



June 11, 2013

Superintendent Constance Hubbard
Randy Booker, Assistant Superintendent, Educational Services
Members of the GATE Advisory Committee
Piedmont Unified School District
760 Magnolia Ave, Piedmont, CA 94611

Dear Superintendent Hubbard, Mr. Booker, and GATE Advisory Committee members,

Piedmont GPS was formed four years ago for families with advanced learners (including but not limited to GATE identified students) in the Piedmont Unified School District. Our main goal is to help the District support advanced students at every level. We do this through education, advocacy, community building, and fundraising. Our members are active participants on the GATE Advisory Committee, Budget Advisory Committee, and Site Councils. Our group has grown to 67 families.

During this past year, our group:

- Attracted 120 parents and teachers and raised \$3,000 through a workshop with author, psychologist, educator, and consultant, Dr. James Webb
- Held an event for 30+ parents and teachers on supporting the emotional needs of advanced learners and to introduce Khan Academy as a tool for parents and/or teachers to use to support differentiated learning in the classroom and at home (note Khan Academy is very actively mapping their offering to the common core)
- Raised funds for the introduction of “differentiation specialists” to support advanced learners

As you know, we submit a letter of recommendation to you once per year. We thank you for addressing many of the proposals made in our prior letters. At your request, we are updating below the recommendations we submitted to you last year:

- 1. Improve communication to parents.** Parents of advanced learners want to know how their children’s needs are being met. For example, the district could create a simple, brief, written plan for each advanced learner or GATE-identified student to document educational goals and list principal activities to meet those goals. Parents of older children would like to better understand the academic pathways for accelerated math & science / high school honors / AP classes.
- 2. Improve cluster grouping.** “The Cluster Grouping Handbook: A School-wide Model” book with CD-ROM can be used to train teachers and administrators in clustering best practices, and explain the strategy to parents. The goal is to challenge gifted students and improve achievement for all. Link for more information: <http://bit.ly/1128Oap>

- 3. Professional development. Continue the GATE certification training next year; continue professional development for teachers in differentiated instruction;** Increase the number of GATE-certified teachers at every school site. Ask GATE-certified teachers to lead in-house seminars or coach peers on collaboration days.
- 4. Implement the differentiation specialist program at all school sites and hire a district-level gifted/GATE Resource Coordinator–Ensure that these roles provide the needed support for advanced learners.**
- 5. Use GATE funds to pay for above mentioned activities with the goal to meet the needs of advanced learners during the regular school day.**

We've tried to make these recommendations specific, reasonable, and actionable. Our group would be happy to discuss raising funds and provide other resources to support these goals. We look forward to working with you on the 2013-2014 effort to revise the district GATE plan, perhaps incorporating these recommendations.

We would also like to announce that we will be changing our group's name to ALPS -- Advanced Learners Program Support, in an effort to support all of our high-potential students, not only those who are identified as gifted.

If you have any questions, please contact our incoming president, Kim Fisher, at kim@galimagroup.com. We welcome discussion of and your feedback on our recommendations. We appreciate all your efforts and look forward to an ongoing, productive relationship.

Regards,

Piedmont GPS Board and Members:

Kathleen Crombie, Elizabeth Shook, Kim Fisher, Jon Elliott, Leshia Manley, Julie Caskey, Freda Zietlow, Liz Paez, Jude Lee, Gigi Orta, Lisa Joyce, and Julie Fenske

Piedmont GPS (soon-Piedmont ALPS)
P.O. Box 20351
Oakland, CA 94620
email piedmontgps@gmail.com