

# Alexandria City Public Schools

## Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted

2023-2028

<b>LEA#</b>	101		
<b>Superintendent</b>	Dr. Melanie Kay-Wyatt (Interim Superintendent)		
<b>Mailing Address</b>	1340 Braddock Place Alexandria, VA 22314		
<b>Gifted Education Director/Designee</b>	Dr. Megan Tempel-Milner	<b>Title</b> <b>Address</b> <b>Telephone</b> <b>Email</b>	Advanced Academic Services Director  1340 Braddock Place Alexandria, VA 22314  703-619-8093  Megan.Tempel-Milner@acps.k12.va.us
<b>Local School Board Chairperson</b>	The Honorable Meagan L. Alderton		
<b>Date Approved by School Board</b>	TBD		

**Table of Contents**

Table of Contents	2
Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted	3
General Information Regarding the Gifted Program in Alexandria City Public Schools	6
Part I: Statement of Philosophy and Local Operational Definition of Giftedness for the School Division (8VAC20-40-60A.1)	7
A. Division Statement of Philosophy for the Education of Gifted Students	7
B. Division Operational Definition of Giftedness	8
Part II: Program Goals and Objectives (8VAC20-40-60A.2)	10
A. Identification	10
B. Delivery of Services	11
C. Curriculum and Instruction	12
D. Professional Development	13
E. Equitable Representation of Students	13
F. Parent/Guardian and Community Involvement	14
Part III: Screening, Referral, Identification, and Service Procedures	15
A. Screening Procedures (8VAC20-40-60A.3)	16
B. Referral Procedures (8VAC20-40-60A.3)	19
C. Identification Procedures (8VAC20-40-60A.3)	22
Part IV: Notification Procedures (8VAC20-40-60A.4)	29
A. Tier III: Specific Academic Aptitude (SAA) Services in Grades 4-12	30
B. Universal Screening: Phase 2 and Phase 3	30
Part V: Change in Instructional Services (8VAC20-40-60A.5)	32
A. Tier III	33
B. Process for Change in Services	33
Part VI: Evidence of Appropriate Service Options (8VAC20-40-60A.10)	34
A. Service Options Are Continuous and Sequential	35
B. Service Options Provide Instructional Time With Age-Level Peers	43
C. Service Options Provide Instructional Time With Intellectual and Academic Peers	43
D. Service Options Provide Instructional Time to Work Independently	44
E. Service Options Foster Intellectual and Academic Growth	45
F. Procedures for Assessing Academic Growth in Gifted Students	45
Part VII: Program of Differentiated Curriculum and Instruction (8VAC20-40-60A.11)	46
Part VIII: Policies and Procedures for Access to Programs and Advanced Courses (8VAC20-40-60A.12)	49
Part IX: Personal and Professional Development (8VAC20-40-60A.13)	50
Part X: Procedures for Annual Review of Effectiveness (8VAC20-40-60A.14)	55

Alexandria City Public Schools (2023-2028)

A. State Compliance	55
B. Equity and Program Audits Presented to the School Board, Superintendent, Administrators, Instructional Staff, and Local Advisory Committees	55
C. Screening and Identification Effectiveness	55
D. Achievement Growth in Students Identified for Tier III Services	56
E. Feedback and Recommendations	56
Part XI: Procedures for the Establishment of the Local Advisory Committee (8VAC20-40-60B)	58
Part XII: Assurances (8VAC20-40-60A.6; A.7; A.8; A.9)	58
References	60

## **Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted**

*Each school board must review and approve a comprehensive plan for the education of the gifted. That plan must provide specific explanations of the school division's implementation of the Regulations Governing Educational Services for Gifted Students. School divisions, working in conjunction with their school boards, should determine the appropriate timeframe of applicability for their division's gifted plan. Historically, division plans span five years. For the technical review, the DOE will request a division to send its most current, approved plan at the time of the review. The applicable timeframe for the division's plan does not need to correspond to the collection year of their technical review. Information on the DOE technical review schedule can be found on the gifted education homepage at the Virginia Department of Education's Web site Gifted Ed Homepage: <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching-learning-assessment/specialized-instruction/gifted-education>*

*Section 8VAC20-40-60A of the Regulations states that "Each school board shall submit a comprehensive plan for the education of gifted students to the Department of Education (DOE) for technical review on a schedule determined by the Department. Each school board shall approve a comprehensive plan for the education of gifted students, including the components identified in these regulations." To assist school divisions and school boards in complying with section 8VAC20-40-60A, the Virginia Department of Education has created this template for developing Local Plans for the Education of the Gifted (revised January 2011). This public document addresses all aspects of local services for gifted students, including, but not limited to, the area(s) of giftedness the school division will serve, an operational definition of giftedness in the division and its supporting identification procedures, program services, professional development, curriculum development, and parent and community involvement.*

*Each section of the plan should address specific procedures and information for each area of giftedness identified by the school division. If a school division identifies students in general intellectual aptitude (GIA) and specific academic aptitude-mathematics (SAA-M), then the section for referral procedures, for example, should reflect the specific referral procedures for GIA and SAA-M. Throughout the local plan template, school divisions may need to copy and paste the drop-down boxes, the insert text form fields, and any pertinent information for each area of giftedness identified by the division. In order to be able to 'choose an item' from a drop-down box, simply right-click on the highlighted 'choose an item' wording, and the drop-down arrow should appear on the right. Right-clicking on the arrow will allow the drop-down box choices to appear. If certain procedures or policies apply to more than one area of giftedness, simply copy and paste the drop-down selection box to reflect all areas of giftedness that are applicable to the procedures or policy.*

*Once the completed comprehensive local plan for the education of gifted students has been approved by the local school board, the plan shall be accessible to the public through the division's Web site. The division shall ensure that printed copies of the plan are available to citizens who do not have online access.*

*For more information, contact the Virginia Department of Education specialist for Governor's Schools and Gifted Education at 804-225-2884.*



**General Information Regarding the Gifted Program in Alexandria City Public Schools**

*In section 8VAC20-40-40A of the Regulations, divisions are required to screen, refer, identify, and serve gifted students in at least general intellectual aptitude or specific academic aptitude. School divisions may identify and serve gifted students in career and technical aptitude or visual or performing arts aptitude, or both at their discretion. On the chart below, please indicate all areas of giftedness that are identified and served within the division. Please copy and paste any additional rows as might be needed to address all areas in Specific Academic Aptitude and/or Visual and/or Performing Arts that are identified by the school division.*

<b>Area of Giftedness Identified by the Division</b>	<b>Grades Served</b>
General Intellectual Aptitude (GIA)	Grades K-12  ACPS will use a talent development approach, including an early childhood talent development focus in grades K-3, regardless of GIA eligibility
Specific Academic Aptitude (SAA) – Math	Grades 4-12
SAA – English/Language Arts	Grades 4-12
SAA – Social Studies	Grades 4-12
SAA – Science	Grades 4-12
Career and Technical Aptitude (CTA)	N/A
Visual and/or Performing Arts Aptitude (VPAA) – Choose an item.	N/A

(Please highlight, copy, and insert SAA and/or VPAA rows, as necessary, to reflect all areas of giftedness served by the school division.)

**Part I: Statement of Philosophy and Local Operational Definition of Giftedness for the School Division (8VAC20-40-60A.1)**

Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) aligns with the National Association for Gifted Children's (NAGC's) definition of giftedness and philosophical beliefs about serving students within our school division. "Students who perform or have the capability to perform at higher levels compared to students of the same age, experience, and environment require modification(s) to their educational experience(s) to learn and nurture their potential. Our students who require these services come from all racial, ethnic, and cultural populations, as well as all economic strata, require access to learning opportunities to realize their potential, can have learning and processing disorders that require specialized intervention and accommodation, need support and guidance to develop socially and emotionally and in their areas of talent, and require varied services based on their changing needs." (NAGC, 2019)

**A. Division Statement of Philosophy for the Education of Gifted Students**

In ACPS, we believe all students have the fundamental right to an education that promotes the development of their potential. Each child has a unique profile of academic strengths and abilities. ACPS is committed to providing challenging learning experiences for all students that build on individual strengths and optimize abilities, including Advanced Academic Services (AAS), formally known as Talented and Gifted Services.

We believe in the power of providing services to our students. Over the years, ACPS has heard and listened to families and educators discuss what the impact of labeling a student as "gifted" can mean. The association with the current program's title has not always been positive. Educators and parents/guardians must be aware of the potentially negative ramifications of labeling students as gifted and address this problem from many fronts, including changing the system's culture regarding how high academic achievement is nurtured and developed. Therefore, we propose that the program be renamed to better align with identifying different levels of AAS to meet the needs of students and develop their potential, rather than a label assigned to a child. As a result, the program's new name will be Advanced Academic Services (AAS).

Additionally, ACPS's beliefs, policies, and procedures are grounded in equity and inclusion. We believe in developing the strengths and talents of all students and offer a continuum of AAS to meet a range of student needs, which also aligns with the Talent Development Model. The Talent Development theoretical framework posits that schools should identify services necessary to develop high potential. Giftedness is not viewed as an absolute or fixed state of being. Instead, it is considered a developmental set of behaviors that can be applied to problem-solving situations. Gifted behaviors emerge in certain people, at certain times, and under certain circumstances.

One theoretical framework for Talent Development in giftedness is the Talent Development Process Model, proposed by Paula Olszewski-Kubilius and colleagues. The Talent Development Process Model includes three components: potential, practice, and performance. According to this model, the development of talent involves the identification of potential, the acquisition of skills through deliberate practice, and the demonstration of performance in a specific domain. It

is up to educators and families to offer students as wide an array of enriching experiences as possible so students can discover the areas in which their potential is greatest; then, students must be given opportunities to pursue those areas of interest and high potential.

The benefits of transitioning to a Talent Development Process Model for K-3 students are numerous and well-documented. The model allows all students to receive appropriate levels of challenge and support. It ensures that all students are engaged in learning and have the opportunity to grow and excel in areas that are meaningful to them. Focusing on developing each student's individual strengths, students will develop a sense of self-efficacy, which is essential for their future success. Additionally, the Talent Development Process Model promotes equity in education, where all students receive the support they need to achieve their full potential regardless of their background or socioeconomic status.

ACPS offers a continuum of AAS to nurture skills acquisition, beginning in kindergarten and continuing through grade 12. This K-12 continuum provides increasing levels of challenge and is designed to emphasize the importance of matching services to student needs with flexible entry points. All children have the opportunity to work at a level of challenge that promotes continuous intellectual growth. Through advocacy and a continuum of differentiated services in ACPS, the unique needs of students will be valued and nurtured to challenge students' minds, meet their emotional needs, and prepare them to thrive in a diverse and ever-changing world.

#### **B. Division Operational Definition of Giftedness**

*This section should include an operational definition for each area of giftedness (general intellectual aptitude, specific academic aptitude, visual and/or performing arts aptitude, or career and technical aptitude) identified and served by the division. An operational definition provides the concrete, observable, and/or measurable criteria for 'giftedness' used by the division in the identification process. Such a definition might include listing the evidence of student readiness for gifted educational services, e.g., evidence of gifted behaviors determined by a valid and reliable teacher checklist or evidence of superior academic performance based on a norm-referenced aptitude assessment.*

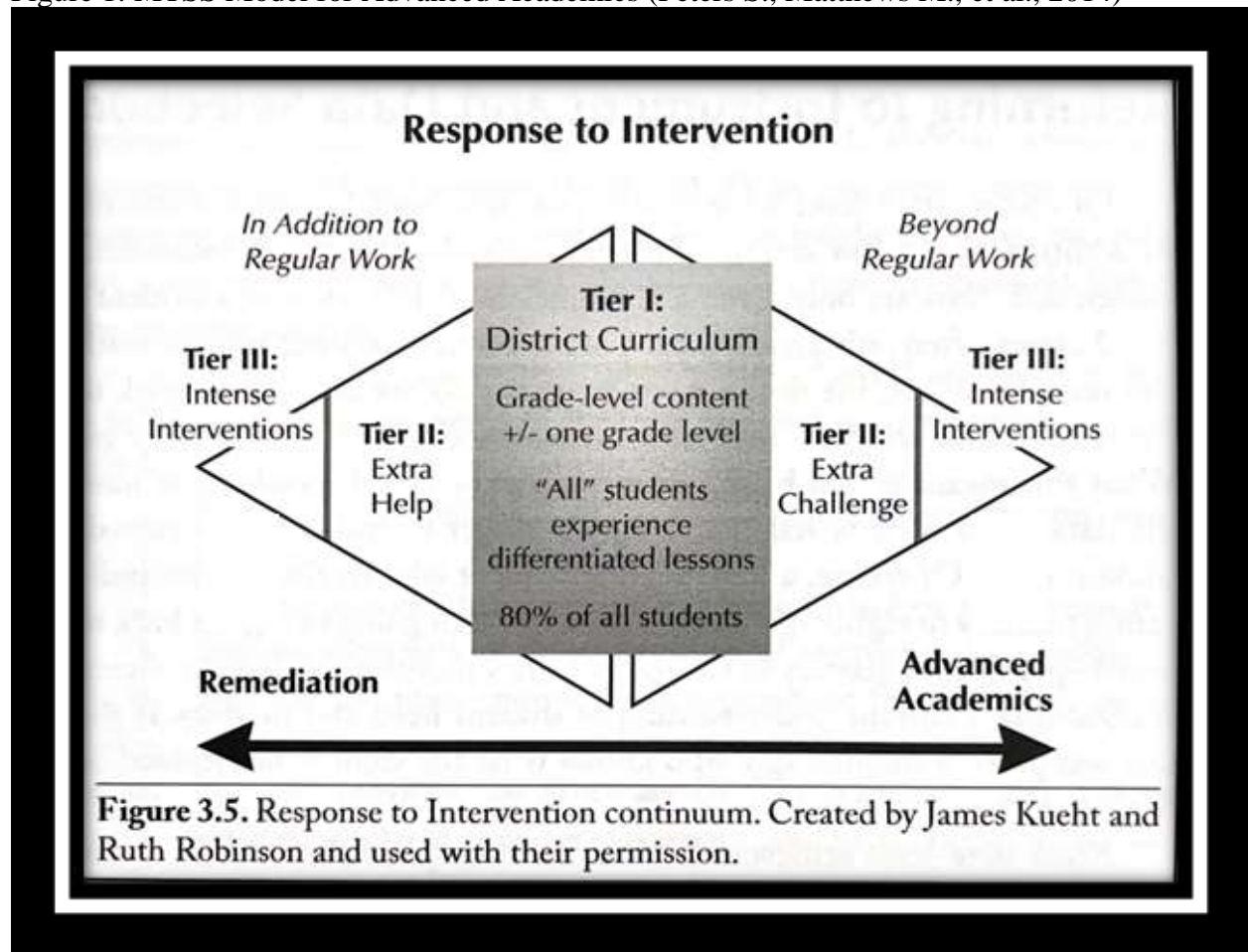
ACPS identifies students in need of AAS who have the potential to achieve at high academic levels. Within this plan, ACPS addresses the various levels of advanced academic interventions the schools and staff will provide for students through an advanced academic services model incorporating the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) advanced academic intervention services across grades K-12 using a three-tiered system. Research and professional organizations suggest that aligning the Gifted Talent Development Model and the MTSS Model can provide targeted support for advanced learners within a comprehensive framework for meeting the needs of all students.

For students who need more than a Tier I or Tier II advanced academic intervention, ACPS offers a third tier of intervention. Formal identification for the gifted, including universal screening and multi-data points, will be at the Tier III advanced academic level. This high-stakes intervention aligns with Virginia's Specific Academic Aptitude (SAA) services. Students in grades 4-12 who are identified as requiring SAA have the potential to achieve high levels of



academic achievement. These students exhibit advanced performance capability in intellectual endeavors in one or more academic areas: mathematics, science, social studies, and/or language arts. Students are screened and identified using multiple sources of information, including nationally normed ability and achievement tests, gifted rating scales, student work samples, and other evidence that supports a need for advanced academic services. Identified students need access to educational resources to enhance their learning. Our advanced learners require an engaging and complex differentiated curriculum to meet the needs of students and develop their abilities. In addition, the curriculum needs to be varied in depth, breadth, and pace of instruction through a broad range of opportunities that enrich and extend the program of studies in all subject areas.

Figure 1: MTSS Model for Advanced Academics (Peters S., Matthews M., et al., 2014)



## **Part II: Program Goals and Objectives (8VAC20-40-60A.2)**

*This section should include goals and objectives for the school division's gifted education program. Specific references pertaining to each area of giftedness identified by the division should be clearly indicated.*

The formal services under this current Local Plan for the Gifted will focus on Specific Academic Aptitude (SAA) services in grades 4-12 in language arts/English, mathematics, science, and social studies. In addition to a focus on SAA services, ACPS has developed goals to align with a Talent Development Model philosophy, which will have an Early Childhood Talent Development Model focus in grades K-3 (which may include General Intellectual Aptitude services); a Young Scholars Model in grades K-12; a differentiated instruction via class cluster grouping in grades 4-12; and open Honors, Advanced Placement, and Dual Enrollment in grades 6-12. The goals presented below are robust but represent a needed shift from ACPS's gifted program goals developed in 2012.

### **A. Identification**

*Overarching goal:* ACPS will ensure all students have equitable access to, and engagement with, programs and support that reduce barriers to learning.

*Subgoals:*

- ACPS will reduce disparities in advanced academic access over the next five years.
- ACPS will implement multiple robust criteria in screening and identification processes using a holistic review of data to match the needs of students to service options.
- All students will have access to instructional rigor in ACPS through high-quality Tier I instruction.
  - This would entail adopting Critical and Creative Thinking resources and instructional strategies across all school levels, including project-based learning, critical and creative thinking, Socratic seminars, debates, rich-math tasks, and document-based questions (DBQs).
  - Student responses in the form of work samples and documented observations serve as an important data point in the holistic screening process for the continuum of services available to students.
- All students who require Tier II interventions will be assessed via the classroom teacher with flexible interventions throughout the year, depending on need.
- Tier III- Specific Academic Aptitude (SAA) interventions will occur when robust data is available for students, which historically occurs by grade 3 in ACPS.
- All grade 3 students will go through a universal screening process to determine if there is a current need for Tier III services, which would begin in grade 4.
- ACPS will expand its universal screening data to include nationally normed ability tests, nationally normed achievement tests, and observation scales
- All Young Scholars in grade 3-5 will be screened for Tier III services.

## **B. Delivery of Services**

*Overarching goal:* ACPS will provide Advanced Academic Services (AAS) to students among all ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic groups, which will enable students to achieve excellence and develop their abilities to the fullest.

*Subgoals:*

- ACPS will provide access to rigor for all students through high-quality Tier I instruction.
  - ACPS will adopt critical and creative thinking resources and instructional strategies across all school levels, including project-based learning, critical and creative thinking strategies, Socratic seminars, debates, rich-math tasks, and DBQs—all of which align with the Talent Development Model and mindset.
- ACPS will implement an Early Childhood Talent Development Model approach in grades K-3.
  - The Early Childhood Talent Development Model focuses on providing more services to more students regardless of a formal identification screening that most gifted programs require. Advanced Academic Support Teachers will work directly with teachers and students to support differentiated learning within the homeroom classroom.
  - Referrals are not required for this service, however, individuals may refer students in grades K-2 to receive a formal identification status. The service within general intellectual aptitude is the same as a Tier II intervention within the classroom.
- ACPS will expand the Young Scholars Model to include more students at the elementary level.
- ACPS will expand the Young Scholars Model at the middle and high school levels to include programming support throughout the year.
- ACPS will provide two Advanced Academic Support Teachers (AASTs) at every elementary school to serve students at the Tier I-Tier III levels.
- ACPS will provide one secondary instructional specialist at the Central Office level who will work in the Office of AAS. The secondary instructional specialist will support secondary AAST teachers; work with instructional specialists in each of the core content areas to differentiate instruction; and support the Governor’s School, Dual Enrollment, Honors, and Advanced Placement (AP) instruction.
- ACPS will provide an AAST at the high school level to support secondary teachers with Advanced Placement, Dual Enrollment, and Honors work.
- Tier I and Tier II instruction will be delivered within the homeroom classes with the primary support of the classroom teacher and supplemental support of the AAST.
- At the elementary level, AASTs will co-teach and model Critical and Creative Thinking Strategies, as well as a gifted curriculum, once a week or once every two weeks, depending on the school size.
- ACPS will look to expand advanced services in the following areas:
  - Explore opening advanced opportunities in other areas of talent, including Visual and/or Performing Arts Aptitude (VPAA).

- Explore opening advanced opportunities in other areas of talent, including Career and Technical Aptitude (CTA).

### **C. Curriculum and Instruction**

*Overarching goal:* ACPS will ensure that all students have access to, and engagement with, high-quality instruction.

*Subgoals:*

- ACPS will ensure that a guaranteed, viable, and differentiated curriculum is delivered to all students. ACPS instruction will be:
  - Aligned to a division-wide instructional framework and high-quality curricula
  - Engaging and rigorous
  - Culturally relevant
  - Differentiated to students' strengths
  - Responsive to students' social, emotional, and academic needs
  - Supported and monitored by school and division administrators and instructional coaches, creating a culture of substance, depth, and critical thinking in curriculum and instruction
- ACPS will develop a grades 6-12 curriculum resource framework of researched-based gifted and talented curriculum resources.
- ACPS will update curriculum guides to align research-based gifted resources with district standards pacing.
- ACPS will ensure the implementation of well-defined, high-impact instructional strategies that support academic learning and social and emotional development for a diverse student population.
- ACPS will work collaboratively with the content and program area offices to provide alternate pathways within curriculum documents to outline learning outcomes for gifted learners using curricular resources written for gifted learners.
- ACPS will support the curriculum and instruction needs through lesson planning, teacher support, and coaching, providing rigorous instruction to all and developing a robust Honors program.
  - Staff two AASTs at each elementary and K-8 school.
  - Provide a Secondary Advanced Academic Specialist (SAAS) to support the secondary needs of curriculum writing and to support content-area specialists within the Central Office with the Governor's School.
  - Provide one AAST at Minnie Howard and one AAST at Alexandria City High School (ACHS) King Street.

### **D. Professional Development**

*Overarching goal:* ACPS will continue to develop, lead, and provide ongoing professional learning using multiple modalities on various topics related to current best practices in gifted

education, including characteristics of diverse gifted learners; best practices in equitable screening and identification processes; Young Scholars and talent development; curricular resources written for gifted, critical, and creative thinking strategies, assessment and compacting curriculum for daily differentiation; clustering and flexible grouping; appropriate support for twice exceptional (2e) students, English learners, students from poverty, underachieving students, and students from diverse linguistic, cultural, and/or ethnic backgrounds; and support for the social-emotional needs of gifted learners.

*Subgoals:*

- ACPS will realign professional learning with the division supports at schools, provide instructional coaching on the instructional framework, and identify high-leverage instructional strategies through a lens of trauma-informed care.
- ACPS will continue collaborating to support shared professional learning with community-based, early care, and education partners.
- ACPS will conduct a needs assessment of professional learning opportunities with staff involved in division-wide, after-school programming.
- ACPS will provide professional learning opportunities for staff that support student-centric learning models, innovative instructional practices, and professional growth through technology.
- ACPS will continue to provide ongoing professional development on cultural competency and updated research in advanced academic and gifted research.
- ACPS will build the capacity of teachers to differentiate curriculum and instruction for a broad range of advanced learners K-12 to include students who may be 2e; English language learners from diverse linguistic, cultural, and/or ethnic backgrounds; or economically vulnerable.
- ACPS will sponsor teacher endorsement in gifted education by partnering with the University of Virginia.

**E. Equitable Representation of Students**

*Overarching goal:* ACPS will ensure that all students have equitable access to, and engagement with, programs and support that reduce barriers to learning.

*Subgoals:*

- ACPS is committed to eliminating opportunity and achievement gaps by monitoring progress through:
  - The disproportionality rate of students in AAS at the elementary level by the school and student group
  - The disproportionality rate of students in advanced coursework at the secondary level by school and student group
  - Expanding participation of diverse students in Young Scholars and AAS programs in grades K-12
- ACPS will use improvement science to identify and address the root causes of historic systemic inequities and racism.

- ACPS will work to collectively remove barriers that prevent someone from achieving their aspirations and fully engaging in whatever they choose within ACPS’s educational experiences.
- ACPS will expand universal screening measures to include non-standardized-based testing measures.
  - ACPS will increase the use of local building norms as an equitable best practice.
  - ACPS will continue to expand the use of student portfolios to document gifted behaviors and to show growth over time when given opportunities to think critically and problem-solve.
  - ACPS will continue the use of an oversight committee to do an annual review of screening, referral, and identification data.
- ACPS will eliminate opportunity and achievement gaps by monitoring the progress through the expansion of the Young Scholars Model at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

#### **F. Parent/Guardian and Community Involvement**

*Overarching goal:* ACPS will ensure that all families and community members feel welcomed, respected, and valued.

*Subgoals:*

- ACPS will work with community outreach to support family and community members and include them in ACPS decision-making processes, empower them to support the delivery of education and services to students, and connect them to a coordinated system of services across partner organizations.
- ACPS will commit to eliminating opportunity and achievement gaps by monitoring our progress through:
  - The percentage of families feeling welcomed, valued, and empowered as partners in their children’s success (survey)
  - The percentage of families who feel their voices are included and valued in ACPS decision-making processes (survey)
- ACPS will use surveys to receive feedback from various representative voices.
- ACPS will streamline and align technology tools for improved communications with families and other stakeholders.
- ACPS will improve students’ and families’ experiences during critical transitions in their educational journey.
- ACPS will work with national consultants to bring parent/guardian workshops to support families learning about the needs of their children.

#### **Part III: Screening, Referral, Identification, and Service Procedures**

ACPS uses a three-tiered advanced academic system of support for its students. The table below provides an encapsulated view of the various Advanced Academic Services (AAS) options for

students throughout the division. Over the following subsections within Part III, the plan will outline the screening, referral, identification, and service procedures for each level of service.

Table: 3.1: Overview of ACPS’s AAS

	Elementary: Grades K-3	Elementary: Grades 4-5	Middle: Grades 6-8	High: Grades 9-12	
Tier I Talent Development Model: Rigor for All	Access to AAS curriculum and strategies for all students	Access to AAS curriculum and strategies for all students	Access to AAS curriculum and strategies for all students	Access to AAS curriculum and strategies for all students	
Tier II Talent Development Model	Differentiated lessons using advanced curriculum and strategies in the general education classroom	Differentiated lessons using advanced curriculum and strategies in the general education classroom	Differentiated lessons using advanced curriculum and strategies in the general education classroom	Differentiated lessons using advanced curriculum and strategies in the general education classroom	
	Young Scholars	Young Scholars	Young Scholars	Young Scholars	
	Early Childhood Talent Development Model		Open Honors in English, math, social studies, or science	Open Honors in English, math, social studies, or science	Open Honors in English, math, social studies, or science
			Open Enrollment in Advanced Placement (AP)		Optional Enrollment in Dual Enrollment classes

	Elementary: Grades K-3	Elementary: Grades 4-5	Middle: Grades 6-8	High: Grades 9-12
Tier III Specific Academic Aptitude (SAA) Services		SAA in reading, math, social studies, and/or science	SAA in reading, math, social studies, and/or science through Honors	SAA in reading, math, social studies, and/or science through Honors, Dual Enrollment, and APcourses
				Governor's School

**A. Screening Procedures (8VAC20-40-60A.3)**

*This section should provide screening procedures for each area of giftedness identified and served by the division. These procedures should include the annual review of student data used to create a pool of potential candidates for further assessment. Specific references pertaining to each area of giftedness identified by the division should be clearly indicated.*

Tier I and Tier II are screened through ongoing informal assessments and professional learning conversations at the school and grade level, as well as with the classroom teacher. There is no formal screening or identification process for Tier I or II except for the Young Scholars Model.

**Tier I**

All students can access Tier I AAS opportunities without screening or identification. Tier I services provide access to rigor through a high-quality instructional model for all students within ACPS. It entails using nine critical and creative thinking strategies and high-level instructional resources, including project- or problem-based learning, critical and creative thinking, Socratic seminars, debates, rich-math tasks, and document-based questions (DBQs).

**Tier II**

Tier II services are for students in grades K-12 who need enrichment or acceleration beyond AAS opportunities available in Tier I. Students may be identified by the classroom teacher for differentiated instruction in one or more content areas. The need for AAS in specific content areas is flexibly evaluated throughout the year. Tier II may include small-group instruction using higher-level reading materials, small-group enriched or accelerated instruction within the Math Workshop model, and independent or group projects. Students in grades K-3 receive Tier II services in the student's homeroom class. For some families who wish to have a formal gifted eligibility status, they may refer for General Intellectual Aptitude (GIA) service in grades K-2.



The service within GIA is the same as a Tier II intervention within the classroom. The GIA referral process follows the same timeline as SAA screening in grades 3-7.

Students at the middle and high school levels have access to open enrollment in Honors, Advanced Placement, and Dual Enrollment. Students will be served regardless of a formal identification process. However, if families, community members, staff, or students would like to refer their K-2 students for General Intellectual Aptitude (GIA) services, they may do so following a similar method as grades 3-8 Tier III- SAA screening.

### **Young Scholars Model**

ACPS follows the Young Scholars Model, which began in Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) and provides an additional opportunity to nurture talent and build confidence so students can meet their potential (FCPS, 2023). The Young Scholars model is designed to help identify students from historically underrepresented populations within gifted or AAS who may benefit from wraparound strategies and supports for success and receiving AAP services. Underrepresented populations include twice-exceptional (2e) students, English language learners, Black and Hispanic students, and economically disadvantaged students.

For the Young Scholars screening and identification process, there are no formal referrals needed, as all students move through a continuum of screening. The following steps outline the Young Scholars screening process:

1. The school will identify the grade level(s) for the Young Scholars screening pool.
2. The Young Scholars Lead (YSL) will train grade-level teachers on the Young Scholars Program.
3. The YSL will narrow the screening pool using the Young Scholars starting criteria by analyzing ACPS's underrepresented populations, which include 2e, English language learners, Black and Hispanic students, and economically disadvantaged students.
4. The screening grade-level teachers will complete the teacher observation scale on all students on the initial Young Scholars screening list. The screening grade-level teacher will collaborate with teachers who provide services for students on the Young Scholars list to complete the rating scale.
5. Grade-level teachers or the YSL will collect student work samples aligned with the AAS curriculum.
6. The Young Scholars Committee will meet to make eligibility determinations.
7. The Young Scholars Committee will meet to score work samples, evaluate multiple criteria data, and complete the Young Scholars Matrix.
8. The Young Scholars Committee members may include a classroom teacher, a YSL, a literacy or math specialist, an English Learner teacher, a specialized services teacher, an Advanced Academic Support Teacher (AAST), or an AAS Screening Lead.
9. The YSL will mail confirmation and permission letters home to eligible students.
10. Parents/guardians will return Young Scholars permission forms to the YSL at the local school.

11. There is no formal appeal process for the Young Scholars screening process, as this is not a formal identification process.

**Tier III: Screening Procedures for SAA Services in Grades 3-7**

ACPS uses a three-phased approach to screening and identifying students. First, ACPS uses universal screening methods to begin the identification process for students. Universal screening has been effective in identifying gifted students who might otherwise be overlooked, particularly those from historically underrepresented groups (National Association for Gifted Children [NAGC], 2018). This method involves testing all students in a given population for giftedness rather than relying on referrals from teachers or parents/guardians. ACPS has expanded its universal screening data to include nationally normed ability tests, nationally normed achievement tests, and observation scales. In addition, students identified for Young Scholars will automatically move forward in Phase 2 of the screening process. ACPS begins universal screening for all grade 3 students in language arts and math. In grades 4-5, universal language arts and math screenings occur for students new to ACPS during the current school year.

Table: 3.2: Three Phases of Screening

Screening Step	Information	Responsible Party	Time of Year
Phase 1: Universal screening grades for students currently enrolled and attending ACPS schools	Grade 3 – All students for language arts and math  Grades 4-5 – All new students in ACPS for language arts and math	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Central Office AAS</li> <li>Local School AAS Screening Leads</li> </ul>	Pool established by January 31
Phase 1: Referral deadline for students currently enrolled and attending ACPS schools	Grades 3-7 – All students for language arts, math, science, and social studies.  Grades K-2- General Intellectual Aptitude (GIA) services. <sup>1</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Central Office AAS</li> <li>Local School AAS Screening Leads</li> <li>Parents/guardians, community members, students, and staff</li> </ul>	Due January 31,
Phase 2: Data collection	Local schools compile all identification criteria into a screening portfolio.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local School AAS Screening Leads</li> </ul>	February-March

<sup>1</sup> ACPS has moved to a model where Tier II services does not require a formal identification process. However, an individual may refer students in grades K-2 to receive a formal gifted identification status. The service within GIA is the same as a Tier II intervention within the classroom.

Alexandria City Public Schools (2023-2028)

Screening Step	Information	Responsible Party	Time of Year
Phase 2: Local School AAS Screening Committee meeting	<p>The committee reviews information in the student portfolio and makes one of four decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student continues to be eligible for Tier I instruction.</li> <li>• The student is in need of Tier II instruction.</li> <li>• The student is eligible for Young Scholars.</li> <li>• The student is in need of moving on to Phase 3 screening.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current classroom teacher</li> <li>• Other teachers who work directly with the student</li> <li>• Local School AAS Screening Committee members</li> </ul>	February-March
Phase 3: Central Office AAS Screening Committee	<p>The Central Office AAS Screening Committee reviews information in the student portfolio and makes one of two decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student needs Tier II instruction.</li> <li>• The student is eligible for Tier III SAA services.</li> </ul>	Central Office AAS Committee members	April-May 15
Appeals	Parents/guardians have the option to appeal the Central Office AAS Committee decision.	Parents/guardians	Due from parents/guardians by June 1

**B. Referral Procedures (8VAC20-40-60A.3)**

*This section provides referral procedures for each area of giftedness identified and served by the division. These procedures shall permit referrals from parents or legal guardians, teachers, professionals, students, peers, self, or others. These procedures should include to whom referrals*

*are submitted and the timeline for the division to provide parents/guardians with the results of the eligibility process. Specific references pertaining to each area of giftedness identified by the division should be clearly indicated.*

**Tier I:** No referral is needed; formal screening is for Tier III: SAA Services in Grades 3-12.

**Tier II:** No referral is needed; formal screening is for Tier III: SAA Services in Grades 3-12.

**Tier III:** Referrals are automatic for SAA and occur using formal screening for SAA Services. More information is provided below.

### **Referral Procedures for Tier III SAA Services<sup>2</sup>**

This section will outline the process for referring students for Tier III advanced academic instruction. Three referral processes are based on student enrollment:

1. Students enrolled in ACPS in grades 3-7 from the previous year
2. Students who are new to ACPS and have gifted eligibility from another district
3. Students who are new to ACPS and do not have gifted eligibility from another district

### **Students Who Have Been Enrolled in ACPS in Grades 3-7 From the Previous Year**

Grades 3-7 students who are not new to ACPS will go through the identification process during the winter/spring of their current year for placement the following school year (for grades 4-8 services). There are two means of referrals:

1. Grade 3: Universal Screening Process (Phase 1) for Tier III Services (Automatic Referrals) will occur in grade 3 in the areas of language arts and math and for new students in grades 4-5 in the areas of language arts and math. ACPS casts a wide net for automatic referrals, and an automatic referral will be determined by January 31 of the current school year. This includes the following:
  - Students who have an ability score in the 85th percentile or higher on any subtest of a nationally normed ability test
  - Students who have an achievement score in the 85th percentile or higher on any subtest of a nationally normed achievement test
  - Students who are in the top 15% of their school grade level (locally normed) for a gifted rating scale
  - All Young Scholars students
2. Grades 3-7: Submitted Referral Process:
  - The referral deadline is January 31 of the current school year.

---

<sup>2</sup> For grades K-2, ACPS will serve students who need differentiated instruction regardless of a formal referral and formal screening process. If a person wishes to refer for GIA they may do so following the grades 3-8 process.

- Any student in grades 3-7 may be referred for Tier III SAA services in the areas of language arts, math, social studies, and/or science. Grades K-2 for GIA services.
- Parents/guardians, staff, community members, and students may submit a referral via PowerSchool or a hard-copy referral to the AAS Screening Lead at the child's local school.

### **Students in Grades K-8 Who Are New to ACPS and Have Gifted Eligibility From Another District**

An immediate screening will occur for students with gifted eligibility in another district:

- For students enrolled over the summer, parents/guardians should reach out to the Office of AAS at [AAS@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:AAS@acps.k12.va.us).
- Students newly enrolled in ACPS during the school year should contact their AAS Screening Lead.
- Parents/guardians must submit the following:
  - A paper referral form
  - The name, email, and phone number of the gifted contact person at the previous school
  - Eligibility documentation from the previous school
  - A description of the gifted services from the previous school explaining what the child is eligible for (usually, the school's website has this information)
- The local school works with the Central Office to determine "like" services for students already eligible at other school systems.

### **Students in Grades 4-7 Who Are New to ACPS and Do Not Have Gifted Eligibility From Another District**

- Within 30 days of enrollment and attending ACPS, students may be referred for AAS Tier III services via a paper copy submitted to the AAS Screening Lead at the local school.
- A mini-screening is provided to determine if a full screening needs to occur. If a full screening is not needed, then the students can be referred during the regular screening cycle, with a deadline of January 31.
- Grade K-2 students will follow the end-of-school year screening guidelines.

### **Referral Forms**

Parents/guardians or teachers may submit Talented and Gifted (TAG) referrals through PowerSchool forms translated into the following languages: English, Spanish, Amharic, Arabic, and Dari. Parents/guardians may find and submit the form by [logging into their child's PowerSchool account](#), selecting their child's name, clicking on the Forms tab, clicking on the form titled "ACPS Referral of Students for Advanced Academic Services," and then filling in and submitting the form. In addition, anyone who would like to refer for AAS SAA and GIA services and does not have access to PowerSchool may contact the AAS Screening Lead at the child's school to receive a paper copy of the referral form.

**C. Identification Procedures (8VAC20-40-60A.3)**

*This section provides identification procedures for each area of giftedness identified and served by the division. Identification in GIA programs shall be K-12 and must include a nationally norm-referenced aptitude test. Identification in SAA programs shall be K-12 or as assessment instruments exist to support identification and must include either a nationally norm-referenced aptitude or achievement test. Identification in CTA and VPA programs shall be at the discretion of the school division. Specific references pertaining to each area of giftedness identified by the division should be clearly indicated.*

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) states, “Identification in a specific academic aptitude area may occur as assessment instruments exist to support identification. If the school division elects to identify students in one or more academic aptitude areas, it shall provide service options through twelfth grade.” Based on ACPS’s historical data, our students have a more robust portfolio for screening during the grade 3 year. Therefore, screening for Tier III-SAA services will begin in grade 3 for placement in grade 4 or higher. The focus on services will be in the four core content areas of language arts, math, science, and social studies.

ACPS believes that not one single data point should be used to determine if a child does or does not receive AAS Tier III- SAA services. ACPS uses a multi-data point system for screening procedures. Multiple criteria assessment recognizes that giftedness can manifest differently and that a single test or measure may not capture the full range of giftedness (Renzulli, 2005). This method involves using multiple indicators of giftedness such as ability tests, achievement tests, teacher observations, rating scales, student work, and growth portfolios.

**1. Multiple Criteria Listing (8 VAC 20-40-40D.3)**

*This section includes the three or more categories that divisions shall include to develop a profile or composite for each student being considered. This listing of categories should be repeated for each area of giftedness identified by the division. Please copy and paste the section below to support all identified areas of giftedness. NOTE: Selection of either item 5a or 5b or both counts as a single category.*

**Tier III: SAA Services in Grades 4-12**

1. Assessment of appropriate student products, performance, or portfolio
2. Record of observation of in-class behavior
3. Appropriate rating scales, checklists, or questionnaires
4. Individual interview
- 5a. Individual or group-administered, nationally-norm-referenced aptitude test(s) (must be included for General Intellectual Aptitude [GIA])
- 5b. Individual or group-administered, nationally norm-referenced achievement test(s) (optional for GIA)
6. Record of previous achievements (awards, honors, grades, etc.)

7. Additional valid and reliable measures or procedures  
Specify: gifted rating scales, student questionnaires, and growth reports

The screening portfolios that move on to Phase 3 of the screening process will be assembled at the local school. It contains the items listed above: ability test scores, achievement test scores, a gifted behaviors rating scale (completed by the Local School AAS Screening Committee), observation commentary, work samples, progress reports, growth reports, student questionnaire, and parent/guardian input via referral or optional questionnaire.

A copy of the screening file is sent to the Central Office and read by trained professionals who consider data in the portfolio file to determine eligibility for Tier III – SAA or GIA services. Screening portfolios are reviewed centrally by trained committee members who do not know the student, and all evidence must be explained and contained in the file. Multiple criteria are reviewed, and no one piece of information can determine eligibility or ineligibility. The Central Office Screening Committee members take a holistic case study approach, and all information is reviewed to determine a match between a student’s needs and available services. Finally, there is an oversight committee that reviews ineligible decisions.

Parents/guardians of students found ineligible during Phase 3 can submit an appeal by presenting new information by the published deadline. If a student is found ineligible for AAS, the parents/guardians may appeal the decision. The decision from the appeals committee is final. Students may also be referred again the following school year. More information about the appeals process is in Part III, Section D, of this Local Plan.

D. Placement Procedures (8VAC20-40-60A.3)

*This section provides procedures for the placement of gifted students in each area of giftedness identified and served by the division. These procedures include information about the identification and placement committee.*

**1. Identification/Placement Committee (8VAC 20-40-40D)**

*This section includes the number of persons comprising the Identification/Placement Committee by category.*

ACPS uses a three-phased approach to screening and identifying students using a combination of Local School AAS Screening Committees and Central Office AAS Screening Committees.

Phase 1 and Phase 2: Local School-Based Committee

Classroom Teacher(s) (Core Committee Member)  
Gifted Education Resource Teacher(s) (Core Committee Member)  
Counselor(s) (Core Committee Member)  
School Psychologist(s) (Supplemental Member)  
Assessment Specialist(s) (Supplemental Member)  
Principal(s) or Designee(s) (Core Committee Member)  
Gifted Education Director (this role serves as a facilitator)  
Other(s)  
Specify: English language resource teacher, specialized instruction resource teacher, speech and language teacher, and Young Scholars Lead (YSL) (Supplemental Members)

Phase 3: Central Office Screening Committee

Classroom Teacher(s) (Core Committee Member)  
Gifted Education Resource Teacher(s) (Core Committee Member)  
Counselor(s) (Core Committee Member)  
School Psychologist(s) (Supplemental Member)  
Assessment Specialist(s) (Supplemental Member)  
Principal(s) or Designee(s) (Core Committee Member)  
Gifted Education Director (this role serves as a facilitator)  
Other(s)  
Specify: Central Office specialists, English language resource teacher, specialized instruction resource teacher, speech and language teacher, and YSL (Supplemental Members)

Type of Identification/Placement Committee

*This section indicates the type of Identification/Placement Committee the division uses.*



Alexandria City Public Schools (2023-2028)

School level (Phase 1 and Phase 2 of identification)

Division level (Phase 3 of identification)

**2. Eligibility (8VAC20-40-60A.3)**

*This section includes a chart detailing all criteria that could be considered in the identification process for a specific area of giftedness identified by the division. A description of the eligibility process used by the committee to make decisions regarding eligibility for services shall follow the chart. It includes a timeline for making eligibility decisions within 90 instructional days of the school division’s receipt of the parent’s(s’) or legal guardian’s(s’) consent for assessment.*

Table 3.4: SAA Services: Screening and Identification Occurs in Grades 3-7

Screening Phase	Measure	Administered/ Completed by	Scored by	Provided to the Committee by
1, 2, 3	Nationally normed ability tests	Current classroom teacher, AAS teacher, or assessment coach	Testing company	Office of Accountability and Research/ Office of AAS
1, 2, 3	Nationally normed achievement test	Current classroom teacher, AAS teacher, or assessment coach	Testing company	Office of Accountability and Research/ Office of AAS
1, 2, 3	Gifted rating scale	Current classroom teacher and other teachers who work directly with the student	Local school AAS Screening Committee	Office of AAS
2, 3	Work samples	Current classroom teacher or the Advanced Academic Support Teacher (AAST)	Local school AAS Screening Committee and Central Office AAS Screening Committee	Office of AAS
2, 3	Observation commentary	Current classroom teacher and other teachers who work directly with the student	Local School AAS Screening Committee and Central Office AAS Screening Committee	Office of AAS
2, 3	Growth reports	Current classroom teacher and other teachers who work directly with the student	Local School AAS Screening Committee and Central Office AAS Screening Committee	Local school
2, 3	Progress reports	AAST	Local School AAS Screening	Local school

Alexandria City Public Schools (2023-2028)

Screening Phase	Measure	Administered/ Completed by	Scored by	Provided to the Committee by
			Committee and Central Office AAS Screening Committee	
3	Student questionnaire	AAST	Central Office AAS Screening Committee	Office of AAS

*Insert eligibility decision process, including timeline*

Table 3.5: Timeline of Eligibility Decisions

Step	Action	Date Range
1.	Grades K-3: Classroom teachers and AASTs collect work samples and make observations via Tier I and Tier II services within the Early Childhood Talent Development Model. The work samples and observation notes are added to the student’s screening portfolio, which allows portfolios to show growth over time.	When students are enrolled in grades K-3
2.	Hold parents/guardians and information AAS meetings.	Due by October 1 of each year
3.	Standardized data collection: Notification of testing dates will be sent via the school.	Fall/winter
4.	If parents/guardians do not want their child to be screened in the Phase 1 process, including through the universal screening, they will need to indicate refusal on the Opt-Out Form for Universal Screening (Phase 1) via PowerSchool.	Due by January 6
5.	The school completes the gifted rating scale for universal screening grades.	Due by January 15
6.	All Tier III referrals are due in PowerSchool or to the school’s AAS Screening Lead by January 31.	Due by January 31
7.	The Optional Parent Information Form, Permission to Screen Form, and optional student work samples are due to the local school’s AAS Screening Lead.	Due by February 20
8.	The school collects additional data: progress reports, commentary narratives, growth scores, and other supplemental data.	Due by March 7
9.	The school communicates to families whether or not students will be moving forward to Phase 3 of the screening process.	Due by April 1

Step	Action	Date Range
10.	The Central Office Phase 3 Identification Committees meet, and notification of the decision will be sent out, including the Screening Matrix, the Permission to Place Form, and information about submitting appeals.	Due by May 15
11.	Appeals are due to the AAS Director.	Due by June 1
12.	The Appeals Committees meet, and decision letters are sent home. Appeals decisions are final for that screening cycle.	Due by July 15

### 3. Determination of Services (8VAC20-40-60A.3)

*This section describes the process of determining appropriate educational services for identified K-12 students.*

Criteria from the list above are used to determine eligibility for Tier III AAS and Tier II GIA services. Multiple criteria are reviewed, and no one piece of information can determine eligibility or ineligibility.

Students retain GIA and SAA eligibility through grade 12. If the student is found eligible for services, the student may begin the services at the start of the new school year. If the student is new to ACPS and is found eligible for services, the student may begin services within two instructional days of the school receiving the Permission to Place Form.

If a student is found eligible and does not accept the placement, the parent/guardian may activate eligibility for placement by completing and submitting the reactivation form to the Office of AAS before the start of the new school year. Parent/guardian permission is necessary for program changes.

If a student is found ineligible for AAS, the student may be referred again the following school year.

#### Appeals Process

Parents/guardians have the right to file an appeal with the Office of AAS for students who were referred during the ASS screening cycle and were not found eligible for services. The appeal will be reviewed before a Central-Office-coordinated appeals committee called the AAS Appeals Committee.

Parents/Guardians who wish to appeal the decision have **10 ACPS instructional days to submit an appeal** after being informed of their child's eligibility for services.

Required: Parents/guardians must submit an appeals form via PowerSchool. On the form, parents/guardians are required to note the following:

## Alexandria City Public Schools (2023-2028)

- Which subject areas the appeal is being made in
- The reasons you believe the committee decision was in error

Optional: Parents/guardians can include additional data and/or information they may have relevant to their child's eligibility for gifted services. Please submit all documents in **one email** to [AAS@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:AAS@acps.k12.va.us). Some examples include:

- Up to **five, single-sided work samples selected by the parents/guardians**
- New test results
- Parents'/guardians' narrative about their child via a video or audio recording, not to exceed five minutes (Due to email storage space, please send a link to the video and not the file of the video.)

The AAS Appeals Committee will convene within 25 school days of receiving the letter requesting an appeal. In the case of an appeal, all of the documents involved in the student's referral are reviewed by the committee, consisting of professional personnel familiar and trained with the gifted placement process. The goal is to have personnel from a different school other than the school the child attends, but that is not always possible. The AAS Appeals Committee may include an AAS Screening Lead, an AAS teacher, a grade-level teacher, a staff member certified in the area of social-emotional health, and a certified administrator. Other school personnel may include Central Office specialists, assessment leaders, and resource teachers.

Each case is evaluated individually. After reviewing the information presented at the appeals conference, the AAS Appeals Committee makes one of the following decisions:

- Eligible for services in Tier III- SAA
- Not eligible for services in Tier III-SAA
  
- Eligible for services in Tier II- GIA
- Not eligible for services in Tier II-GIA

The AAS Appeals Committee's decision will be communicated in writing to the parents/guardians within **15 school days (or business days during the summer months) after the appeals conference**. The committee's decision is final, and parents/guardians can refer again during the next school's year screening cycle.

A record of each decision is placed in the division's computer database, and screening portfolios are returned to the school.

**Part IV: Notification Procedures (8VAC20-40-60A.4)**

*This section includes the procedures used for (a) notifying parents/guardians when the individual identification process is initiated; (b) requesting permission for individual testing and/or collection of additional information; (c) requesting permission for provision of appropriate service options; and, (d) parents/guardians wishing to file an appeal of the identification outcome, change in placement, or exit decision. Any procedural differences pertaining to a specific area of giftedness identified by the division should be clearly indicated.*

**A. Tier III: Specific Academic Aptitude (SAA) Services in Grades 4-12<sup>3</sup>**

Annually, school and Central Office communications will inform parents/guardians of Advanced Academic Services (AAS) and the procedures and timelines for identification and placement. These communications include newsletter articles, parent/guardian information meetings, and the ACPS website. In addition to the communication strategies listed, a timeline of all screening and notification events and responsible parties (Central Office, school, parents/guardians) is detailed in Table 4.1: Tier III Notification Action Steps listed below. Finally, the AAS Screening Lead is the contact person for the entire identification process.

**B. Universal Screening: Phase 2 and Phase 3**

Once a student is referred for formal assessment through the referral process or transfer, parents/guardians will receive a confirmation letter 10 school days after the referral window closes. Parents/guardians are asked to complete the Parent Information Form and a permission form, Written Permission for Advanced Academic Tier III Evaluation, allowing their child to be administered the necessary standardized tests. The Identification/Placement Committee's eligibility meeting will be held within 90 school days of receipt of the referral window due date.

The Identification/Placement Committee's placement decision is communicated to the parents/guardians and school Principal by the Talented and Gifted (TAG) Screening Lead within 10 school days of the decision by sending home the Eligible/Not Eligible for TAG Services Form. If the student is found eligible, the parent/guardian is required to sign a Permission to Place form, which provides parental/guardian permission to place the child in the program. If the student is not eligible for services, the parents/guardians may appeal the decision.

Table 4.1: Tier III Notification Action Steps

Step	Action	Responsible Person	Date Range
1.	Provide parents/guardians with a screening overview and timelines.	Central Office: AAS Staff	By September 1st

<sup>3</sup> For grades K-2, if a person wishes to refer for GIA they may do so following the grades 3-8 process. Parent/guardian notification will follow a similar process.

Alexandria City Public Schools (2023-2028)

Step	Action	Responsible Person	Date Range
2.	Hold parent/guardian information AAS meetings.	Local School: School-based Screening Leads	By October 1st Each year
3.	Provide screening reminders to parents/guardians/community members/staff members about referral deadlines via school and district newsletters, websites, and social media.	Local-school-based Screening Leads and Central Office: AAS staff	Due by December 15
4.	Indicate refusal for screening in the Phase 1 process, including through the universal screening, on the Opt-Out Form for Universal Screening (Phase 1) via PowerSchool.	Parents/ guardians	Due by January 6
5.	Submit Tier III referrals in PowerSchool or to the school's AAS Screening Lead.	Parents/ guardians/staff/ community members/ students	Due by January 31
6.	Send confirmation letters to families who submitted a referral for Tier III screening and to families of students who were automatically referred via the universal screening procedures, indicating they will move on to Phase 2 of the identification process.	Central Office: AAS staff	Within 10 instructional days of the referral deadline
7.	Submit optional parent information forms, Permission to Screen Form, and optional student work samples to the local school's AAS Screening Lead.	Parents/ guardians	Due by February 20
8.	Communicate to families whether or not students will be moving forward to Phase 3 of the screening process.	Local school: AAS Screening Leads	Due by April 1
9.	Send out a notification of the decision, including the screening rubric, Permission to Place Form, and information about submitting appeals.	Central Office: AAS staff	Due by May 15
10.	Answer questions that parents/guardians may have about their child's screening.	Local School: AAS Screening	Between May 15 – to the end of

Alexandria City Public Schools (2023-2028)

Step	Action	Responsible Person	Date Range
		Leads or Principal	the school year
11.	Submit appeals to the AAS Director.	Central Office: AAS staff	Due by June 1
12.	Meet and send out decision letters to parents/guardians.	Central Office: AAS staff	Due by July 15



**Part V: Change in Instructional Services (8VAC20-40-60A.5)**

*This section includes the policy for written notification to parents or legal guardians of identification and placement decisions, including initial changes in placement procedures or exit policy from the program.*

**A. Tier III**

Parents/guardians receive a notification at every stage of the screening and identification process, as outlined in Table 4.1: Tier III Notification Action Steps.

Once a student is found eligible for gifted services, this eligibility lasts for as long as the student is enrolled within ACPS, unless the parents/guardians or school initiates a change of services.

**B. Process for Change in Services**

To ensure ACPS meets children's academic and affective needs, parents/guardians, a teacher, or a student may request a change in gifted services.

*Parent/Guardian Refusal of Services*

Parents/guardians may decline the continuation of gifted services at any time. Such a request must be made in writing and placed in the student's cumulative folder. The request will be honored immediately. Parents/guardians who wish to initiate a change in their Tier III Advanced Academic Services (AAS) or GIA services must notify the local school Principal and AAS Director in writing. Once the request is received, a Change of Placement Notification Form is given to the parents/guardians, who then sign the form.

*Process for Exiting Tier III AAS or GIA AAS*

Teachers continuously monitor student progress throughout the school year. When a student experiences difficulty, as reflected in a grade of "C" or lower in the subject area(s) in which Specific Academic Aptitude (SAA) services are delivered, a Student Support Team (SST) is established. The SST consists of the classroom or AAS support teacher, a school administrator representative, an AAS Central Office specialist, and the parents/guardians. The team will convene to discuss interventions put in place to support the child and will develop a Plan to Improve the Performance of the Student Receiving AAS Services. The plan will include measurable goals to monitor student progress and relevant data to support the need for the plan. The plan will be provided to the parents/guardians, as well as the AAS Director.

If, after a predetermined period of time of not less than 30 consecutive school days, the plan is not successful, the SST will reconvene to discuss whether further interventions are needed or if the student needs to exit the SAA services in which the student is not finding success. If the SST decides that exiting the Tier III AAS or GIA services is appropriate, then the school principal completes a Change of Placement Notification Form to exit the student from the specific area of gifted services and notifies parents/guardians in writing, which will also include support on the transition back into the general education classroom.

Parents/guardians may appeal the decision to the AAS Director, stating the reasons why the appeal is being made. The AAS Director will form an appeals team and then notify the parents/guardians of the team's final decision within 10 instructional days of the appeal.

**Part VI: Evidence of Appropriate Service Options (8VAC20-40-60A.10)**

*This section provides evidence that gifted education service options from kindergarten through twelfth grade are offered continuously and sequentially, with instructional time during the school day and week to (i) work with their age-level peers, (ii) work with their intellectual and academic peers, (iii) work independently, and (iv) foster intellectual and academic growth of gifted students. Parents and legal guardians shall receive assessment of each gifted student’s academic growth. Career and Technical aptitude programs and Visual and/or Performing Arts programs are offered at the discretion of the school division.*

**A. Service Options Are Continuous and Sequential**

*This section provides evidence that the division’s program of curricula and instruction for gifted learners is continuous and sequential. GIA programs need to provide evidence from kindergarten through twelfth grade. SAA programs need to provide evidence that service options are continuous and sequential from identification until twelfth grade.*

ACPS implements a continuum of services model for K-12 students. This model is similar to a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS), formerly called Response to Intervention (RTI). The MTSS model is a tiered intervention system that includes Advanced Academic Services (AAS). Research suggests that aligning the Gifted Talent Development Model and the MTSS Model can benefit gifted learners' academic and social-emotional development. For example, in a study by Rizza and colleagues (p. 81, 2020), the authors discuss how an MTSS framework can be adapted to support gifted learners through enrichment activities and differentiated instruction. The authors note that “A tiered model of support is an excellent vehicle for meeting the needs of gifted learners, who are often overlooked in the general education classroom.”. Moreover, the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) recommends that schools use an MTSS framework to support gifted learners. According to the NAGC (p. 2, 2020), “An MTSS framework can support gifted students by providing a systematic approach to identify their needs, providing the appropriate level of challenge, and monitoring progress over time.” The model suggests that Tier I is for about 80% of students and aligns with the district curriculum and grade-level content with some remediation or advancement of material. All students have access to differentiated resources and instruction. For Tier II, the focus would be on extra challenges or extra help, and for Tier III, the focus would be on intense interventions. The ultimate goal is to expand our notion of advanced services to discuss different levels or tiers of rigor based on the duration, frequency, and intensity of services. As a review, Table 6.1 provides an overview of the continuous AAS services ACPS has to offer its enrolled students.

Table 6.1: Overview of ACPS’s ASS

	Elementary: Grades K-3	Elementary: Grades 4-5	Middle: Grades 6-8	High: Grades 9-12
Tier I Talent Development	Access to AAS curriculum and strategies for all students	Access to AAS curriculum and strategies for all students	Access to AAS curriculum and strategies for all students	Access to AAS curriculum and strategies for all students

Alexandria City Public Schools (2023-2028)

	Elementary: Grades K-3	Elementary: Grades 4-5	Middle: Grades 6-8	High: Grades 9-12
Model: Rigor for All				
Tier II Talent Development Model	Differentiated lessons using advanced curriculum and strategies in the general education classroom	Differentiated lessons using advanced curriculum and strategies in the general education classroom	Differentiated lessons using advanced curriculum and strategies in the general education classroom	Differentiated lessons using advanced curriculum and strategies in the general education classroom
	Young Scholars	Young Scholars	Young Scholars	Young Scholars
	Early Childhood Talent Development Model		Open Honors in English, math, social studies, or science	Open Honors in English, math, social studies, or science
			Open Enrollment in Advanced Placement (AP)	Optional Enrollment in Dual Enrollment classes
Tier III Specific Academic Aptitude (SAA) Services		SAA in reading, math, social studies, and/or science	SAA in reading, math, social studies, and/or science through Honors	SAA in reading, math, social studies, and/or science through Honors, Dual Enrollment, and APcourses
				Governor's School

### **Tier I**

Tier I services provide access to rigor through a high-quality, Tier I instructional model for all students within ACPS. It would entail adopting critical and creative thinking resources and instructional strategies across all school levels, including project- or problem-based learning, critical and creative thinking, Socratic seminars, debates, rich-math tasks, and document-based questions (DBQs)—all of which align with a talent development model and mindset. The Tier I level of service should meet the needs of around 80% of the student population and does not require additional screening, as these services can be used with all ACPS students. In grades K-3, the interventions will be provided by the classroom teacher. The Advanced Academic Resource Teacher (AART) will also plan, co-teach, and model critical and creative thinking strategies in all classrooms, either once a week or once every two weeks, depending on the school size.

### **Tier II**

Tier II AAS is for students who require additional interventions without the need for formal identification procedures. This level of service is geared toward students in grades K-12 who need more than what Tier I instruction is currently providing for them.

In grades K-3, the interventions will be provided by the classroom teacher. The Advanced Academic Support Teacher (AASST) will also plan, co-teach, model, and work in small groups in all classrooms, either once a week or once every two weeks, depending on the school size. Tier II advanced academic interventions will serve three roles: (1) to increase access to greater rigorous instruction, (2) to serve as a Talent Development Model to prepare for more rigorous coursework as students progress through each grade level, and (3) to collect additional data for when universal screening begins in grade 3. ACPS will call this the Early Childhood Talent Development Model. The focus on the Early Childhood Talent Development Model would move the shift from formal identification of General Intellectual Aptitude (GIA) services to developing talent and using flexible grouping to provide services. For grades K-2, ACPS will serve students who need differentiated instruction regardless of a formal referral and formal screening process, however, if a person wishes to refer for GIA they may do so following the grades 3-8 process.

Tier II also includes further expansion of ACPS's Young Scholars Model, which is a Talent Development Model that ACPS has been implementing for more than six years. ACPS follows the Young Scholars Model, which began in Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS), providing an additional opportunity to nurture talent and build confidence so students can meet their potential (FCPS, 2023). The Young Scholars Model is designed to help identify students from historically underrepresented populations within gifted or AAS who may benefit from wraparound strategies and supports for success and receiving AAP services. Underrepresented populations include twice-exceptional (2e) students, English language learners, Black and Hispanic students, and economically disadvantaged students.

### **Tier III**

Students identified as requiring Tier III: SAA in grades 4-12 AAS have the potential to achieve high levels of academic achievement. These students exhibit advanced performance capability in

intellectual endeavors in one or more academic areas: mathematics, science, social studies, and/or language arts. Students are screened and identified using multiple sources of information, including nationally normed ability and achievement tests, gifted rating scales, student work samples, and other evidence that supports a need for AAS. It is essential for them to access educational resources to enhance their learning. To meet students' needs and develop their abilities, our advanced learners require a differentiated curriculum that is engaging, complex, and differentiated in the depth, breadth, and pace of instruction through a broad range of opportunities that enrich and extend the program of studies in all subject areas.

## **Grades 4-5**

### *SAA in Reading*

All grades 4-5 students found eligible for gifted services in language arts will receive instruction with a designated AAST teacher in a self-contained class. The curricula are modified from the standard curricula and contain content and activities that are accelerated, enriched, and differentiated.

### *SAA in Mathematics*

All grades 4-5 students found eligible for gifted services in math will receive instruction with a designated Talented and Gifted (TAG) teacher in a self-contained class. The curricula are modified from the standard curricula and contain content and activities that are accelerated, enriched, and differentiated.

### *SAA in Social Studies*

All grades 4-5 students found eligible for gifted services in science will receive differentiated instruction based on the strengths of the learner—assessed during the eligibility process—and will be provided with a modified curriculum of enrichment, differentiation, and acceleration in the eligible subject area. These services are individualized and are reflected in the Differentiated Education Plan (DEP). This plan is created with the partnering of the AAST and classroom teacher, which specifies the types of activities and extended enrichment each identified student will provide. At the end of the first quarter, parents/guardians will receive a reflection document on what was covered during the quarter, as well as the DEP for the second quarter. At the end of the second quarter, parents/guardians will receive a DEP plan for the third and fourth quarters.

### *SAA in Science*

All grades 4-5 students found eligible for gifted services in science will receive differentiated instruction based on the learner's strengths—assessed during the eligibility process—and provided a modified enrichment and differentiation curriculum and acceleration in eligible subject areas. These services are individualized and are reflected in the DEP. This plan is created with the partnering of the AAST and classroom teacher, which specifies what types of activities and extended enrichment each identified student will be provided. At the end of the first quarter, parents/guardians will receive a reflection document on what was covered during the quarter, as

well as the DEP for the second quarter. At the end of the second quarter, parents/guardians will receive a DEP plan for the third and fourth quarters.

## **Grades 6-12**

### *Honors (6-12)*

Honors courses are open to all middle and high school students who seek academic rigor. Students who demonstrate high achievement, interest, and/or potential to achieve in one or more areas of academic strength may participate in Honors courses in the four core academic subject areas. Honors classes use a curriculum that extends the ACPS's Program of Studies (POS) in depth and complexity and seek opportunities to build on individual student strengths, develop critical and creative thinking skills, and prepare students for high school opportunities to take Advance Placement and Dual Enrollment classwork. Documentation of how services will be provided is outlined in the class syllabus.

### *Dual Enrollment (High School)*

Dual Enrollment courses are offered in conjunction with local universities in ACPS high schools, allowing students to earn college credit without tuition. These college-level courses are updated each year in ACPS's POS. Courses are taught in the local high school by teachers who are credentialed with advanced degrees in their content area. Documentation of how services will be provided is outlined in the class syllabus.

### *Advanced Placement (AP) (High School)*

The AP program provides rigorous academic coursework in the major subject fields, with course content designed at a college level. AP courses are offered in English, social studies, science, world languages, mathematics, and fine arts and are open to all students who seek academic rigor. High school students who complete AP courses demonstrate mastery of subject material by earning qualifying grades on AP examinations. Documentation of how services will be provided is outlined in the class syllabus.

### *Governor's School (High School)*

ACPS offers students the opportunity to apply for Summer Residential Governor's school programs. The process for applying for Governor's School is outlined by the state yearly. For more information, please visit the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) website: <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching-learning-assessment/specialized-instruction/governor-s-schools/summer-residential-governor-s-schools>.

## **K-12: Acceleration**

Acceleration in education refers to allowing students to move through the curriculum at a faster pace than their peers. It is a common practice in gifted education that involves modifying the academic environment to better meet the needs of academically advanced students. Acceleration

can take many forms, such as grade skipping, subject acceleration, early entrance to a college or university, and Dual Enrollment. The goal of acceleration is to provide appropriate challenges and opportunities for advanced students to learn at a level that is commensurate with their abilities, interests, and needs. It is important to note that acceleration is not appropriate for all gifted students and should be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account factors such as intellectual ability, social-emotional readiness, and academic achievement.

In ACPS, teachers provide acceleration within the classroom environment. However, some students require greater services than what is provided at the K-12 level. If these high-intensity services are needed, ACPS can accommodate the intervention of acceleration after the parents/guardians submit a referral. ACPS will screen students for full-year acceleration at grades K-3 levels and single-subject or whole-grade acceleration at grades 4-12 levels. Note: When students are taking high school classes, acceleration within some subjects is not possible without first taking an appropriate prerequisite class.

### *Process*

Students in grades K-3 who are attending an ACPS school may be considered for full-year acceleration based on academic need. Students in grades 4-12 may be considered for single-subject or full-year acceleration.

Accelerations can be initiated by parents/guardians or by school administration. If school administrators initiate the process, administrators must contact the parents/guardians to inform them of the reason behind the referral.

Within 10 instructional days of the acceleration referral, the AAS Director and school administration will convene a local acceleration committee to review available data, including academic ability; academic achievement; prior record of advanced interventions; nonacademic measures like age, motor coordination, emotional development, behavior, and relationships with peers and adults; and support strategies.

The local acceleration committee will consist of the school administrator, classroom teacher, counselor, school psychologist, parents/guardians, Central Office specialists, and receiving grade-level teachers or a rising school support team to determine one of the following:

1. More information is needed to determine the student's need for full-year acceleration.
2. Student data are sufficient to determine if the student should remain in the current grade level and services.
3. The student does not require acceleration at this time, but a plan for differentiation will be put into place.

If more information is needed, the parents/guardians will be given a Permission to Screen Form, and once the form is turned in to the school, the school will have 30 instructional days to complete any further data collection for the student.



If a child is found eligible for acceleration, school staff will monitor the transition period, not to exceed 45 days. In addition, during this period, parents/guardians can request a reversal in acceleration, if desired.

If a child is not found eligible for acceleration services, an appeal can be requested for reconsideration of the results of any part of the acceleration process, such as: 1) the data collection process, 2) the proceedings of the convened committee, and 3) the written acceleration plan. Once the parents/guardians have submitted a letter to the school Principal outlining the nature of the concern, they will convene a meeting with the parents/guardians, which may include other school personnel, to discuss the concern. The Executive Director of Instructional Support will issue a written final decision within 15 instructional days of the appeal, which will include the reason for the decision.

*Timelines*

**Kindergarten:** Families of kindergarten students may request full-year acceleration at the end of the first quarter up to three weeks into the second quarter. This gives staff time to get to know the child's strengths and to gather multiple data points to inform the discussion and decision with the local acceleration committee.

**Grades 1-3:** The deadline for a full-year acceleration request is April 15 for placement the following school year.

**Grades 4-12:** The deadline for a full-year or single-subject acceleration request is April 15 for placement the following school year.

**New Families:** Families new to ACPS may request an acceleration at the end of the first quarter up to three weeks into the second quarter.

The table below gives an encapsulation of the acceleration process.

Table 6.1: Acceleration Process

Acceleration Step	Information	Responsible Party	Timeline
1.	Submit a referral for acceleration stating the reasons behind the request for accelerated services and send it to the AAS Director and the child's school Principal.	Parent/guardians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kindergarten and new families: At the end of the first quarter and up to three weeks into the second quarter</li> <li>Grades 1-12 families: May</li> </ul>

Alexandria City Public Schools (2023-2028)

Acceleration Step	Information	Responsible Party	Timeline
			15 for placement the following year
2.	Work to compile preliminary data.	Local school Central Office	Within 10 instructional days from receipt of the acceleration referral
3.	Meet to determine the next steps.	Local school Central Office Parent/guardians	Within 10 instructional days from receipt of the acceleration referral
4.	Complete the Permission to Screen Form.	Parent/guardians	
5.	Begin additional data collection.	Local school Central Office	Within 30 days of the parents'/guardians' Permission to Screen Form submittal
6.	Meet to determine a need for services.	Local school Central Office Parent/guardians	Within 30 days of the parents'/guardians' Permission to Screen Form submittal
7.	Choose three options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● There will be no acceleration at this time.</li> <li>● There will be no acceleration at this time, but a DEP for support is put into place.</li> <li>● There will be acceleration.</li> </ul>	Local school Central Office Parent/guardians	Within 30 days of the parents'/guardians' Permission to Screen Form submittal
8.	1 Appeal an ineligible	Parents/guardians	Within five

Acceleration Step	Information	Responsible Party	Timeline
	decision to the Executive Director of Instructional Support, AAS Director, and the school Principal.		instructional days
9.	Issue a decision letter.	Executive Director of Instructional Support	Within 15 business days (over the summer) or instructional days (during the school year)
10.	Continue with an acceleration monitoring period for 45 days.	Local school Parents/guardians	Student’s start date to 45 instructional days after placement

**B. Service Options Provide Instructional Time With Age-Level Peers**

*This section includes a description of the instructional strategies or program model that allows gifted students to interact with their age-level peers during the school day and week.*

**SAA: Grades 4-12**

Schools function as communities of learners, and advanced students have multiple opportunities to research, investigate, learn, and build a community with peers who are of similar age. When possible, students are cluster grouped to ensure that there is an available collaborative group with similar differentiation needs, as well as to provide opportunities for peer-to-peer feedback in the learning process.

**C. Service Options Provide Instructional Time With Intellectual and Academic Peers**

*This section includes a description of the instructional strategies used in the division to accelerate and enrich the content for gifted learners beyond the grade-level or course expectations for all learners. The description should include how these academic needs are met during the school day and week.*

**Students in Tier I and Tier II**

Students in grades K-12 have opportunities to learn with intellectual and academic peers through the collaborative cluster model and ongoing flexible grouping based on pre-assessment, formative, and summative data.

### **Tier III: SAA: Grades 4-12**

ACPS provides extensions, enrichment, and acceleration opportunities for students who are identified for advanced services in single-subject or multiple content areas. The ACPS AAS curriculum resource framework and guides provide a structure for how students' academic needs can be met beyond ACPS's standard program of studies. It aligns gifted resources with state standards, and it can include challenges, competitions, and extracurricular activities. Specific instructional strategies include mathematics enrichment, scientific inquiry and investigation, historical analysis, and interpretation, independent research, Project-Based Learning, Problem-Based Learning, academic and creative writing, and developing argumentation skills. When possible, students are cluster grouped to ensure that there is an available collaborative group with similar differentiation needs, as well as to provide opportunities for peer-to-peer feedback in the learning process.

#### **D. Service Options Provide Instructional Time to Work Independently**

*This section includes a description of the instructional strategies or program model used in the division to allow gifted learners to work independently during the school day and week.*

#### **SAA: Grades 4-12**

Independent study can provide gifted learners with a more personalized, flexible, and engaging learning experience that can help them reach their full potential. NAGC (2021) explains that independent learning offers the following benefits:

1. **Customized Learning Experience:** Advanced learners often have unique learning needs that may not be fully met in a traditional classroom setting. With independent study, they can customize their learning experience to focus on their areas of interest and learning pace.
2. **Greater Flexibility:** Independent study allows advanced learners to work at their own pace and on their own schedule. This can be especially beneficial for students who may need more time to delve deeper into a subject or who may need to adjust their schedule due to extracurricular activities or other commitments.
3. **Personal Responsibility and Autonomy:** Independent study can also help advanced learners develop important skills such as personal responsibility and autonomy. They must take the initiative to plan and organize their own learning, which can help them become more independent and self-directed.
4. **Pursue Their Passions:** Advanced learners often have a strong interest in specific subjects or areas of study. With independent study, they can pursue their passions and explore topics that they may not have the opportunity to study in a traditional classroom setting.

In ACPS, teachers provide advanced learners ongoing opportunities to investigate, research, and work independently through advanced, in-depth study provided by the models and strategies embedded in the ACPS curriculum framework differentiated for advanced learners.

### **E. Service Options Foster Intellectual and Academic Growth**

*This section includes a description of the instructional strategies used in the division to foster intellectual and academic growth during the school day and week.*

#### **SAA: Grades 4-12**

The foundation of our AAS is curriculum and instruction designed to challenge and engage advanced learners. The emphasis is on critical and creative thinking and problem-solving. Students have ongoing opportunities for reflection and self-assessment that help them develop an understanding of the characteristics, demands, and responsibilities of advanced intellectual development and encourage continuous intellectual growth.

### **F. Procedures for Assessing Academic Growth in Gifted Students**

*This section includes a description of the procedures used by the division to assess the academic growth for gifted learners.*

#### **SAA: Grades 4-12**

Assessing growth in gifted learners requires ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure that they continue to progress and develop their abilities, and accounting for the achievement and progress of advanced learners requires an assessment system that is designed to accommodate high levels of performance. Students in advanced academic classes take the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) test for any and all courses that they are taking. High school students who complete AP and International Baccalaureate® (IB) courses demonstrate mastery of subject material by earning qualifying grades on AP and IB examinations.

In addition, teachers will provide regular assessments of a student's progress, which can provide insight into the student's academic and intellectual growth. This can include measuring growth in areas such as reading fluency, writing skills, or mathematical reasoning. Also, teachers will assign challenging tasks that require higher-order thinking skills, which helps identify areas where advanced learners have grown or still need to develop. At the elementary level, teachers will maintain a portfolio of a student's work, which can provide a snapshot over time of their progress and development, as well as evidence of their abilities and accomplishments. In the upper grades, advanced learners will set specific goals and track progress toward those goals. Finally, advanced learners are encouraged to reflect on their own learning, and growth can help them develop metacognitive skills and gain a deeper understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses.

It's important to remember that growth in advanced learners may not always be linear or predictable and that progress may vary depending on various factors, including a student's motivation, interests, and environmental factors. Regular communication between parents/guardians, teachers, and gifted education specialists can help ensure that gifted learners receive the support and resources they need to continue growing and developing their abilities. Teachers and family members are encouraged to communicate via email, over the phone, and at a parents/guardians conference to discuss the growth of advanced learners over time.

**Part VII: Program of Differentiated Curriculum and Instruction (8VAC20-40-60A.11)**

*The Regulations Governing Educational Services for Gifted Students defines appropriately differentiated curriculum and instruction as curriculum and instruction adapted or modified to accommodate the accelerated learning aptitudes of identified students in their areas of strength. Such curriculum and instructional strategies provide accelerated and enrichment opportunities that recognize gifted students' needs for (i) advanced content and pacing of instruction; (ii) original research or production; (iii) problem finding and solving; (iv) higher level thinking that leads to the generation of products; and (v) a focus on issues, themes, and ideas within and across areas of study. Such curriculum and instruction are offered continuously and sequentially to support the achievement of student outcomes, and provide support necessary for these students to work at increasing levels of complexity that differ significantly from those of their age-level peers. This section provides a description of the school division's appropriately differentiated curriculum and instruction, demonstrating accelerated and advanced content for gifted learners.*

Differentiation is not a one-size-fits-all approach, and strategies must be tailored to meet the unique needs of each advanced learner. Supporting differentiated curriculum and instruction for gifted learners involves tailoring learning experiences to meet their individual needs, interests, and abilities. ACPS uses ongoing communication and collaboration between teachers, Advanced Academic Support Teachers (AASTs), content specialists, and parents/guardians to help ensure that students receive the support and resources they need to thrive.




ACPS has a curriculum resource framework for Advanced Academic Services (AAS) in grades K-5 and is in the process of updating the curriculum resource framework for grades 6-12, as well as updating curriculum guides to align with gifted resources in grades K-12. The resource frameworks and guides provide a coherent foundation for ACPS's AAS and outline goals and outcomes for engaging and challenging students in mathematics, social studies, language arts, and science. It is designed to enumerate students' cognitive and affective needs and provide a basis for continuous intellectual growth.

**Critical and Creative Thinking Lessons**

In K-12, the critical and creative thinking lessons are designed to elicit a higher-level thinking response. The problem-solving skills, thinking processes, and student products that result from these lessons provide observable evidence of a student's ability to think and reason on advanced levels. Each lesson is structured to provide students opportunities to connect content to prior knowledge, engage in new ideas, use thinking skills to consider possibilities, reflect on new learning, and connect the lesson to future learning. Each of the lessons teaches a specific thinking strategy. The lessons may be used to develop creative and critical thinking skills in all learners. Each thinking strategy can be used at any grade level and in any curriculum area. Students are taught the name of the strategy and how it can help them become better thinkers, and they are then given opportunities to practice using the thinking strategies in different content areas.

**Tier I-III**

In addition to critical and creative thinking strategies, ACPS has a curriculum resource framework and guide to support teachers when differentiating for students in their classroom. These resources come from curriculum developers who infuse the power of critical and creative thinking into their lessons and resources created by universities that focus on gifted and advanced learners. Teachers may use these resources to support the depth, breadth, and pace of learning within their classroom. An example of the resource framework is below:

<b>Alexandria City Public Schools</b> <b>Curriculum Resources for Differentiated Instruction: Advanced Academic Services (AAS)</b> <b>Grade 3</b>			
<p><i>ACPS believes that all students should have the opportunity to use a variety of differentiated instructional strategies and curricular resources as part of our talent development focus. The Curriculum Resources for Differentiated Instruction were designed to provide all students with access to learning opportunities and resources that are academically, intellectually and personally challenging, as well as connected to the VDOE learning standards. When using these resources with students; the frequency, duration and subject area(s) may vary based on student need. However, it is highly recommended that students should have access to at least one differentiated learning experience using these resources quarterly and frequent opportunities to use the nine Critical and Creative Thinking Strategies (CCTS) in daily instruction.</i></p>			
<b>Mathematics</b>			
<b>Resource</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Visual of Resource</b>	<b>Where to Access or Order</b> (ISBN number in parenthesis)
<b>Critical and Creative Thinking Lessons</b>	Lessons designed to elicit a higher level thinking response. Activities employ differentiation strategies, extension ideas and English Learner (EL) best practices.		Lessons and VDOE Standards Alignment Chart on <a href="#">Canvas</a>
<b>Differentiated Curriculum Lesson Series/Kit</b>	Lessons feature cross curricular differentiated activities that emphasize conceptual and thematic approaches to learning. The series features books with the following titles: <i>Cycles, Faces, Symbols, Gifts, Discoveries and Questions.</i>		<a href="#">Prufrock Press website</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Differentiated Curriculum Lesson Series/Kit:</b> (9781593633080)</li> <li>• <b>VDOE Standards Alignment Chart (selected activities)</b> on <a href="#">Canvas</a></li> </ul>
<b>Project M3: Mentoring Mathematical Minds Series</b>	<p><b>MoLi Stone-Place Value &amp; Numeration:</b> students explore our numeration system in depth</p> <p><b>Awesome Algebra-Patterns &amp; Generalizations:</b> students study patterns and algebraic thinking</p> <p><b>Digging for Data- Analyzing Data:</b> students learn how to gather, represent, and analyzing data</p> <p><b>How Big is Big?- Understanding &amp; Using Large Numbers:</b>students explore place value</p> <p><b>In Search of the Page Measuring Up, Down:</b> students explore concepts in linear measurement.</p>		<a href="#">Kendall Hunt website</a> <p><b>MoLi Stone-Place Value &amp; Numeration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Journal: (978-1-4652-6197-7)</li> <li>• Teacher Guide: (978-1-4652-8075-6)</li> </ul> <p><b>Awesome Algebra-Patterns &amp; Generalizations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Journal:(978-1-4652-6201-1)</li> <li>• Teacher Guide: (978-1-4652-8076-3)</li> </ul> <p><b>Digging for Data- Analyzing Data:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Journal:(978-1-4652-6209-7)</li> <li>• Teacher Guide: (978-1-4652-8082-4)</li> </ul> <p><b>How Big is Big?- Understanding &amp; Using Large Numbers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Journal:(978-1-4652-6232-5)</li> <li>• Teacher Guide: (978-1-4652-8078-7)</li> </ul> <p><b>In Search of the Yeti: Measuring Up, Down:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Journal:(978-1-4652-7037-5)</li> </ul>



**Part VIII: Policies and Procedures for Access to Programs and Advanced Courses (8VAC20-40-60A.12)**

*This section provides the school division's policies and procedures that allow access to programs of study and advanced courses at a pace and sequence commensurate with the learning needs of the gifted student.*

ACPS offers multiple tiers of interventions for Advanced Academic Services (AAS). Students may transition from one type of service to another based on multiple criteria that are reviewed to determine the level of academic services needed to meet their needs for a match to the frequency and intensity of challenge and availability of an academic peer group. In addition to the Local Plan for the Gifted, ACPS provides specific policies for students to access programs and advanced coursework per the Code of Virginia:

- **IGBB: Programs for Gifted Students**  
Please visit <https://www.acps.k12.va.us/school-board/school-board-policies> to check for the most updated version of the policy.
- **IKEB: Acceleration**  
Please visit <https://www.acps.k12.va.us/school-board/school-board-policies> to check for the most updated version of the policy.
- **IGBI: Advanced Placement (AP) and Dual Enrollment:**  
Please visit <https://www.acps.k12.va.us/school-board/school-board-policies> to check for the most updated version of the policy.

**Part IX: Personal and Professional Development (8VAC20-40-60A.13)**

*School divisions must provide evidence of professional development based on the following teacher competencies outlined in 8VAC20-542-310 below.*

1. *Understanding of principles of the integration of gifted education and general education, including*
  - a. *Strategies to encourage the interaction of gifted students with students of similar and differing abilities; and*
  - b. *Development of activities to encourage parental and community involvement in the education of the gifted, including the establishment and maintenance of an effective advisory committee.*
2. *Understanding of the characteristics of gifted students, including:*
  - a. *Varied expressions of advanced aptitudes, skills, creativity, and conceptual understandings;*
  - b. *Methodologies that respond to the affective (social-emotional) needs of gifted students; and*
  - c. *Gifted behaviors in special populations (i.e., those who are culturally diverse, economically disadvantaged, or physically disabled).*
3. *Understanding of specific techniques to identify gifted students using diagnostic and prescriptive approaches to assessment, including:*
  - a. *The selection, use, and evaluation of multiple assessment instruments and identification strategies;*
  - b. *The use of both subjective and objective measures to provide relevant information regarding the aptitude/ability or achievement of potentially gifted students;*
  - c. *The use of authentic assessment tools such as portfolios to determine performance, motivation/interest and other characteristics of potentially gifted students;*
  - d. *The development, use, and reliability of rating scales, checklists, and questionnaires by parents, teachers and others;*
  - e. *The evaluation of data collected from student records such as grades, honors, and awards;*
  - f. *The use of case study reports providing information concerning exceptional conditions; and*
  - g. *The structure, training, and procedures used by the identification and placement committee.*
4. *Understanding and application of a variety of educational models, teaching methods, and strategies for selecting materials and resources that ensure:*
  - a. *Academic rigor through the development of high-level proficiency in all core academic areas utilizing the Virginia Standards of Learning as a baseline;*
  - b. *The acquisition of knowledge and development of products that demonstrate creative and critical thinking as applied to learning both in and out of the classroom; and*
  - c. *The development of learning environments that guide students to become self-directed, independent learners.*

5. *Understanding and application of theories and principles of differentiating curriculum designed to match the distinct characteristics of gifted learners to the programs and curriculum offered to gifted students, including:*
  - a. *The integration of multiple disciplines into an area of study;*
  - b. *Emphasis on in-depth learning, independent and self-directed study skills and metacognitive skills;*
  - c. *The development of analytical, organizational, critical, and creative thinking skills;*
  - d. *The development of sophisticated products using varied modes of expression;*
  - e. *The evaluation of student learning through appropriate and specific criteria; and*
  - f. *The development of advanced technological skills to enhance student performance.*
6. *Understanding of contemporary issues and research in gifted education, including:*
  - a. *The systematic gathering, analyzing, and reporting of formative and summative data; and*
  - b. *Current local, state, and national issues and concerns.*

Gifted education professional learning is important for ensuring that educators have the knowledge and skills they need to serve the needs of gifted and talented students effectively. ACPS offers professional learning opportunities designed for teachers and other education professionals who work with students at various tiers of advanced academics. We believe all teachers in ACPS should have access to these learning opportunities, as we believe all our students need access to high-quality, rigorous instruction. By participating in professional learning opportunities, educators can stay up-to-date with current research and best practices in the field of gifted education and apply this knowledge in their work with gifted learners.

The goal of the professional learning sessions is to help educators enhance their knowledge and skills in working with gifted students, including how to identify giftedness, how to differentiate instruction, and how to provide appropriate academic and social-emotional support to gifted learners. ACPS provides professional learning throughout the school year, over the summer, and for graduate-level classes. The wide variety of offerings allows teachers and administrators to find areas in which they want to focus their professional learning.

Teacher's Grade	Job Description	Required Training
All Teachers	All K-12 teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Annual orientation training for new ACPS teachers</li> <li>● Observation scale training (applicable to the screening grades)</li> <li>● Training on critical and creative thinking strategies</li> <li>● Overview of AAS in ACPS</li> </ul>

Alexandria City Public Schools (2023-2028)

Teacher's Grade	Job Description	Required Training
<p>Elementary Advanced Academic Support Teachers (AASTs)</p> <p>Grades K-5</p>	<p>Teachers who typically work predominantly during the day and/or week with identified gifted students</p>	<p>State Certification: Division-level support is provided to teachers who participate in cohorts designed to lead to a full endorsement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Current Talented and Gifted (TAG) Teachers – Must have gifted endorsement and/or an M.A. in gifted education, as well as demonstrated success teaching gifted students</li> <li>● New TAG Teachers – Must have the add-on gifted endorsement (endorsement must be received within three years of employment in that position)</li> </ul> <p>Additional Required Course:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Introduction to Young Scholars and Special Populations</i> (to be provided by the Office of AAS)</li> </ul> <p>AAST Beginning-of-the-Year Meetings and Monthly Meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Teacher professional Central Office workdays</li> <li>● Two full training days the first week of school each year</li> <li>● Full-day monthly meetings</li> <li>● Topics to include cultural competency, the use of alternative assessments in helping to find gifted students from underrepresented populations, implementing the differentiated gifted curriculum, meeting the social-emotional needs of gifted learners and related topics, co-teaching models, and professional learning facilitation</li> </ul> <p>Conference Attendance, as Appropriate and Available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)</li> <li>● Virginia Association for the Gifted (VA Gifted)</li> <li>● William and Mary National Curriculum Network Conference (NCNC)</li> </ul>
<p>Middle and High School Advanced</p>		<p>State Certification: Division-level support is provided to teachers who participate in cohorts designed to lead to full endorsement.</p>

Teacher's Grade	Job Description	Required Training
Academic Coaches		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Current TAG Teachers – Must have gifted endorsement and/or an M.A. in gifted education, as well as demonstrated success teaching gifted students</li> <li>● New TAG Teachers – Must have the add-on gifted endorsement (endorsement must be received within three years of employment in that position)</li> </ul> <p>Additional Required Course:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Introduction to Young Scholars and Special Populations</i> (to be provided by the Office of AAS)</li> </ul> <p>AAST Beginning-of-the-Year Meetings and Monthly Meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Teacher professional Central Office workdays</li> <li>● Two full training days the first week of school each year</li> <li>● Full-day monthly meetings</li> <li>● Topics to include cultural competency, the use of alternative assessments in helping to find gifted students from underrepresented populations, implementing the differentiated gifted curriculum, meeting the social-emotional needs of gifted learners and related topics, co-teaching models, and professional learning facilitation</li> </ul> <p>Conference Attendance, as Appropriate and Available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● NAGC</li> <li>● VA Gifted</li> <li>● William and Mary NCNC</li> </ul>
Middle and High School Honors and Advanced Placement (AP) Teachers		<p>Teachers who teach an Honors or AP course are encouraged to earn their gifted state endorsement. ACPS offers free graduate-level coursework to obtain this endorsement.</p> <p>In addition, Honors and AP teachers must attend at least 16 hours of gifted professional learning a year, either provided at the school or Central Office level or at a conference with equivalent hours.</p>

Alexandria City Public Schools (2023-2028)

Teacher's Grade	Job Description	Required Training
		Conference Attendance, as Appropriate and Available: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● NAGC</li> <li>● VA Gifted</li> <li>● William and Mary NCNC)</li> <li>● AP Institutes</li> </ul>
Central Office Instructional Specialist and Director		State Certification: Division-level support is provided to teachers who participate in cohorts designed to lead to a full endorsement. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Gifted endorsement and/or an M.A. in gifted education, as well as demonstrated success teaching gifted students</li> <li>● <i>Introduction to Young Scholars and Special Populations</i> (to be provided by the Office of AAS)</li> </ul>

ACPS offers teachers access to a variety of professional learning opportunities, including workshops, conferences, online courses, and graduate-level programs. These opportunities may be offered by universities, professional organizations, school districts, or other educational institutions. Finally, all teachers of advanced academic courses are encouraged to pursue a Virginia state endorsement in gifted education.

**Part X: Procedures for Annual Review of Effectiveness (8VAC20-40-60A.14)**

*This section provides the procedures for the annual review of the effectiveness of the school division's gifted education program, including the review of screening, referral, identification, and program procedures toward the achievement of equitable representation of students, the review of student outcomes and the academic growth of gifted students. School divisions may decide to focus on one or more areas to review each year. However, reviews shall be based on multiple criteria and shall include multiple sources of information.'*

Tracking program effectiveness is a vital component of program management, as it can provide a more comprehensive understanding of how well ACPS's programs are meeting the needs of our students. ACPS uses multiple methods to assess the effectiveness of its Advanced Academic Services (AAS) program. Annually, ACPS will review effectiveness via state compliance reports, internal annual program reports, screening and identification data, achievement growth data, and stakeholder feedback and recommendations. In addition, there will be an annual review of progress made on the goal recommended in *Part II: Program Goals and Objectives*.

**A. State Compliance**

- Annual report to the Commonwealth of Virginia on referrals
- Annual report to the Commonwealth of Virginia on student enrollment

**B. Equity and Program Audits Presented to the School Board, Superintendent, Administrators, Instructional Staff, and Local Advisory Committees**

- Annual report on the enrollment of gifted learners by division, school and grade level to include the number of students referred, screened, and found eligible by various subgroups, including gender, race/ethnicity, special programs such as English learners, specialized services, and Young Scholars
- Annual report on achievement to include Advanced Placement (AP) exam performance by discipline, number of AP exams taken by Tier III identified students, AP Honors awards, and participation in Dual Enrollment t classes
- Annual report on graduation rates and the type of diploma awarded
- Annual report on teacher certification status at the elementary, middle, and high school levels
- Annual report on teacher professional development
- Annual equity audit conducted by the Office of Accountability

**C. Screening and Identification Effectiveness**

- Screening profiles will be submitted to the AAS Director twice annually and reviewed by a committee composed of AAS teachers and Screening Leads to ensure that all students in the screening pool have been appropriately evaluated.
- Referral and identification data will be reviewed and reported by the AAS Director, disaggregated by ethnicity and gender, to determine progress toward equitable representation.

#### **D. Achievement Growth in Students Identified for Tier III Services**

Accounting for the achievement and progress of advanced learners requires an assessment system that is designed to accommodate high levels of performance. The criteria for student performance typically exceed grade-level standards and include in-depth knowledge, an advanced application of skills, and a deep understanding of the content, issues, and problems inherent in a field, subject area, or discipline:

- Units and lessons designed for advanced learners include assessment components such as pre-assessments, ongoing or formative assessments, and post-assessments.
- Complex performance-based assessments are used to assess the solutions, products, and/or projects resulting from a differentiated curriculum.
- Student work portfolios, oral presentations, projects, and exams are used to evaluate student learning and achievement.
- Rubrics are designed to provide clear criteria, assist students in self-assessment, and support students as they journey from novice toward expert in their knowledge, skills, and understanding in various disciplines.
- Students in advanced academic classes take the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) test for any courses that they are taking and will also engage in performance assessments that go beyond grade-level standards and expectations.
- High school students who complete AP and Dual Enrollment courses demonstrate mastery of subject material by earning qualifying grades on AP and Dual Enrollment examinations.

#### **E. Feedback and Recommendations**

- The Advanced Academic Services Advisory Committee (AASAC) reviews the plan each year and reports to the School Board on the progress made and recommendations for growth.
- AASAC will provide embedded opportunities for public feedback at each meeting.
- Gathering feedback from teachers, parents/guardians, and students can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of gifted education programs. The feedback can be collected through surveys, interviews, or focus groups:
  - Percentage of students agreeing that they feel supported socially, emotionally, and academically (Equity Audit)
  - Percentage of parents/guardians agreeing that their children are receiving a high-quality education (survey)
  - Percentage of teachers agreeing they feel supported to deliver a high-quality education (survey)
- Observations can be used to assess the effectiveness of gifted education programs in terms of classroom management, student engagement, and overall effectiveness. Observations can be conducted by administrators, teachers, or outside observers.
  - Percentage of classrooms in each school demonstrating the use of high-impact (engaging, rigorous, culturally relevant) strategies (observation, rubric)
  - Percentage of teachers planning and implementing lessons utilizing the ACPS instructional framework (observation)



## Alexandria City Public Schools (2023-2028)

- Each fourth year within the five-year plan cycle, a fully independent program evaluation will be conducted by an outside resource knowledgeable in program evaluation and gifted education, such as a university or other professional evaluation service provider.
- ACPS participates in the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) program feedback survey conducted during the life of the most recent five-year adopted plan.

**Part XI: Procedures for the Establishment of the Local Advisory Committee (8VAC20-40-60B)**

*Each school division may establish a local advisory committee composed of parents, school personnel, and other community members who are appointed by the school board. This committee shall reflect the ethnic and geographical composition of the school division. This section should include the school division's procedures for the establishment of the local advisory committee for the gifted program if the division has elected to establish a committee.*

The ACPS School Board believes strong communication and community outreach is essential to student achievement and public support of our schools. The ACPS School Board appoints advisory committees to provide opportunities for citizens to advise the School Board on major issues pertaining to ACPS. In addition, ACPS has an established advisory committee called the Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee (TAGAC). With the recent shift in the former Talented and Gifted program name, TAGAC will now be formally called the Advanced Academic Services Advisory Committee (AASAC).

Each year, the School Board approves AASAC's Scope of Work based on the goals of the Strategic Plan, including any requirements of law or regulation. Annual reports are presented to the School Board through the Superintendent.

The School Board Chair appoints individual Board members as liaisons to the community to serve on AASAC. Parents/guardians and community members may also be appointed by the School Board to serve on city committees or commissions, consistent with city policies.

Before applying to join a School Board Advisory Committee, the School Board requests that individuals attend one of AASAC's meetings and introduce themselves to the Committee Chair and Staff Liaison. Individuals interested in serving on TAGAC submit applications for membership to the [ACPS School Board](#). Applicants will need to provide the names and phone numbers of three references, as well as answer questions about the reasons for wanting to join the committee, potential contributions, and past community involvement. Once applications are received, they are forwarded to AASAC's Chair for approval by the committee and then placed on a Board Meeting agenda for approval by the School Board.

AASAC's bylaws outline committee membership, and an effort is made to appoint members who represent all constituents in the community. Advisory committee members solicit applications for specific slots to achieve broad representation, and community organizations are also represented, when possible. Additional recruitment efforts will be made to improve broad representation to include teachers, parents, students, and community members.

**Part XII: Assurances (8VAC20-40-60A.6; A.7; A.8; A.9)**

*In accordance with the Regulations Governing Educational Services for Gifted Students, the following assurance must be provided by the school division:*

- *Assurances that student records are maintained in compliance with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations;*
- *Assurances that (i) the selected and administered testing and assessment materials have been evaluated by the developers for cultural, racial, and linguistic biases; (ii) identification procedures are constructed so that those procedures may identify high potential or aptitude in any student whose accurate identification may be affected by economic disadvantages, by limited English proficiency, or by disability; (iii) standardized tests and other measures have been validated for the purpose of identifying gifted students; and (iv) instruments are administered and interpreted by trained personnel in conformity with the developer’s instructions;*
- *Assurances that accommodations or modifications determined by the school division’s special education Individual Education Plan (IEP) team, as required for the student to receive a free appropriate public education, shall be incorporated into the student’s gifted education services; and*
- *Assurances that a written copy of the school division’s approved local plan for the education of the gifted is available to parents or legal guardians of each referred student, and to others upon request.*

Pursuant to these requirements, I hereby certify that the school division is in compliance with this language.

---

Division Superintendent’s Signature

Printed Name

Date

**References**

Fairfax County Public Schools (2023). Young Scholars Program Improvement and Innovation Plan. <https://www.fcps.edu/node/44243>

National Association for Gifted Children. (2018). NAGC position statement: Identification of gifted and talented students. <https://nagc.org/page/position-statements>

National Association for Gifted Children. (2020). Multi-tiered system of supports and gifted students.

National Association for Gifted Children. (2021). Independent study. <https://dev.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources/national-standards-gifted-and-talented-education/pre-k-grade-12-5>

Olszewski-Kubilius, P., Subotnik, R. F., & Worrell, F. C. (2016). *The talent development process: Putting theory into practice*. Routledge.

Olszewski-Kubilius, P., Subotnik, R., & Worrell, F. C. (2021). *Talent development as a framework for gifted education: Implications for best practices and applications in schools*. Routledge.

Peters, S. J., Matthews, M. S., McBee, M. T., & McCoach, D. B. (2014). *Beyond gifted education: Designing and implementing advanced academic programs*. Routledge.

Renzulli, J. S. (2005). The three-ring conception of giftedness: A developmental model for creative productivity. In R. J. Sternberg & J. E. Davidson (Eds.), *Conceptions of giftedness* (2nd ed., pp. 246-279). Cambridge University Press.

Rizza, M. G., Runnheim, E. K., Williams, K. J., & Rogers, C. M. (2020). Meeting the needs of gifted students through multi-tiered systems of support. *Gifted child today*, 43(2), 81-89. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1076217620910351>