

**BOARD MEMO**

Date: 10/21/21

For ACTION \_\_\_\_\_

For INFORMATION

Board Agenda: Yes

No \_\_\_\_\_

**FROM:** Laura Rose, Chair, Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee

**THROUGH:** Megan Tempel-Milner, Ph.D., Gifted Programs and Advanced Academic  
Gerald R. Mann, Jr., Ed.D., Executive Director of Instructional Support  
Terri H. Mozingo, Ed.D., Chief of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership  
Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr., Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

**TO:** The Honorable Meagan L. Alderton, Chair, and  
Members of the Alexandria City School Board

**TOPIC:** 2020–2021 Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee Annual Report

**ACPS 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL:**

Goal 2: Instructional Excellence

**SY 2021-2022 FOCUS AREA:**

Focus Area 5: Talented and Gifted

**FY 2022 BUDGET PRIORITY:**

Implementation of 2025 Strategic Plan  
Reduce Disproportionality in TAG and Advanced Courses

**SUMMARY:**

The Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee (TAGAC) focuses on assuring that the needs of all Talented and Gifted (TAG) students are met in the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS). The Scope of Work for the 2020–2021 school year was to improve the ways that the academic and social-emotional needs of TAG students in ACPS are met by focusing its efforts on key objectives, including:

- Tracking the impacts of virtual learning on TAG and Young Scholar (YS) students by monitoring the academic and social-emotional services they receive;
- Addressing equity issues within the TAG program by monitoring students' identification and delivery of services for the Young Scholars program, General Intellectual Aptitude (GIA), and Subject-Specific Identification; examining testing practices; advocating for consistency in programming across schools; and understanding additional barriers, including language, disability, and social relationships; and
- Creating a comprehensive K–12 Road Map for gifted services, including the following: ensuring multiple entry points to the program; improving transitions from elementary to

## BOARD MEMO

middle school and middle school to high school; monitoring the academic rigor provided via differentiation and honors classes; improving the Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) and improved training, curriculum extensions, and supports for teachers and staff supporting TAG students.

Accompanying each of these key objectives were the following set of Action Items:

- Report back to the School Board on gifted students' experiences and needs during virtual learning based on feedback from committee members and parents while also seeking out positive virtual learning experiences that can benefit ALL students.
- Monitor the Young Scholars program; review the Annual Indicators Report; and research testing with awareness of social, cultural, and economic barriers.
- Rethink service approaches to better deliver differentiation and make recommendations to the TAG Local Plan.
- Assign subcommittees, as required, to efficiently execute the above Action Items.

### **BACKGROUND:**

This represents a high-level overview of our activities from 14 full committee meetings and numerous, separate subcommittee meetings during the 2020–2021 School Year. Per the ACPS subcommittee operating guidelines, TAGAC has approved minutes for all of our meetings in the ACPS archives.

We held a special July 2020 meeting to discuss the spring's virtual learning experience and offer suggestions for meeting the needs of gifted students and amending the identification process for the upcoming school year, given the expectation that students would not be in classrooms for some portion of the year.

In September, the committee remained focused on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic with concerns about the inability to provide universal testing to first and third graders. The committee also drafted the Scope of Work.

October's meeting included invaluable feedback from our student representative about some experiences of non-White students in the TAG program, which served to only reinforce the committee's commitment to meet the needs of all gifted students. Additionally, the committee was briefed on the new Portfolio Process as a mechanism for identification of first and third grade students for TAG programming in lieu of universal testing, which would be unavailable.

In November, we welcomed Ms. Dornswalo Wilkins-McCorey, a TAG Coordinator with the Virginia Beach City Public Schools (VBCPS) and President-Elect of the Virginia Association of Gifted Children (VA Gifted). She shared her experience launching a book study program, *A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children*, certified by the Social and Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG) to help parents understand and support their children as well as develop a richly supporting community of parents of gifted learners. It was piloted at 17 Title 1 schools and was extremely successful. The committee's takeaway was that parent support groups can be helpful for ALL parents. Additionally, the Chair gave a presentation on TAGAC to the Parent Teacher

## BOARD MEMO

Advisory Council (PTAC) Diversity and Inclusion Committee (see attached *TAG PTAC Presentation*) and found that several opportunities exist for partnering on shared initiatives.

The committee hosted two guest speakers in December: Dr. Jonathan Plucker, President of the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) and Angela Greene from the ACPS Accountability Office. Both speakers were knowledgeable and compelling and contributed greatly to the committee's work on equity and testing. The *TAGAC Identification and Testing Subcommittee Report* provides expanded details on this work.

In January, acting TAG Coordinator, Tiana Dominick, provided updates on the final rollout of the Young Scholars program to all elementary schools and fielded additional questions regarding the program. Committee members began discussions about subcommittees aligned to the Scope of Work objectives and drafting corresponding reports.

February's meeting focused on a discussion with Ms. Krishna Levya, ACPS Director of Family and Community Engagement (FACE), about opportunities to leverage FACE to reach underserved communities and inform them about the TAG program. For additional details, see the *TAGAC K12 Communications Subcommittee Report*. The committee also formalized subcommittees by focus area to expedite drafting and submitting reports based on Action Items from the 2020–2021 Scope of Work.

In order to follow School Board rules and manage the constraints of virtual meetings, the March meeting was a series of rolling subcommittee meetings where a designated leader could organize with fellow members and plan for separate, public subcommittee meetings to draft their reports. These subcommittees continued to meet throughout March and April.

With great enthusiasm, the committee welcomed Dr. Megan Tempel-Milner as the new Director of Gifted and Advanced Academic Programs at the start of our April meeting. We also reviewed the *Annual Indicators Report November 2020* and discussed at length the Virginia Mathematics Pathway Initiative (VMPI) and how it might affect TAG programs if implemented by the state.

During our May meeting, the committee discussed the draft reports of the subcommittees and elected next year's officers.

In June, we learned that the Portfolio Process had been halted and a new approach was being implemented immediately to make sure all students currently in first and third grade would have equal access to assessment for TAG services. The committee applauded Dr. Tempel-Milner's efforts with regard to this change.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

The Superintendent recommends that the School *Board* TAGAC 2020–2021 Annual Report, including all attachments.

### **IMPACT:**

By adopting the recommendations contained in these reports, TAGAC believes ACPS will provide a stronger, better supported, and more equitable TAG program to its students.

## BOARD MEMO

### STAFF RESPONSE:

ACPS recognizes and appreciates TAGAC's efforts during the 2020–2021 school year, as the school system and committee navigated the COVID-19 pandemic; virtual and hybrid instruction; the retirement of Ms. Donna Brearley; the hard work of acting coordinator, Ms. Tiana Dominick; and the April arrival of the new Director, Dr. Tempel-Milner. In addition, this TAGAC report provided our committee with foundational knowledge that will be the impetus for future work in gifted programming within ACPS.

Points made in this TAGAC report and additional discussions with stakeholders provide the catalyst and support of a revised Local Plan for TAG. Our top priority for the 2021–2022 school year is to revise our Local Plan. The recommendations in this Annual Report will be considered as we embark on revising our Local Plan. As a committee and school division, it is imperative that we review our current plan to determine if we are using the most updated, research-based practices that promote equity. At the same time, we must work to ensure our students remain engaged in classroom instruction and learning experiences.

As a division and committee that needs to keep equity as a top priority, we must take courageous steps to ensure we use identification procedures that are culturally, linguistically, and economically unbiased. In addition, we must create a continuum of advanced and rigorous services for all students, including for students identified for TAG services. During our work, ACPS will involve input from students, parents, and staff to develop and check in for feedback as we revise, approve, and implement the Local Plan.

Immediate steps have been taken due to the work and support from TAGAC during this year's committee work. During the summer of 2021, all students going into fourth grade were screened for TAG services regardless of a submitted referral. In addition, we will continue to use universal screening to screen students in 2021–2022. Due to the disruption from the COVID-19 pandemic, ACPS will expand universal screening for the 2021–2022 school year to all first through fourth grade students using either the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT) or the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) score as an automatic referral. Finally, ACPS has consulted with experts in the field of giftedness, including Dr. Jack Naglieri, Dr. Richard Cash, and Dr. Carol Horn, and we plan to reach out to other experts to solidify equitable and research-based screening procedures.

In keeping with the agreement with TAGAC, we believe that clear communication is a key mitigating factor to reduce identification and program placement inequities in our system. Therefore, our office has worked and will continue to work with ACPS's Communications Office to update forms for clarity and translations purposes. In addition, we are in the process of updating our website, which will be done in increments as we revise and adopt a new Local Plan. The work on communication will be a multiyear approach as we refine our policies, practices, and procedures.

## **BOARD MEMO**

Finally, ACPS continues to value the dedication and service the members of TAGAC and its leadership provide. We look forward to our continued work to update our district's TAG Local Plan to provide rigorous and equitable services to all students in ACPS.

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment A: TAGAC 2021-2021 Annual Report

Attachment B: TAG PTAC Presentation

Attachment C: Talented and Gifted Program Indicators November 2020

### **CONTACT:**

Laura Rose, Chair, Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee, [roselauraw@yahoo.com](mailto:roselauraw@yahoo.com)

Dr. Megan Tempel-Milner, [megan.tempel-milner@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:megan.tempel-milner@acps.k12.va.us)