

Comment to Maryland State Board of Education by
Steve Smalley
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Hello, my name is Steve Smalley. I am an Advisory Engineer at Northrop Grumman and heavily engaged in our Education Outreach efforts. In the interest of full disclosure, I played a role in drafting the COMAR 13A.04.07 Gifted and Talented Education Regulation. I think it's important. This regulation was approved by the Maryland State Board of Education. It is on the books. We just need to emphasize to our superintendents and administrations that it must be followed.

"That which is measured gets done." (Perhaps with negative connotations in the school systems, but its validity has been underscored). The board has a responsibility to ask the systems how differentiation for gifted and talented students is being implemented.

I was, and my children were, unusual students. We had high expectations, sometimes high achieving, and sometimes working outside the classroom norms. I was blessed to receive an education that fit my needs within the boundaries of PA Public Education. My kids received fantastic opportunities, growth and personal care in Howard County public schools. This COMAR regulation was written to better prepare all Maryland schools to provide the type of opportunities on which gifted students thrive.

At Northrop Grumman we focus a lot of attention on engagement: how much more powerful we can be when all of our employees are focused and working at their full capability. We don't expect everyone to contribute the same, but want everyone to have the opportunity to contribute at their personal potential. The COMAR was written to ensure that each of our students can be engaged while in school. Different students have different learning styles and different capabilities.

I believe the trans-disciplinary nature of STEM education can go a long way in engaging our students, but it does not address the need for differentiated opportunities for our gifted students. It may provide some wonderful opportunities, but the school systems need to learn how to make those opportunities available to the right students. Each of our school systems needs to recognize those differences and make opportunities available to students at all capability levels. As a student, all I wanted was the opportunity to learn something new every day. I'm thankful my school system knew how to make that happen. I'm now asking that we task each of our school systems to show you how they are making that happen for their gifted and talented students.

Thank You
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