

Alexandria City Public Schools

Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee

December 14, 2020 Minutes

Meeting: December 14, 2020, @ Zoom Webinar

Current TAGAC Members Present: Zion Bezu, Daphney Denerville-Davis, Tiana Dominick, Leigh Dugan, Reese du Pont, Emily Garrahan, Mark Lacy, Dr. Gerald Mann, D Ohlandt, Laura Rose, Kathleen Sheehy, Mary Beth Walker, Nicholas Miller, Lindsay Clarke, Julia Egy, Asha Mede

Old Business:

The committee approved the November 17th and December 8th Meeting Minutes.

New Business:

The committee heard Angi Green, Testing Improvement Analyst for the ACPS Department of Accountability, discuss aspects of the CogAt test.

The CogAt is a multiple choice test that measures learned reasoning abilities in verbal/quantitative/non-verbal areas.

The Verbal battery consists of 3 areas (Verbal Analogies, Sentence Completion, and Verbal Classification). The Quantitative battery has 3 areas as well, (Number Analogies, Number Puzzles, and Number Series). The Nonverbal battery has 3 levels (Figure Matrices, Paper Folding, and Figure Classification). Each area is a 10-minute timed test. The goal is to identify students whose predicted level of academic performance differs from the actual performance.

All 3rd graders are tested. The test is multiple choice and given with paper/pencil, though there has been some discussion about moving to an online testing environment for 2021. Training for test administration begins with School Test Coordinator training in September followed by teacher training later that month. Students typically learn about how to take the CogAt and take practice tests the 2nd week of October and take the CogAt the 3rd week of October.

***Note that there have already been conversations about the possibility of testing 3rd and 4th graders in the Fall of 2021 to catch any students who might not have been identified via the portfolio process instituted during the Covid pandemic.

Automatic Referrals are triggered for students as follows:

Verbal scores of 96% or higher are used for ELA/Sci/Soc. Studies referrals

Quantitative, NonVerbal/Quantitative, Nonverbal scores are used for Math referrals

Committee members asked questions about giving the same test twice (in consecutive years) to allow familiarity with the testing instrument to possibly facilitate more identification.

There is still consideration being given to using Local/School-Based norms in TAG identification so that not every school would have the same 96thile. This will be part of the revised TAG Local Plan discussions.

There was a request that the Department of Accountability investigate additional avenues for communicating upcoming testing dates to families and to ensure that the DoA->school->parent communication pipeline is solid.

There was a question about accommodations for English Learners. As of now, EL students can be tested in small groups, but don't receive additional time to complete the test. This can be looked at and put in the TAG Local Plan.

The committee asked about the types of demographic data that are collected and how that data is used to help students. Tiana Dominick reported that she uses data from the 2016 TAG Evaluation to drive the work that she has done in outreach as well as developing curriculum for YS and GIA students.

Update from Dr. Mann:

- Staff Update – Thursday the 17th is a presentation on disparities in Middle and High School Honors TAG/AP/DE. The students who are identified for these courses and the gap that begins in TAG Elementary and continues to High School is the topic of this conversation.
- The first round of Interviews for the Donna Brearley's position will take place this week.
- The Statement of Work is still working its way through the process.

Committee Discussion:

- There was a short discussion about the breakdown of teacher demographic data for TAG/Honors/DE/AP courses but it seems that the data is self-reported and limited.
- A question was raised regarding what might be the best test to use for Twice Exceptional (2E) students – is the CogAt the best instrument?
- How many YS students are able to 'break-in' to TAG? Ms. Brearley's report to the School Board said that the initial years was 12% and slightly higher each year. Latest numbers were @14%.
- YS might serve as a good onroad to the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program which provides good supports for future Honors and AP/DE coursework
- Discussion regarding class size and potential caps on AP courses. There is concern that some students who would like to take AP courses are unable to do so because of class sizes being reached and no additional classes being added. Dr. Mann to follow up.