

**Alexandria City Public Schools
Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee
May 15, 2023**

Mount Vernon Community School Media Center
2601 Commonwealth Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22305

Minutes

Meeting: May 15, 2023 @ 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm

Current TAGAC Members Present: D. Ohlandt (Chair), Evan Smith (Vice Chair), Laura Rose, Katie Baker, Irene Arevalo (Teacher Rep)

Guests: Dr. Megan Tempel-Milner (ACPS), Mashari Whitfield (ACPS), Jeremy Miller (member of public), Julie Anne Watko (member of public)

Chair's Remarks:

D. Ohlandt: thanks to Laura Rose, who is at the end of her term limits, and Irene Arevalo and Andy Corso, who are rotating off TAGAC after this year

D. Ohlandt: Updated Local Plan is on the SB agenda to be presented May 18 (vote will be later)
- discussion of whether TAGAC itself can present to SB, or only members in public comment
- D says we have been invited to do this, but didn't get on calendar for this year

Laura Rose: historically, advisory committees didn't get much feedback from Board. TAGAC should take advantage of this invitation

D: encouraged TAGAC members' attendance at SB meetings; will make sure to take invitation for TAGAC to speak next year

Old Business:

March meeting minutes approved (Laura motion, Katie seconded) – All approved

April meeting minutes approved (Laura motion, Irene seconded) – All approved

ACPS Staff Remarks

Megan Tempel-Milner: on May 18, Presentation of Local Plan is on School Board Agenda

Megan: congratulations to Dr. Burrell, named WaPo Principal of the Year

Megan: provided updates on curriculum resources and how they align with SOLs. Hoping to get curriculum writers (current level of \$30/hour isn't enough to incentivize).

Jeremy Miller: Can't we look for existing curricula rather than developing new ones?

Megan: Yes, but still need curriculum writers to fit specific resources into state standards (VA is not common core) and into pacing, plan for accommodations, etc.

Laura: would also be helpful for committee members to attend the meeting when the School Board actually votes on the Local Plan.

Public Remarks

Julie Anne Watko: when I was a TAG student we would do lots of things outside of school. I got a lot out of that, but then I see the poor quality of TAG services in ACPS. Only one assignment so far that I know about. Students in Young Scholars get all the resources and the best instruction, but once your kid is TAG-eligible, they can't access Young Scholars. Students of color and from disadvantaged backgrounds game the eligibility tests so they don't qualify for TAG and get into Young Scholars instead. Compared to Young Scholars, the services aren't much of anything at all. We can do better.

Jeremy Miller: I want to comment on Local Plan being considered. I am especially concerned about changes being proposed to K-3 level; also think it is not consistent with VA legal code which seems to require identification K-12.

D: Reviewed VA statutes; proposed Local Plan is in compliance.

Megan: proposed Local Plan allows for GIA identification for K-3 if referred by a parent or teacher. Regardless of identification, all students will be receiving services from a TAG teacher. TAG teachers will also be spending a lot of time going into classrooms supporting differentiated instruction by classroom teachers and using gifted resources.

Jeremy Miller: worried about kids slipping through the cracks, especially if we don't have updated curriculum to use.

Laura: My ideal would be something like they have in Fairfax with four levels, etc. But I don't see us ever getting there and things will be a compromise. But the plan includes having a lot of AAS teachers that represents a huge increase in services...if funded.

D: Ideally, if a child is struggling to read, even if they don't have a special education label (e.g., dyslexia), the teacher is still equipped to help that kid learn to read. We want to get to a similar place with TAG where every child has access to TAG services that they need, whether or not they have the label.

Megan: there is a major cost to doing identification, put those resources to providing services.

Election of Officers

D: Moving to election of officers and membership next year. Will need a new teacher representative. Want to focus on increasing representation from west end and middle schools.

Motion to re-nominate D as Chair and Evan as Vice Chair for next year by Katie, seconded by Irene. All approved.

Committee Work Session

Discussion of Local Plan TAGAC recommendations, consideration of various accountability mechanisms. Considered adding "at the division, school, and classroom levels" to recommendation number three on this topic.

Discussion of Middle School TAG Curriculum recommendations, considered to move recommendation to increase math options beyond full-grade acceleration from 6th to 2nd and reorder other recommendations to match differentiation recommendations.

Discussion of Differentiated instruction topic, decided to fix numbering issue on recommendations.

Laura Rose moved to approve with the minor changes noted above, Katie seconded. All approved.

Discussion of Topics for Next Year

Potential topics:

- Continued focus on middle school, especially expanded to Language and Visual/Performing Arts
- Focus on teacher professional development/learning, which is critical to success of much of the proposed local plan
- Focus on ways of formalizing accountability for differentiated instruction, which will become even more important if local plan is adopted
- Make more specific budget recommendations to ensure School Board gets the specific info it needs
- Focus on additional ways to increase parent involvement in TAGAC and communication around TAG in general
- Continued attention to identifying and serving TAG-specific social and emotional needs

Additional ACPS Staff Remarks

Megan Tempel-Milner: In anticipation of one of the focus areas for 2023-24 having to do with social and emotional support of TAG-eligible students, and as thanks for the time and effort the committee has already done on this topic, we would like to give the members of the committee a copy of the book *A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children (2nd edition)*. Mashari and I reviewed several resources and we believe this book will be helpful to you as parents of TAG-eligible children and also it will help frame future committee discussion about social and emotional supports.

Additional Public Comments

Jeremy Miller: Not convinced that the proposed Local Plan will do the things you claim it will do. Just that it has been a long time since we updated the Local Plan is not a good enough reason to approve it. TAG parents need to be surveyed; the reasons I have heard that this can't be done sound like excuses. ACPS should use the Fairfax County Schools plan as it is, just take their whole plan and use it at our schools.

Julie Anne Watko: TAG families need to be surveyed. The survey doesn't have to go through a formal design process, you just need to ask parents what they think. All the good resources go to Young Scholars and the TAG kids don't get what they need.

Motion to adjourn, seconded, and unanimously agreed @ 8:30pm

TAGAC meetings for 2023-24 will be scheduled at a later date.