

I. Talented and Gifted Identification Process for 2020 - 2021

The shift to Virtual PLUS+ for the 2020 - 2021 school year impacted many aspects of the TAG Identification Process including universal screening, parent/teacher/community member referrals, and carry-over referrals from 2019 - 2020.

Universal Screening

The biggest change to the identification process was with universal screening. In normal years, the Naglieri Nonverbal Aptitude Test, Ed. 3 (NNAT3) and the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT), are used as universal screening tools in 1st and 3rd grade, respectively. Due to school closures, these tests could not be used as universal screeners for 2020 - 2021. Instead, the ACPS Office of Talented and Gifted Programs developed an equitable alternative to determine TAG eligibility.

A digital portfolio process was adopted in order to identify students and determine eligibility. A portfolio was completed for all 1st grade students and 3rd grade students, and the creation and review process consisted of:

1) Digital Portfolio Creation: From October to December, homeroom teachers and students worked to create digital portfolios, which consisted of **two teacher selected assignments** (teachers were asked to choose something already being assigned to the students and that allowed for open-ended responses and work product. The same assignments needed to be submitted for all students in the same class, although selected assignments did vary from classroom to classroom); **two student selected assignments** (students were asked to submit their favorite pieces or any that they were especially proud of); and **two work samples using assignments that explored creative and critical thinking** (assignments could be chosen from the existing Young Scholar identification library). 3rd grade portfolios needed both a language arts and math submission to assist in placement decisions for 4th grade.

2) Central Committee Review: In [add time range], all portfolios in the division were reviewed by the central committee. This committee consisted of [add number] teachers and [add other committee participants]. Around 3,000 portfolios were scored by the Central Committee. [Need more details on the make-up of the committee and confirmation of how many portfolios were scored.]

3) Referral for Testing: Those portfolios that received a Superior rating were referred for TAG evaluation and in-person testing. Per the State of Virginia, a standardized test score is still required for qualification. [How did/is the in-person testing taking place? There was mention of MAP test scores being used—did that happen?]

Parent/Teacher/Community Member Referral

As in previous years, students in all grades could be referred by a parent, teacher, or community member. Students in grades other than 1st or 3rd were required to submit a digital portfolio (all 1st and 3rd graders prepared a portfolio, regardless of referral; see above). For new referrals in grades 4 and 8, portfolios focused on subject matter based on the area of referral (i.e. math, ELA, science, social studies). All new referrals were scored on a Gifted Rating Scale completed by current and former teachers. A review of 1st and 2nd quarter grades, depending on timing, was also conducted.

The deadline for referral submission was extended to the end of the 2nd quarter in January 2021, meaning that 1st and 3rd grade students who did not receive a “superior” on their portfolio review could still be referred for eligibility determination by a parent, teacher, or community member.

Changes to the referral process were communicated to parents via the ACPS website, Express newsletter, individual school newsletters, and more.

New Students and Incomplete Referrals

Students who were referred to TAG during the 2019 – 2020 year whose identification process was incomplete were required to receive updated testing by appointment or to complete the referral with the portfolio option, with testing upon return to in-person learning. Missing work samples were not required to be submitted.

Students coming from a gifted program in their previous school could be placed without additional testing using existing records. If testing was needed, it was scheduled by appointment.

Considerations for the 2021 – 2022 School Year

Due to the significant changes in the universal screening process, in the Fall of 2021, the 2nd graders who would normally have had the NNAT3 in their previous year, and the 4th graders who would normally have had the CogAT in their previous year, will receive the missing standardized testing. This will allow for identification of any students who were missed in the portfolio process.

Data from the portfolio process will also be explored to see if any pieces of the process should be incorporated into the TAG identification process moving forward.

II. Delivery of TAG services in Virtual and Hybrid Learning in 2020 - 2021

The delivery of TAG services in virtual and hybrid learning environments through 2020 - 2021 took a range of forms depending on the schools, grade levels, and subjects. It is worth noting that the diverse formats and uneven reception of TAG services during virtual/hybrid learning was not significantly different from the diversity and unevenness of TAG services during full-time in-person learning.

GIA and K-3

Based on informal reports from parents, teachers, and students, the delivery of services to GIA students, especially in elementary grades and especially in grades K-3, was most uneven. In some schools GIA students seemed to receive only minimal differentiation while teachers adapted to the demands of a virtual classroom; in other schools, the virtual environment allowed GIA students to pursue complex, sustained projects one-on-one or in small groups with teachers other than the homeroom teacher. Schools that were able to use resource or encore teachers to assist homeroom teachers with the teaching of core subjects were best able to differentiate for students of multiple ability levels and learning differences.

Subject-based (4th - 8th)

In 4th and 5th grades, the TAG language arts and math classes were taught virtually as “pull-out” classes much as they are taught in person. TAG-level middle school courses and AP/advanced courses in high school were also taught virtually as self-contained cohorts as they are taught during in-person instruction.

Social / Emotional Needs of TAG students

Virtual and hybrid learning created both challenges and opportunities for the delivery of social/emotional services to TAG students during 2020 - 2021. Without face-to-face instruction or casual opportunities to observe students in face-to-face interactions, teachers and counseling staff had to find other ways to do preliminary identification of social and emotional issues. When concerns were identified, students’ “screen fatigue” or household situations sometimes obstructed counseling staff attempts to meet with students individually or in groups outside of instructional time.

On the other hand, a critical opportunity created within the Virtual+ Learning plan was the delivery of Social-Emotional-Academic Learning (SEAL) lessons on daily basis for all students, with an emphasis on building relationships.

III. Young Scholars program in 2020 - 2021

Through the TAG Virtual Identification Plan and the GIA/ YS Curriculum, the office of Gifted and Advanced Academics continued to service Young Scholars (YS) students within our Virtual+ and Phased Re-entry Plans.

Identification

The YS Virtual Identification Plan retains the most important aspects of our original identification plan while also incorporating some of the portfolio features of the TAG Virtual Identification Plan. The most equitable features of the Young Scholars process remain the same, including the 3 A's (Access, Affirmation, and Advocates), portfolio considerations, and holistic evaluation. GIA teachers, YS teachers, and YS contact leads were heavily involved in the YS identification process at their schools.

The GIA/YS Curriculum

During virtual and hybrid instruction, the Young Scholars model has continued with its implementation of the curriculum. Young Scholar students received enrichment via differentiated instruction by their classroom teacher. Teachers could access the GIA/YS curriculum resource options housed in Canvas, supporting differentiation within a hybrid learning framework. Students also had access to gifted resources to explore independent study, passion projects, and problem/project-based learning projects. The flipped classroom model was another way that students could access rigorous learning opportunities that nurture academic potential. Throughout virtual and hybrid learning, the continuation of the YS model has provided students with more personalized opportunities to learn. It has helped them develop their self-regulation, deductive reasoning, and time-management skills.