The Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee (TAGAC) recommends the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) School Board **designate funding for developing understanding of, and capacity to respond to, the implications of the forthcoming Virginia Mathematics Pathways Initiative (VMPI) on TAG students and on all students.**

The TAGAC committee primarily advocates for the needs of TAG students, who have special academic, social-emotional, and developmental needs. It is the responsibility of the school district to ensure that these needs are met. Currently, the primary method of responding to TAG students' needs in the area of mathematics in ACPS is through whole-grade-level acceleration.

The VMPI calls for the end to whole-grade-level acceleration and tracking because tracking does not improve achievement but it does increase educational inequality (NCSM, n.d.) At the same time, the VMPI ideally makes rigorous and challenging instruction more accessible to all students. Within the structures of the VMPI, calculus and other AP and DE courses should be accessible to all students in 11th and 12th grade without having to accelerate.

What will be key in making this a reality in ACPS is ensuring that the detracked, heterogenous K-10th grade courses adequately prepare students to be successful in those advanced courses. *We must ensure that being in heterogenous, non-accelerated courses in grades K-10 do not limit any students' ability to prepare for college credit-bearing mathematics courses and to excel in college majors and careers that require these advanced mathematics courses.*

Careful preparation will be needed by ACPS to determine how the aforementioned needs of TAG students, and all students, will be met under the VMPI.

We ask ACPS to take action on the following:

Require that teachers are held accountable for using a consistent, high-quality, rigorous and pre-differentiated mathematics curriculum across all schools and all grade levels. Jonathan Plucker, the President of the National Association for Gifted Children, when acting as a guest speaker for the TAGAC committee, said that adopting a high quality pre-differentiated curriculum is the most effective lever a school district can pull to provide huge benefits for advanced students and to promote advanced achievement, especially among low-income students (Plucker, 2020).

Provide targeted and systematic curriculum-specific professional development for all teachers in best practices for enrichment and differentiation within non-accelerated courses. Teachers will require support in personalizing for the needs of all students in their classes, especially if students who would have had their academic needs met by accelerating mathematics courses are now held in grade-level courses. This includes how to develop and execute on Differentiated Education Plans for all TAG students. According to the National Council of Supervisors of Mathematics, "school districts must be aware that teachers, coaches and leaders will need intense professional development before and during the process of detracking as well as continued support throughout" (NCSM, n.d.)

Better articulate how and when differentiation and personalization will be applied in the general education classroom, and clearly communicate how all students' needs will be met within the

VMPI. This includes clearly articulating what enrichment in lieu of acceleration will look like for TAG students, especially for students who are so gifted mathematically that acceleration would traditionally be the method of enrichment that best meets their needs. Personalizing learning will be needed so that TAG students academic and socio-emotional needs are met. "The detracked mathematics courses will need differentiated instructional materials and approaches that support heterogeneous classrooms with students of varying levels, learning experiences and demographic backgrounds" (NCSM, n.d.)

Provide extensive parent education to help parents understand the forthcoming VMPI changes and what that will look like in their childrens' mathematics courses. Parents and students will need to understand the different methods of enrichment that will be used, how TAG needs will be met if acceleration is not an option, and what the new courses and content will look like at school and at home. Specifically, "districts will need to communicate to parents and community stakeholders to assure them that students that have traditionally been in the "higher" levels of tracking will remain competitive with detracking" (NCSM, n.d.) It is important that all parents understand the value of the opportunities the VMPI provides.

Engage TAG-certified teachers in evaluating the effectiveness of existing systems and tools for differentiation. Project-based learning is one example of a differentiation and deep learning strategy that is currently in use. These teachers could make recommendations for what those types of strategies would look like in heterogeneous courses.

Explore additional options for advanced services within heterogeneous courses. This could include clustering TAG students, having courses co-taught by both general education and TAG teachers, and providing additional support such as additional teachers and extra learning time to enable all students to access and be successful with rigorous content within the detracked and heterogenous courses. Flexible and equitable ability grouping based on performance and potential within courses benefits all students, especially those in the lowest performing quartile (Plucker, 2020).

References

Plucker, J. (2020, December 24). *Virtual TAG Advisory Committee Meeting* [Webinar]. Zoom. https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/play/UqzRaes8XzchJW8gQWHEiHY1QMI_nPBUYGzKeERQXBFiVZXQvraTfxzN4-P3Re3VB5egJTSc0LBcKXT5.F8y05QswfH8zlvt2?continueMode=true&_x_zm_rtaid=DyjlA_cxR16b5R_kNV3-Xg.1617759168498.7f3643bd175d6472d8c1a17723dd6e22&_x_zm_rhtaid=879

NCSM (n.d.). Closing the Opportunity Gap: A Call for Detracking Mathematics. https://www.mathedleadership.org/docs/resources/positionpapers/NCSMPositionPaper19.pdf

Other possible references that KS hasn't had time to integrate….

https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-the-overlooked-support-teachers-are-missing-a-coherent-curriculum/2021/03

https://opportunitymyth.tntp.org/

California approach: Chapter 8 speaks to the High School mathematics shift and the issues with acceleration, with lots of references: https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/ma/cf/