

Date: June 2019
For ACTION ___
For INFORMATION X
Board Agenda: Yes X
No ___

FROM: K. Nicholas Miller, Chair, Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee
(TAGAC)

THROUGH: Gregory Hutchings, Jr., Ed.D, Superintendent of Schools
Terri Mozingo, Ed.D., Chief Academic Officer
Frances Donna Brearley, Talented and Gifted Coordinator

TO: The Honorable Cindy M. Anderson, Chairman, and
Members of the Alexandria City School Board

TOPIC: 2018-2019 Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee Annual Report

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Background:

The Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee (TAGAC) for ACPS is focused on assuring that the needs of all Talented and Gifted students are met in Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS).

The Scope of Work for the 2018-2019 school year had the TAGAC specifically focused on what we felt were the key areas of Communications, Delivery of Services at the Elementary and Middle School levels as well as some system wide issues in identification of TAG students at all levels and in all identification areas. Additionally the TAGAC was keenly interested in the TAG Local Plan for the Gifted due to the Virginia Department of Education in the spring of 2019 and the implementation of findings from the 2016 Audit.

Summary of Activities:

This represents a high level overview of our activities for the 2018-2019 School Year. Per the ACPS subcommittee operating guidelines the TAGAC has approved minutes for all of our meetings in the ACPS archives.

The school year and the TAGAC year started strong in September with a sizable number of the ACPS school board candidates in attendance to learn more about TAG and the role of the TAGAC in ACPS. The TAGAC also reviewed the Scope of Work for the 2018-2019 TAGAC year and heard a report from the TAG Coordinator, Donna Brearley on ACPS efforts to survey other comparable Talented and Gifted programs around Virginia.

October continued the ACPS school board candidates participation in the TAGAC along with a presentation by Mr. Jessie Mazur, George Washington Middle School Principal, on his vision for how to provide services to TAG students via a clustering model at the middle school level.

In November, the TAGAC hosted Dr Hutchings and listened to his views on TAG and had a live Q&A session with the committee and members of the public who were present.

The December meeting was attended by the Office of Accountability who presented the annual metrics that the TAGAC requested to build a baseline data set for tracking TAG effectiveness/availability in ACPS.

In January due to teacher changes at Polk elementary the discussion was dominated by the public comment session on the mid-year implementation of an in-class differentiation for TAG students and how it was failing to address the needs of TAG students. This interaction prompted the TAGAC to vote to issue a position paper on the subject.

The February meeting was focused on writing a position paper in opposition to a proposal written by the elementary school principals that promoted removing the TAG different and gifted specific service model for English/Language Arts to a universal curriculum delivered thru a push in model. Additionally, a paper on the inadequacies of the middle school curriculum was also under development.

In March, ACPS had the honor of hosting Dr. Richard Cash who was selected to provide differentiation training to ACPS elementary school staff with a focus on TAG. Dr Cash also spoke at a public forum which was widely attended with over 75 parents signing in. When the next TAGAC meeting was held, we had an all time high attendance of ~45 non-committee people attending. Further development of the Elementary and Middle School position papers was conducted with this larger audience.

April saw the finalization of the position papers as well as preparation for Dr Hutchings TAG Chat at T.C. Williams. There were initial discussion on the TAG focus for 2019-2020.

The May meeting was spent discussing the TAG Chat from T.C. Williams as well as discussing TAG goals for 2019-2020.

Position Papers/Major Works:

The TAGAC was involved in writing the 2019 revision to the TAG Master Plan

The TAGAC approved and sent to the board the following position papers:

TAGAC Elementary School Response to Proposed Local Plan

TAGAC Middle School Response to Proposed Local Plan

Recommendations:

Based on the TAGAC Scope of Work, over 20 hours of TAGAC meetings and 2 public forum sessions dedicated to TAG and countless hours by TAGAC and community members conducting research on their own time the TAGAC has the following recommendations for ACPS in relation to the Talented and Gifted services:

1. Execute on the recommendation from the TAG Evaluation Report, “Design and develop a General Intellectual Aptitude (GIA) program around advanced content at K-3 level, consistent with the 4-5 curriculum structure and delivered to clusters of students in the classroom.”
2. Execute on the recommendation from the TAG Evaluation Report, “Revamp the middle school TAG Program so that it includes opportunities for an accelerated ELA, science, and social studies program beyond honors which currently fails to provide differentiated curriculum or instruction. Develop an interdisciplinary option in the humanities and STEM areas for students who have aptitudes and interests in the underlying areas of learning.”
3. Commit to continuing an exemplar from the TAG Evaluation Report by maintaining the current delivery method of gifted specific curriculum/self-contained services for 4th and 5th grade TAG ELA.

4. Complete roll-out of the Young Scholars program to all ACPS elementary schools Move the Young Scholars program fully under the ACPS TAG program so that Young Scholars can be considered for TAG grouping in class structures.
5. Improve training for general education teachers in the areas of identifying and working with TAG and Young Scholars. Increase training in differentiating classroom instruction for all students.
6. Implement a universal test/screening in the 5th grade in the areas of Math, Language Arts, Science and Social Studies to solidify identification for TAG students as they graduate to Middle School.
7. Address a gap in TAG services by implementing push in ACPS Counseling to address the unique needs of TAG students from a social and emotional perspective, paying specific attention to twice exceptional students, as well as provide academic advising.
8. Devise a rigorous assessment plan to measure the effectiveness of gifted instruction. The current model of “provide” does not address if the gifted services are being delivered and if so are services truly meeting the needs of students both academically and socially. This should be distinctly separate from test score monitoring.

Impact:

With the delay of the TAG Master Plan we feel the need to make robust recommendations that are specific and executable with a long term vision that will improve the delivery and quality of TAG services in ACPS.

We recognize that these are not no cost recommendations however we still feel they are the necessary drivers to tackle the tough areas of identification, equity and social issues that all students experience, and talented and gifted students experience in a unique manner.

These recommendations address overall program quality issues in the areas of curriculum, service delivery and accountability. These recommendations identify places our curriculum needs to evolve, specifies needed teacher incorporates needed counseling support , and stresses the need to create a baseline from which success can be qualitatively measured.

Attachments:

None – All referenced documents can be found in the ACPS public archives.

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