

Alexandria City Public Schools
Advanced Academic Services Advisory Committee
October 17, 2023
ACHS 3330 King St, Room A-114

Meeting: October 17, 2023, from 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm at Alexandria City High School, 3330 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22305.

Current AASAC Members Present: D. Ohlandt (Chair), Evan Smith (Vice Chair), Catherine (Katie) Baker, Mike Dukes, Penny Hairston (Principal Rep)

Guests: Dr. Megan Tempel-Milner (ACPS), Pierrette Finney (ACPS), Carmen Sanders (ACPS), Julia Stenpeck, Julie Anne Watko, Emmett Watko (ACPS student), Jessica Wintfeld, Shirley Boampung, Anna Garloch, Willow Darsie, Michelle Sandilands, Kelley Organeck, Jeremy Miller, Laura Rose

Chair’s Report:

Dr. D. Ohlandt opened the meeting with a summary of the Scope of Work that would be voted on later in the meeting. The updates to the Local Plan were approved by the school board in June and, moving forward, AASAC will spend its efforts on making policy and budget recommendations to support the Local Plan and not on considering a wholesale revocation of the Local Plan, which was already approved.

Business:

After reviewing the September 2023 meeting minutes, one amendment was proposed, adding “Budget Impact” to the Scope of Work section. Dr. Ohlandt moved to approve the amendment and Katie Baker seconded. The amendment was approved.

At this point, Dr. Ohlandt moved to approve the minutes. Mike Dukes seconded, and the minutes were approved.

Staff Report:

Dr. Megan Tempel-Milner presented updates on the accomplishments and ongoing efforts of the AAS office, the key points of which are included below.

Screening

CogAT testing- recently, there has been a nationwide issue with the Riverside testing platform.

- Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) has been advised by Riverside Insights (the publisher of CogAT) to postpone the start of CogAT testing until later this week for students in grade three and extend the end of the testing window to November 10, 2023.
- Testing will only begin once Riverside provides confirmation to ACPS that their technical issues have been resolved and other localities have successfully administered the online assessment.

- Yesterday, a letter was sent home to all third-grade families informing them of this issue. This delay will not impact the automatic referral process and screening timeline for Advanced Academic Services (AAS).
- It may impact the current Grades 5-8 screening. However, it would only be for a few students who must take the CogAT. We will keep impacted grades 5-8 families informed, if the deadline needs to be updated.

The Grades K-8 referral window is open until January 31, 2023.

- Communication will continue to go out regarding the screening window and process.
- An overview presentation will be posted on our website by 11/1/23. This will allow our families to review the information at their own pace. It will also ensure the message about screening is consistent across the division.
- Schools will hold Q&A sessions from November to mid-January.
- The holistic portfolio process will begin for rising 4th grade (current 3rd grades this year). We will expand the portfolio process to other grade levels in future years.
- Grades K-8 (non-rising 4th-grade screening) will continue to use the matrix form from previous years.

Fidelity of Instruction

- We are two months into implementing the updates to the local plan.
 - We are seeing positive movements in the work. Change is hard, and there is a lot of new.
 - All 4th and 5th-grade LA guides and 4th-grade math guides have been fully updated and aligned with division pacing and gifted resources.
 - We have a K-3 talent development framework that is aligned with division pacing and gifted resources.
- Ms. Whitfield and I have done class visits for almost every elementary and middle school, either through AAS walkthroughs or division walkthroughs.
 - We meet with teachers to answer questions, provide support, and assess the fidelity of implementation.
 - Teachers have our phone numbers, we respond to emails promptly, and we go into schools upon requests from teachers- above and beyond our walk-throughs.
 - Ms. Whitfield meets more often with the new AASTs at each school.
 - 1st Quarter resources include William and Mary Language Arts units, Mentoring Mathematical Minds- Digging for Data, William and Mary Base 10
 - 2nd Quarter- Mentoring Mathematical Minds, Document-Based Questions (DBQS), vocabulary and grammar development.
 - We purchased all materials that are considered essential to the FOI.
 - We purchase supplemental resources based on the needs of the school and students.
- Training and Professional Learning Meeting for AASTs: Topics covered so far this year
 - JASON Project Training
 - Math Workshop Model 2 training
 - Grammar and Vocabulary development using Michael Clay Thompson units
 - William and Mary Language Arts units
 - Co-teaching model

- Time for planning: Teachers work together to plan units, pace out instruction, office hours
- Continuous Feedback from Teachers
 - We seek feedback from teachers on a regular basis and are making notes for next year's updates.
- Pull-out vs. Push-in
 - Even though the 2017 external review encouraged us to move to a push-in model for LA and math, we, as a division and steering committee determined that the shift was not ready to be made. Under the Local Plan for the Gifted, SAA services in Grades 4-5 in LA and math are pull-out services.
 - We held conversations with staff to discuss the need to implement the curriculum with fidelity. If we are doing a pull-out service, the expectation is that we use gifted resources and gifted instructional strategies on an everyday basis.

Public Comments:

There was 10 minutes on the agenda for public comment; however, five guests had comments, so the Committee Chair allowed comments to be heard for over 20 minutes so all present could voice their thoughts. Commenters were asked to submit comments in writing to be attached to the minutes; please see attachments.

Commenters: Jeremy Miller, Julie Anne Watko, Kelley Organek, Willow Darsie, Anna Garlock.

Anna Garlock (did not submit written comments)

- Has 5th and 2nd grade students.
- Concerns about the new Local Plan being best for AAS students.
- There was no communication to parents about the Local Plan.
- Seconded other comments heard throughout the evening that the Local Plan seems harmful to AAS students and needs to be rethought.

Jeremy Miller asked for permission to play an audio recording of comments by another parent who could not attend the meeting. The request was declined.

Committee Work Session:

The committee focused on approving the Scope of Work for the year:

- There was a question if CASEL and SEL were the same thing. Dr. Finney explained that CASEL was an organization and SEL is the concept, so they are not the same thing.
- Mike Dukes motioned to approve the SOW; Katie Baker seconded. Approved.

After approving the SOW, the Committee discussed how to research these topics and what speakers to invite. Some of the ideas were:

- Dr. Pamela Gilchrist at the Innovation Campus at VT & Trish Jacobs at CTE. Good to find intersections with visual arts.
- Dr. Cross from W&M on DEL
- Indicators with Dr. Clinton Page. We'd like to discuss potential indicators at the November meeting to request from his team for the presentation in 2024.
- Staff Overview from middle and/or high school.
- AAS student feedback
- AAST teachers or students to get first-hand perspectives.
- Loudoun & VAGC – Wendy King – talk about how they handle middle school.
- The committee could read a book on different models of gifted education at the secondary level.

Katie Baker motioned to adjourn; Mike Dukes seconded. Approved.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Next TAGAC Meeting:

Tuesday, November 28, 2023; 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm

Alexandria City High School, 3330 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22302

Room A-114

Attachments:

- Public comments as submitted by Jeremy Miller
- Public comments as submitted by Julie Anne Watko
- Public comments as submitted by Kelley Organek
- Public comments as submitted by Willow Darsie