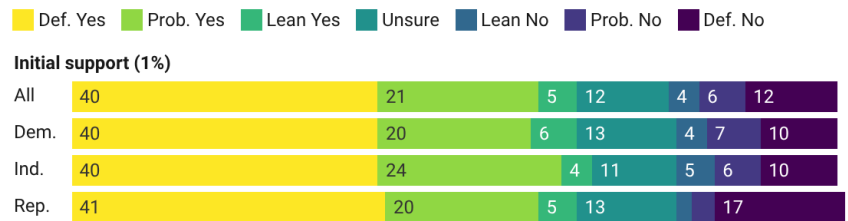


Importantly, the two framings did not perform equally. Under the “1% of its education budget” wording, initial support for the ballot measure was a firm two-thirds majority: 66%. Under the “\$120 million” wording, initial support for the otherwise identical measure was a narrower majority of 55%. This gap between the ‘1%’ and ‘\$120M’ framings held at every stage: after arguments in favor, support rose to 69% and 62%, respectively, and after hearing arguments against, it settled at 63% and 54%.

In part this gap may be due to the comparative ease of placing a percentage in context rather than a lump sum. However, it is also consistent with the regular finding that most American voters significantly underestimate public school funding. EdChoice found that when guessing what public schools in their state spend per student, 66% of Americans and 80% of parents offer answers below the actual figure, with the median parent guess of \$5,000 per pupil being just above half the lowest state average of \$9,496.³

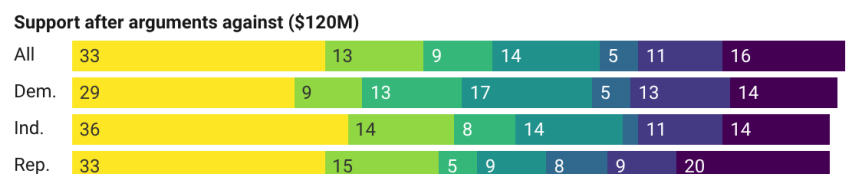
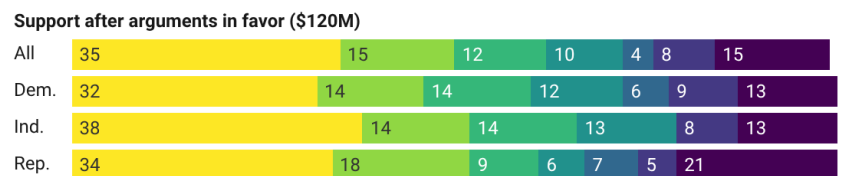
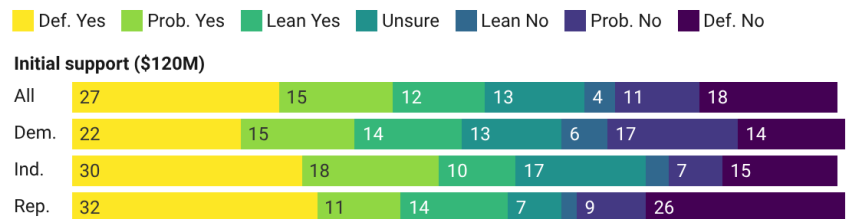
While advocates should prioritize a percentage framing for potential future funding proposals, they should also not be overly worried when opponents reach for lump-sum framing. Having total education funding figures on hand (over \$7.5 billion) will help defuse objections that stress a lump sum, and the proportionality argument remains always available: if TAG students comprise 6.7% of the Oregon student population, then surely 0.1% of state funding for TAG instruction is too low.

Funding support by party: “1% of K–12 budget” framing



“1% of K–12 education budget” framing half-sample. n = 430; ±4.7 pp (larger for smaller subgroups). Weighted partisan subgroups: Democrats (n = 163), Independents (n = 146), Republicans (n = 120).

Funding support by party: “\$120 Million” framing



“\$120 million” framing half-sample. n = 430; ±4.7 pp (larger for smaller subgroups). Weighted partisan subgroups: Democrats (n = 163), Independents (n = 146), Republicans (n = 120).

³ EdChoice, 2025 *Polling Primer: An Overview of American Public Opinion on K–12 Education* (Indianapolis: EdChoice, 2025), <https://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/2025-Polling-Primer.pdf#page=12>



Reasons in Favor, Reasons Against

When asked which gifted-education services were most important to them, voters' answers closely track the high support found above for instruction tailored to academic level and for advanced classes grouped by ability. More than eight in ten (83%) called it extremely or very important to provide every student an education that meets their academic level, and nearly as many (79%) prioritized giving students more opportunities to be challenged when ready (79%). Providing subject-specific advanced coursework ranks

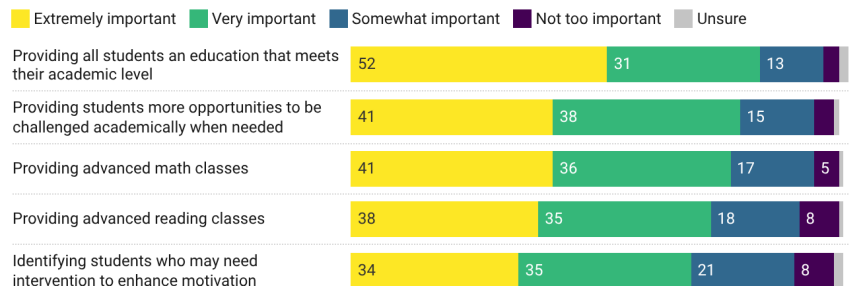
highly, with advanced math classes at 77% and advanced reading classes at 73%, as does identifying students who need help staying motivated at 69%. Funding teacher preparation ranked as slightly lower priorities. Providing TAG training for working and student teachers was extremely or very important to 64% and 58% of respondents, respectively. Offering professional credentials for teachers in educating TAG students was extremely or very important for a smaller majority (54%), just above hiring specialists to work with talented and gifted high school (52%), middle school (50%), and elementary school (48%) students. Least important were providing culturally relevant content for advanced learners (44%) and identifying students able to skip grades (42%).

When 'Yes' voters were asked to explain their support for the dedicated funding measure in their own words, one in four (24%) cited an overall need to support gifted and talented students as a reason in its favor. The next most common response appealed to the importance of investing in the future and society (14%), followed closely by devoting more resources to TAG programs and services (13%) and helping students reach their potential or overcome a lack of challenge in school (12%).

Many explanations from 'No' voters pointed to familiar objections. A fifth (20%) said they oppose dedicated gifted funding on the grounds that not all students are talented and gifted, and that funding should not serve only a subset of students; a sixth (16%) felt Oregon should instead direct funding toward improving public schools generally. The most common objection, though, was not to gifted education at all. A plurality of 'No' voters (26%) would not support the measure because they believed the money would be wasted, mismanaged, or lost to fraud. In the words of one respondent, *"I don't trust the leadership in Oregon. If we had competent leaders, I might feel differently."*

Voters' highest-priority services for increased gifted funding

Respondents rated how important it was to them to increase funding for various services. These five drew the highest share calling them extremely or very important.



N= 860.

Most common reasons in favor

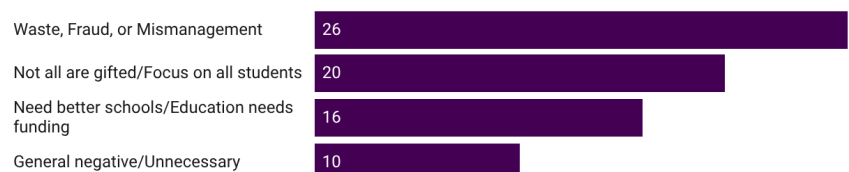
Percentage of 'Yes' voters citing each reason, in their own words.



Open-ended responses, online respondents only, asked of 'Yes' voters only. n = 273. Responses could fall under more than one theme, so shares do not sum to 100%. Top four themes of many shown.

Most common reasons against

Percentage of 'No' voters citing each reason, in their own words.



Open-ended responses, online respondents only, asked of 'No' voters only. n = 138. Responses could fall under more than one theme, so shares do not sum to 100%. Top four themes of many shown.



Takeaways

Support runs broad and deep for dedicated gifted funding and for accelerated classes. Oregon voters of all parties support the tested proposal to dedicate 1% of state K–12 spending to gifted and talented education, and majority support survives even when presented with strong opposing arguments.

When promoting dedicated funding measures for gifted education, advocates have good reason to lead with proportionality. Survey results show the dedicated funding measure wins more support when framed as a percentage of total K–12 funding than when framed as a lump sum. If opponents of a future measure stress the lump sum framing, advocates can refocus on proportions or point to the total education budget in turn. The proportional case is strong: TAG students are 6.7% of all students, yet only ~0.1% of the K–12 budget goes toward serving them. By comparison, the roughly 15% of Oregon students in special education receive 15% or more. A proposal to dedicate 1% to TAG students asks for less than a sixth of what proportionality to the TAG population would grant.

The opposition may also be more tractable than it first appears. The most common objection among “No” voters was not opposition to gifted education spending *per se* but rather doubt that the funds would be spent as promised. But that suspicion is not specific to TAG; it applies to every line item in the education budget. This is an opening for advocates: opposition rooted in a fear of waste and fraud can be met by showing that earmarked funds would go to cost-effective, evidence-based, and transparently accountable programs. Some in this contingent can be persuaded.

The deeper obstacles to dedicated funding are persistent misconceptions about the needs of gifted students. Several ‘No’ voters voiced a belief that gifted students “*will do just fine*” without instruction tailored to their academic level. Yet decades of research show that when left unchallenged, gifted students, often grow frustrated and disengaged, leading to underachievement and isolation. The misconception that TAG programs advantage wealthy students at the expense of those less privileged is especially damaging. When districts fund neither universal screening nor TAG programs at public schools, the students most often overlooked and least able to seek out alternatives elsewhere are precisely those from rural, low-income, and racially diverse backgrounds.

Those harboring these beliefs, however, are in the minority. Taken together, the results of this survey describe something rare in education politics: a popular, bipartisan, and durable cause that its likeliest champions have not yet taken up. The voters are ready; the question is whether Oregon’s lawmakers will follow them.

Select responses from ‘Yes’ voters

- “Investing in these students helps nurture future leaders, strengthens the quality of education, and ensures that students who are ready to excel have the resources and opportunities to reach their full potential.”
- “Education for gifted students has been sidetracked while schools are catering to students to meet the bare minimum requirements for reading and writing.”

Select responses from ‘No’ voters

- “Talented and gifted students already have an advantage in education programs and opportunities to expand their skills through existing programs.”
- “Gifted students are not suffering.”
- “We do not need more programs for gifted kids. They will do just fine in life.”
- “TAG programs are just another way for wealthy parents to get what they want for their kids at the expense of all kids.”
- “Those that are G&T would be better served in charter or private schools. Public schools are not conducive to their education.”



Methodology

This survey was commissioned by the Center for Educational Progress and conducted by FM3 Research, which collected responses from $N = 860$ likely November 2026 Oregon voters between April 28th and May 3rd, 2026, by phone ($n = 399$) and online ($n = 461$).

The 2018–2025 data in the chart “Two in three Oregonians say state is on wrong track” was obtained from prior FM3 Research surveys of Oregon voters; the 2026 figures are from this survey.

Support for the ballot measure was tested with a split-sample design: half of survey respondents ($n=430$) saw (if online) or heard (if by phone) the amount framed as “1% of the education budget,” and the other half ($n=430$) saw or heard the amount framed as “\$120 million.”

Respondents in each half were asked whether they supported or opposed the proposed measure three times: initially, then a second time after considering several statements in support of the measure, and then a third time after considering statements in opposition to it.

For the combined sample, partisan subgroups were Democrats ($n = 327$), Independents ($n = 292$), and Republicans ($n = 241$). For each split sample ($n = 430$), the weighted partisan subgroups were Democrats ($n = 163$), Independents ($n = 146$), and Republicans ($n = 120$). The margin of sampling error is ± 3.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level for the combined sample and ± 4.7 for the split samples, with larger margins for smaller subgroups.

Open-ended responses (Q4) were collected from online respondents only and coded into themes. A single response could be assigned to more than one theme, so the shares reported in the charts “Most common reasons in favor” and “Most common reasons against” do not sum to 100%. The open-ended bases were $n = 273$ for ‘Yes’ voters and $n = 138$ for ‘No’ voters.

Percentages in the charts above may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

About the Report

Survey designed and administered by FM3 Research.

Visualizations created with Datawrapper.

Report by David Shuck (dshuck@educationprogress.org), Senior Fellow, Center for Educational Progress.

About the Center for Educational Progress

The Center for Educational Progress is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit devoted to studying and promoting excellence in education. Founded in 2025, the Center publishes *Education Progress*, which aims to unite pro-excellence voices from across the educational landscape.

Find more at educationprogress.org.



Appendix | Survey Questions

Q1: “Would you say things in Oregon are headed in the right direction, or do you feel they are off on the wrong track?”

Q2: “Currently, Oregon spends more than \$7.5 billion per year on K-12 education, and less than one-tenth of 1% of that goes toward programs and services for the 34,000⁴ students who have been officially identified as gifted and talented, with outstanding achievement, ability or potential in academics, creativity, leadership or the arts. || Do you think this share of the education budget is too much, about the right amount, or too little?”

Q3: Some people have proposed a ballot measure that, without raising taxes, would require the state to spend at least (**Split A: 1% of its [K–12] education budget / Split B: \$120 million**) on services and programs for gifted and talented students from Kindergarten through 12th grade. || Do you think you would vote yes or no on this measure?

(Online: Show answers for *Yes*, *No*, and *Undecided*)

(If *Yes/No*, ask: “Is that definitely or just probably *Yes/No*?”)

(If *Undecided*, ask: “Do you lean toward voting yes or no?”)

Q4: In a few words of your own, why would you vote *Yes/No* on this measure? (OPEN-ENDED)

Q5: First, please indicate whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with each of the following statements about education in Oregon.

5a: Some children require more than can be provided in the typical classroom geared toward the typical student.

5b: Students who are gifted and talented need and deserve a challenging and engaging education at Oregon public schools.

5c: Schools should eliminate academically advanced classes and have all students mixed together in the same classes.

Q6: Please indicate how important it is to you personally to increase funding for each of the following services: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not too important.

- a. Providing training for student teachers in educating gifted and talented students
- b. Providing training for working teachers in educating gifted and talented students
- c. Providing credentials for teachers in educating gifted and talented students
- d. Improving data collection to help districts identify and support gifted and talented students
- e. Hiring specialists to work with gifted and talented elementary school students
- f. Hiring specialists to work with gifted and talented middle school students
- g. Hiring specialists to work with gifted and talented high school students
- h. Identifying students who may be able to skip grades
- i. Identifying students who can be placed into advanced classes in specific subjects
- j. Identifying students for in-class enrichment
- k. Identifying students who may need intervention to enhance their motivation
- l. Providing culturally relevant content for advanced learners
- m. Studying the best approaches to boosting achievement for gifted and talented students
- n. Providing advanced math classes
- o. Providing advanced reading classes
- p. Providing all students with an education that meets them at their academic level
- q. Providing students more opportunities to be challenged academically when needed

Q7: First, please consider the following statements from people who may support this potential measure. For each one, please indicate whether you find it very convincing, somewhat convincing, or not convincing as a reason to vote yes. If you do not believe the statement, you can indicate that instead.

- a. High school students have access to advanced placement courses and college classes, but gifted and talented elementary school students have no guarantee of the kinds of challenging coursework they need. This funding would help expand supports to students at younger ages, where it can make the most difference in their academic careers.

⁴ Survey question figures such as “34,000 [gifted and talented] students” drawn from [Oregon Statewide Report Card 2023–2024](#).



- b. Without state funding, how a gifted or talented student is treated varies significantly by what district they are in. About half of Oregon districts, especially in rural or poorer districts, spend nothing at all on gifted and talented programs. State funding would even the playing field so that high-potential students from all walks of life are challenged and engaged in class.
- c. Rural, low-income, and students of color who are also gifted and talented are the most likely to be overlooked. These students may not have families who can afford to provide enriching opportunities. State funding would even the playing field so that students from all walks of life are challenged and engaged in class.
- d. Oregon is ranked 40th of 50 states when it comes to education. Our gifted and talented students are being left behind by a failing education system. We need to dedicate resources to keep them engaged and succeeding.
- e. Gifted students disproportionately go on to become scientists, engineers, and doctors. Oregon's economy benefits when we develop homegrown talent rather than losing our students to other states.
- f. Currently, students can be identified as talented or gifted and referred to services and programs by teachers or parents. But we need to cast the net wider. This funding would help ensure that we don't just recommend students who behave well in class, but all students who could use additional support for high achievement.
- g. Gifted and talented students may not always be well-adjusted, well-behaved, or high-achieving. They may find it difficult to fit in and find friends in school. Teachers need training to help support these students, just like any other student with special needs.
- h. The status quo isn't working. The current system is leaving high-potential kids without the support they need to succeed.
- i. We are failing Oregon students, who underperform advanced students in most of the country. We need dedicated funding to identify gifted and talented students and provide them access to programs and services to help them live up to their potential.
- j. Other countries are surpassing us academically in part because we're leaving behind our brightest students. This small investment will help make us more competitive with the rest of the world in fields like science, math, tech and medicine.
- k. Underserving gifted and talented students leads their parents to take them out of public schools for private and parochial schools or homeschooling. That hurts enrollment and funding for public schools overall. Better-serving our gifted kids helps every student.

Q8: Do you think you would vote yes or no on this measure to, without raising taxes, require the state to spend at least **(Split A: 1% of its [K–12] education budget / Split B: \$120 million)** on services and programs for gifted and talented students from Kindergarten through 12th grade, without raising taxes?

(Online: Show answers for *Yes*, *No*, and *Undecided*)

(If *Yes/No*, ask: "Is that definitely or just probably Yes/No?")

(If *Undecided*, ask: "Do you lean toward voting yes or no?")

Q9: Next, opponents say that setting aside funding means cutting it somewhere else. Schools have higher priorities than gifted and talented students – like serving those with disabilities and special needs, English language learners, and students struggling with homelessness and poverty. And anyway, good teachers already provide additional support to gifted students within the same classroom. There's no need for more resources and programs just for these students. || Do you think you would vote yes or no on this measure to require the state to spend at least **(Split A: 1% of its [K–12] education budget / Split B: \$120 million)** on services and programs for gifted and talented students from Kindergarten through 12th grade, without raising taxes?

(Online: Show answers for *Yes*, *No*, and *Undecided*)

(If *Yes/No*, ask: "Is that definitely or just probably Yes/No?")

(If *Undecided*, ask: "Do you lean toward voting yes or no?")

Questions 10–18 for classification purposes:

Q10: First, are you, or is a member of your family, a member of a labor union?

Q11: Do you have any children under 18 living with you?

Q12: Do you have any children in the following age ranges living with you: (ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES)

Q13: What kind of school does your child or children attend? (READ LIST)

Q14: Do you have a child who has been designated gifted or talented?

Q15: How would you describe your political perspective?

Q16: What was the last level of school you completed?

Q17: With which racial or ethnic group do you identify yourself?

Q18: What is your gender?