

BOARD MEMO

Date: January 18, 2024

For ACTION:

For INFORMATION:

FROM: D. Ohlandt, Ph.D., Chair, Advanced Academic Services Advisory Committee (AASAC)
Megan Tempel-Milner, Ph.D., Director of Advanced Academic Services (K-12)

THROUGH: Carmen Sanders, Executive Director of Instructional Support
Pierrette Finney, Ed.D., Chief Academic Officer
Melanie Kay-Wyatt, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

TO: The Honorable Michelle Rief, Chair, and
Members of the Alexandria City School Board

TOPIC: **Advanced Academic Services Advisory Committee (AASAC)
Scope of Work for 2023-24**

ACPS 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL:

- Goal 1: Systemic Alignment
- Goal 2: Instructional Excellence
- Goal 3: Student Accessibility and Support
- Goal 4: Strategic Resource Allocation
- Goal 5: Family and Community Engagement

SY 2023-2024 FOCUS AREA:

- Academic Achievement (Tier 1 Instruction) (The High School Project)
- Student Supports (CASEL Social Emotional Learning Competencies) (Student Connection)
- Staff Supports (Continue Culture Building)

FY 2024 BUDGET PRIORITY:

- K-4 Literacy
- Increase Support for Social and Emotional Learning
- Planning for Future Projects
- Communications Support

SUMMARY:

In June 2023, the School Board voted to approve the updated “Local Plan” for the Education of the Gifted at ACPS, 2023-2028. AASAC affirms that the updated Local Plan is a positive development for Advanced Academic Services at ACPS but its success depends on continued support from the Division in the form of staff positions and curriculum resources, and on improving the credibility of AAS among students, families, and ACPS staff.

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To this end, the AAS Advisory Committee activities during the 2023-24 school year will focus on the following areas:

- 1) Improving the credibility of AAS within ACPS students, families, staff, and policy-makers
- 2) Specific attention to the delivery of AAS services at the Middle School and High School levels
- 3) Social-Emotional Learning Supports tailored to advanced students

DETAILS:

Improving credibility of Advanced Academic Services

Whatever improvements to equity, accessibility, and quality of services that ACPS Advanced Academic Services may provide, these improvements will have limited impact if students, families, and staff are not fundamentally convinced that the program can and is providing necessary interventions that lead to positive educational and social outcomes for ACPS students.

AASAC has noted that some of the concerns that have had a negative impact on the credibility of AAS include: poor or inconsistent communication between division, staff, parents, and students; lack of clarity about the form and function of DEPs; poor parent (and sometimes school staff) understanding of the referral, screening, and appeal processes for eligibility determination; inconsistent resources across schools in both instruction and curriculum; lack of rigor in Tier 1 general curriculum; unclear channels of feedback and accountability between parents and school staff; and wide-spread misunderstandings of the character, availability, and benefits of Tier 2 and Tier 3 AAS interventions. AASAC intends to identify some of these concerns and make recommendations for how they might be addressed through policy, budget, and programming.

This aligns with the School Board's Areas of Focus for SY 23-24: "Academic Achievement," subtopic "Tier 1 Instruction" and "The High School Project"; "Student Supports" subtopic "CASEL Social Emotional Learning Competencies" and "Student Connection and Attendance"; and "Staff Supports" subtopic "Continue Culture Building."

Delivery of Advanced Academic Services in Middle School and High School

Continuing its work from 2022-23, AASAC will review and make recommendations about the Honors curriculum at the middle school level and the ways that the academic and social-emotional needs of TAG-eligible and AAS students can be met in middle school. Additionally, AASAC will look at these issues at the high school level and consider the pathways and entrance/exit ramps available to AAS students in grades 6-12.

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Of particular concern will be providing recommendations about the character of “Honors” secondary classes and what differentiates them from rigorous general education classes, and the process of identifying the need for and assuring delivery of appropriate Tier-2 and Tier-3 interventions for AAS students in these classes.

This aligns with the School Board’s Areas of Focus for SY 23-24: “Academic Achievement,” subtopic “Tier 1 Instruction” and “The High School Project”; and “Student Supports” subtopic “Student Connection and Attendance.”

Social Emotional learning supports tailored to Advanced Academic students

AASAC will monitor and make recommendations concerning the delivery of social-emotional supports that are tailored specifically to meet the needs of students receiving interventions for Advanced Academic Services.

Students who require AAS interventions for academic modifications frequently experience social and emotional challenges as well, from difficulty relating to peers in part because of asynchronous development, to anxiety, paralyzing perfectionism, and impatience with others and themselves. AASAC will focus in particular on the ways that social-emotional learning instruction is differentiated for AAS students K-12 and on the resources available to staff, students, and families for Tier-2 and Tier-3 interventions in social-emotional learning for AAS students.

This aligns with the School Board’s Area of Focus for SY 23-24 “Student Supports” subtopic “CASEL Social Emotional Learning Competencies.”

BACKGROUND:

The focus areas for 2023-24 have been developed in conversation with Dr. Megan Tempel-Milner and returning members of AASAC, as well as in consultation with recent and current ACPS and School Board priorities as approved at the September 7, 2023 School Board meeting.

RECOMMENDATION: The Superintendent recommends that the School Board approve the AASAC Scope of Work for 2023-24.

IMPACT:

By focusing on the topics contained in this scope of work, AASAC believes ACPS will provide stronger, better supported, and more equitable Advanced Academic Services to its students.

CONTACT:

Dr. D. Ohlandt, aasac@acps.k12.va.us

Dr. Megan Tempel-Milner, megan.tempel-milner@acps.k12.va.us