

Date: September 24, 2013

For ACTION

For INFORMATION

Board Agenda: Yes
No

FROM: Ramee Gentry, Chair, Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee (TAGAC)

THROUGH: GwenCarol Holmes, Ed.D., Chief Academic Officer
Frances Donna Brearley, Talented and Gifted Coordinator

THROUGH: Margaret May Walsh, Ed.D., Acting Superintendent of Schools

TO: The Honorable Karen Graf, Chairman, and Members of the Alexandria
City School Board

TOPIC: 2013-2014 Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee Scope of Work

BACKGROUND:

The Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee (TAGAC) has discussed a number of potential items for its scope of work for the 2013-14 academic year. This memo describes some of the items the committee may consider.

In addition to the items below, we expect to follow up on the recommendations in our 2012-13 annual report.

Further monitoring of the TAG program

Our annual report for 2012-13 (our Report) describes the TAGAC's efforts to provide the board quantitative information about the achievement of TAG-identified students, the identification process, and other aspects of the program. We plan to continue this work and expand it as data becomes available. In particular, we hope that data analysis can help indicate if ACPS efforts at identification of underrepresented groups have resulted in any change in TAG identification.

Professional Development

TAGAC intends to meet with teachers and get feedback on TAG teacher training, so that we can report to the Board on the current and planned professional development of ACPS staff for TAG endorsement.

Communication

TAGAC will work with ACPS to develop improved communications to ACPS families regarding TAG identification, appeals, and delivery of services. This will include not only the development of new brochures and website information, but also engaging with each school's TAG designee and TAG educators on best practices for timely communication between ACPS and families.

Delivery of Services

1. We recommended in our Report and an earlier memo that the Board staff TAG services in a formulaic manner, similar to the approach ACPS uses for ELL and special education students. If it would be helpful to the board, we could consider specific formulas and make recommendations.

Elementary School

2. We see a wide variation in the delivery of TAG services in elementary schools, and we have some concerns that the learning needs of TAG students are not consistently met across all schools, grades, and academic subjects. We plan to gather more information about the experience of TAG-identified elementary school students and recommend measures to strengthen the delivery of services.

Middle School

3. As we said in our Report, we remain concerned about whether middle schools effectively serve TAG students. We intend to take up the issue of TAG service delivery in middle school more fully in our scope of work for next year. For example, this could include how best to challenge TAG-identified students in Algebra 1, which currently has no honors curriculum.

High School

4. We understand your reluctance to undertake a broad approval of AP classes in 9th grade. However, we do believe that carefully screened, well prepared, highly motivated 9th grade students would benefit from and succeed with that challenge. Indeed, the current TAG Local Plan recognizes the need for TAG-identified students to receive accelerated and enriched learning opportunities, and the research supports this. We plan to consider specific recommendations to you about how to ensure that students who would be successful in AP classes in 9th grade can access them, including through in-person classes and online.
5. We remain supportive of ACPS participation in Thomas Jefferson High School. We look forward to working with the Board on this option. TAGAC will assist the Board by spending the year gathering information on all aspects of admission and participation and submit regular informational reports to the Board throughout the year.

IMPACT:

Our goals include evaluating the delivery of the TAG Local Plan and recommending improvements to better meet the needs of high ability learners.

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