

Date: September 13, 2018
For ACTION X
For INFORMATION
Board Agenda: Yes X
No

FROM: Gregory L. Murphy, Chair, Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee (TAGAC)

THROUGH: Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr., Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools
Terri Mozingo, Ed.D., Chief Academic Officer
Gerald Mann, Ed.D., Executive Director of Secondary Education
Frances Donna Brearley, Talented and Gifted Coordinator

TO: The Honorable Ramee A. Gentry, Chair, and Members of the
Alexandria City School Board

TOPIC: 2017-2018 Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee Annual Report

Background:

The Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee (TAGAC) intensified its focus beyond the metrics used to measure the success of Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) Talented and Gifted (TAG) programs by critically studying the status of TAG at the Elementary, Middle and High School levels during the 2017-18 school year, reviewing and assessing: (i) the efficacy of the identification of TAG capable students and the effectiveness of the academic rigors in the differentiation of the teaching of the curriculum offered; (ii) analyzing the Local Plan; (iii) examining delivery of services at each tier level; (iv) improving communication of what TAG offers within the student and parent communities; (v) qualifying teachers for providing students an effective TAG education; and (vi) creating a Manual for TAGAC that currently and historically informs as to the identification of pending issues of concern and establishment of goals for improvement going forward.

- Timeline:
Attached are the Minutes of each month's meetings which include a brief synopsis summarizing what was achieved at each meeting. See *Appendix A*, with notations to relevant materials that are available on ACPS's website.

Summary of Activities:

Scope of Work:

TAGAC began the year by re-assessing its *Scope of Work* to align its efforts with its priorities, identifying key activities which it could undertake to fulfill its mission. Accordingly, it embarked upon an intensive review of TAG throughout each school level by meeting with TAG teachers, counselors, principals, TAG coordinators, students, academic officers, and others within ACPS. The general aspects of these initiatives were as follows:

- TAG Local Plan review:
TAGAC reviewed the *SY 2011-2017 Local Plan for the Gifted* and, through its Chair, participated as the community's largest stakeholder with ACPS's Steering Committee for making revisions to it. The work during this past year was embarked upon with the *Local Plan* in mind and for proposing revisions. This effort is continuing and TAGAC will provide what it has gained from its own investigative efforts to the work of the Steering Committee to make sure that the recommendations of TAGAC are considered and consistent with the results of the review of ACPS TAG.
- Identification of TAG Students:
TAGAC remained stout in its belief that ACPS needs to address the discrepancies and necessary additional efforts needed in the identification efforts of qualified TAG students. TAGAC continued its thorough review of existing test data, with an eye towards language bias; and the identification of students specifically in Science and Social Studies at the Elementary School level. Importantly, TAGAC stressed implementation of improved communication to the students and their parents, as well as teachers of underrepresented groups in order to provide them training and the tools to enhance TAG students' experience. These efforts and the results are more exhaustively explained in the Sub-Committee Reports undertaken this year and presented re-viewing below.
- Communication:
As has been reported repeatedly, overall communication to parents and students about the TAG program has improved, however TAGAC members still have significant concern over continuing gaps in communication at all levels of the TAG program. TAGAC applauds ACPS on the implementation of the Differentiated Education Plans (DEPs), when used, it helped to define specific expectations for TAG students at all levels. TAGAC continues to work with ACPS in its ongoing efforts to enhance communications to ACPS families by reviewing current outreach efforts and considering either adding additional outreach events, or refining current communication practices, regarding TAG identification, appeals process, delivery of services and additional opportunities for TAG students. Specific recommendations are provided in the attached Sub-Committee Reports.
- Delivery of Services:
TAGAC formed five Sub-Committees in the 2017-2018 year to conduct its own assessment of TAG programs in order to provide, in a systematic manner, for an ongoing review process across all areas in ACPS, with the aforementioned Sub-Committee Reports providing an initial base-line against which expectations and progress for the TAG programs can be measured and for monitoring the meeting of the *Local Plan* objectives. While we have recognized and applauded in the past many aspects of the TAG programs and its implementation, we believe that several areas warrant further, and some immediate, attention.

Specifically, historically the Honors program at the Middle School Level has been fundamentally flawed due to a lack of rigor in identifying students for placement into Honors' classes and for the failure to remove students who consistently failed to perform at an Honors' pace. Moreover, the ability and effort of some of the teachers simply were not at the standards expected for teaching TAG students and the curriculum designed. We therefore undertook a comprehensive review of the Middle School Honors' program, as-

sessing academic rigor and the ability of teachers' performance in accomplishing TAG objectives. We also recommended enhanced opportunities for additional electives, such as STEM based activities, and for a focus on extracurricular activities to provide an increase in opportunities for students.

Additionally, TAGAC recognizes (and as is supported in the *Evaluation Report*) a lack of services and consistency in programming delivered for K-3. TAGAC as reported by parents and supported in the *Evaluation Report* parents, along with the support of the ACPS Staff and the School Board, successfully secured a position for K-3 Coordinator, with the objective of disseminating a K-3 curriculum for TAG students and to provide a consistent program across all Elementary Schools, as well as a boost communication with teachers, staff, parents, and the community.

A complete analysis of TAG at all school levels is found in the attached Sub-Committee Reports. See Appendices B, C, D, E, and F.

Recommendations:

TAGAC very much appreciates the cooperation across ACPS to provide input to our Committee, to update us on their evaluations of the TAG programs and to inform us of the efforts being made internally to enhance and improve them. Further collaboration and continuing refinement, however, is necessary to implement the recommendations found in the Sub-Committee Reports. Most critical is accepting the evaluation from the *EVALUATION STUDY REPORT TALENTED AND GIFTED (TAG) PROGRAM ALEXANDRIA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS* requested by ACPS and implementing the recommendations of that report into the five year *Local Plan*, or for an even longer period of time, to ensure that it is consistent with the external audit and TAGAC's internal assessments. Moreover, prior to instituting any change or final decision-making as to the implementation of the presently suggested clustering for Middle Schools, there should be multiple alternatives explored for overhauling the Middle Schools' failing with regard to its TAG programs. Likewise, TAGAC strongly rejects the Elementary School option to provide 4th/5th grade Language Arts as a push-in service. In the *Evaluation Report*, consultants identified that the current pull-out for the 4th/5th grade Language Arts program was a standout for delivering excellent services to gifted students. TAGAC implores ACPS to fix the broken parts of TAG services first and leave the services that are lauded by parents, teachers, and external consultants to continue their successes. Disruption of successful programs, especially with the current level of community exposure, will seriously erode trust between ACPS and parents and the community.

Impact:

TAGAC's goals include continuing participation with the Steering Committee's revisions to the TAG *Local Plan*, informing it of the results of TAGAC's efforts this past year analyzing the effectiveness and needs for further improvement across all levels of TAG, and providing the recommendations herein, as set forth in the attached Sub-Committee Reports, to ensure that they are considered and addressed in the *Local Plan*. These continue to include: (i) improving communications and transparency by ACPS with TAGAC in order to ensure informed community-wide involvement with regard to policy changes; (ii) strengthening identification of TAG qualified and under-represented student groups; (iii) require accountability for delivery of services; and (iv) improvements in the rigor of the TAG curriculum and the effectiveness of the teaching and man-

agement of class offerings. Moreover, it is essential that no decisions at any level be made in isolation and that any recommendations build on and not destroy the current successes of the program.

Submitted by: Gregory L. Murphy, Chair, TAGAC SY-2017-2018

Contact: Frances Donna Brearley, TAG Coordinator (703-619-8093)

Attachments:

Appendix A	Minutes of TAGAC Meetings.....page 5
Appendix B	Grades K-3 Report.....page 26
Appendix C	Grades 4-5 Report.....page ??
Appendix D	Middle School Report.....page 36
Appendix E	High School Report.....page 41
Appendix F	Communications Report.....page 44

Alexandria City Public Schools
Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee
September 2017 Minutes

Meeting: September 18, 2017, @ Minnie Howard

TAGAC Members Present: Donna Brearley, Stacy Anderson, Stacy Palmer, Emily Garrahan, Julia Egy, Stephen Lally, Nicholas Miller, Cailin Dore, Leigh Dugan, Laura Rose, Ana Humphrey, Hal Cardwell and Gregg Murphy

Old Business:

Approved June 2017 Minutes and Amended Minutes for January 23, 2017

Approved Recommendations for new Members: Leigh Dugan, Emily Garrahan and Ana Humphrey

Approved Nominating Committee's recommendations for Officers for 2017-2018: Gregg Murphy, Chair; Stephen Lally, Vice-Chair; and Cailin Dore, Secretary

Reviewed, amended and approved draft of 2016-2017 TAGAC Annual Report for submission to Staff for comments

General discussion of formatting for the Subcommittees' Final Reports for inclusion in TAGAC Manual being prepared to provide a compendium of current and historical information as to TAGAC's initiatives, including goals and results in meeting those objectives on an annual basis

Approved meeting schedule and venues for 2017-2018 as follows:

- October 16-----John Adams
- November 13-----George Mason
- December 18-----TCW Rotunda
- January 22-----Polk
- February 26-----GW
- March 19-----Tucker
- April 16-----MacArthur
- May 21-----Charles Barrett
- June 18-----MVCS

Request was made for everyone to present a *curriculum vitae* for inclusion in the Manual.

New Business:

A general discussion ensued regarding the recommendations set forth in the proposed Annual Report and setting goals and objectives for the present year. There was a revisiting of the points previously raised at the prior June meeting so as to inform the new TAGAC members of where the Committee was in its review and assessment of the status of TAG at all levels of ACPS and where concerns had been identified. These included the following:

- (i) creating a transition packet of information for dissemination to rising 9th graders and their families describing TAG opportunities available at the High School Level;
- (ii) emailing a notice in the Fall to all TAG parents as to the application process for Governor's School;
- (iii) advertising and extending in ACPS's electronic newsletter, the ACPS EXPRESS, an invitation to parents to attend any of TAGAC's meetings; and
- (iv) advising the elementary schools of TAGAC members availability to attend their TAG Information Night programs in order to answer any questions a parent may have, and providing TAGAC the schedule for those meetings in the event a Committee Member desired to attend any for informational gathering purposes.

The Committee also renewed its consideration of the development of a list-serve for advising students and parents of TAG opportunities, while asking ACPS if it has available an outside platform for supporting the list-serve.

This refresher of past emphasis was followed by a robust discussion on: (a) how to improve TAG curriculum and its processes for identifying those qualified in its various academic subjects, but in particular in sciences and social studies; (b) delivery of TAG services, especially in Middle School; and (c) facilitating communication to and amongst students and their families as to TAG programs and other important information electronically through a centralized system that reaches as many people as possible.

Chair Report:

At the next meeting the year's goals and objectives would be set. Additionally, Subcommittee assignments would be made and so everyone was invited to express their preferences.

Annual Report Summary

A review was conducted of the past year's issues and the recommendations for the 2016-2017 Annual Report for submission to the Staff for comment. Highlighted was the need to establish better processes for TAG identification and improving the curriculum, especially in sciences and social studies, as well as delivery of all TAG related subjects in the transition through Middle School to the AP Courses in High School.

Alexandria City Public Schools
Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee
November 2017 Minutes

Meeting: November 13, 2017, @ George Mason Elementary School

TAGAC Members Present: Stacie Anderson, Donna Brearley, Hal Cardwell, Erica Berson, Cailin Dore, Leigh Dugan, Emily Garrahan, Marie Huddle, Ana Humphrey, Mark Lacy, Nicholas Miller, Gregg Murphy, and Laura Rose.

Old Business:

Approved October 2017 Minutes.

Additional request made for everyone to present a *curriculum vita* for inclusion in the Manual and submit sub-committee assignment preferences. Sub-committee options include: K-3, 4-5, Middle School, High School, Communication, and Ad-Hoc Assignments.

New Business:

The Committee discussed at length the reactions and feedback from parents at recent meetings held by ACPS to present the findings of the TAG Evaluation Report. This feedback will continue to inform the Committee's recommendations.

The Committee outlined a meeting schedule for the upcoming months:

- *December Meeting:* The committee will invite Dr. Crawford and Dr. Jackson to learn more about counseling and student services available for TAG students during the first half of the meeting. During the second half of the meeting, the Committee will finalize a few key priority areas to focus on for the coming year based on the findings from the TAG Evaluation Report.
- *January Meeting:* The Committee will invite principals from the middle schools and T.C. Williams High School, along with a subset of teachers to come together to discuss goals and priorities as they relate to Talented and Gifted education and curriculum.
- *February Meeting:* The committee will invite the principals from the elementary schools to have a similar discussion.
- *March Meeting:* The committee will invite Dr. Brown to share upcoming changes to curriculum standards in Science, ELA, and Social Studies in the Elementary Schools.

At the next meeting, each Committee member is asked to prepare three issues from the recent TAG Evaluation Report for discussion with the Elementary, Middle, and High School principals at future meetings.

Chair Report: With the evolving interest by the Committee in having more direct contact and input from those on staff who are most affected by and knowledgeable of the TAGAC issues confronting ACPS, the goals and objectives for the year will be more fluid to accomplish this.

Annual Report Summary:

As the Committee has better informed itself of the findings in the TAG Evaluation Report, consistent with what it learned from its own efforts in delving into the issues facing ACPS related to TAG curriculum and participation, it has refocused its goals for the year to have more direct interaction with those implementing the TAG objectives and who were therefore best prepared to discuss the success and failures confronting ACPS. Consequently, future meetings are to be scheduled to meet with School Counselors, Principals, TAG teachers and others who are better positioned to advise TAGAC as to the challenges faced in having effective TAG programs, participation and curriculum at all school levels. Additionally, TAGAC will seek to be better informed on upcoming changes to the TAG curriculum, especially in Science, ELA, and Social Studies in the Elementary Schools, along with Middle School's lack of TAG performance and effectiveness being a particular area of interest.

Alexandria City Public Schools
Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee
December 18, 2017 Minutes
T.C. Williams

TAGAC Members Present: Erica Berson, Donna Brearley, Cailin Dore, Leigh Dugan, Joan Harvarth, Ana Humphrey, Steve Lally, Nicholas Miller, Gregg Murphy, Laura Rose

Old Business:

- (i) Approved November 2017 Minutes.
- (ii) Subcommittee assignments will be reported to the Committee members by the next meeting.
- (iii) The Committee will be looking to create a uniform template and finalize the TAG Manual this year for future use.
- (iv) The ACPS Annual Report was approved by the School Board.

New Business:

- (i) In response to a request from the Central Office, going forward the Committee will standardize TAGAC Committee Power Point presentations.
- (ii) The Committee will determine by its next meeting its reporting of goals and objectives for the coming months.
- (iii) Donna Brearley provided information regarding the Governor's School program, which is also available on ACPS's website.
- (iv) The Committee continues to encourage TAG advocacy at monthly School Board meetings to help promote the findings of the TAG audit results.
- (v) Dr. Martha Jackson from the ACPS Counseling Department attended the December meeting and discussed at length the counseling services available for TAG students, emphasizing that:
 - a) the Department uses data to bring counseling standards up to the national level; and
 - b) 85% of the program is universal,
 - c) and 15% of the services are tailored to each specific student.

(v) Clint Page, the Chief Accountability Office, presented updated TAG identification and other data with the Committee.

Annual Report Summary:

The Committee began the process of seeking input from the counselors, principals and teachers as to the status and effectiveness of TAG within ACPS. Dr. Martha Jackson, the Director of ACPS's Counseling Department, initiated that undertaking by informing the Committee how it made use of universally available data in establishing 85% of its standards, augmented by tailoring the remainder of its services to the specific needs of the individual students.

Alexandria City Public Schools
Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee
January 22, 2018 Minutes

Meeting: January 22, 2018, @ Polk

TAGAC Members Present: Stacie Andersen, Vivian Awumg, Donna Brearley, Hal Cardwell, Cailin Dore, Leigh Dugan, Emily Garrahan, Joan Harvarth, Ana Humphrey, Mark Lacy, Stephen Lally, Jesse Mazur (Principal at George Washington Middle School), Dr. Terri Mozingo (Chief Academic Officer), Gregg Murphy, Stacy Palmer (TAG Coordinator at George Washington Middle School), Pierrette Peters (Principal at Hammond Middle School), Laura Rose, and Kennetra Wood (Lead Administrator for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment 9-12 at T.C. Williams High School).

Old Business:

Approved December 2017 Minutes.

New Business:

Dr. Mozingo, Mr. Mazur, Ms. Peters and Ms. Wood attended the January meeting and discussed at length the state of TAG curriculum and offerings at the Middle and High Schools, with following commentary offered:

**** The discussion began with an inquiry by a parent who attend as a guest expressing concern over the 6th grade at GW being taught the same material in language arts as the 4th grade at Lyles Crouch, adding concern for TAG students being bored when integrated in regular classes rather than being pulled out for differentiated instruction and also not knowing options for math curriculum in order to be best prepared for high school. In response, the guest was advised that TAGAC shared those concern and was reviewing the transitioning at school levels, attrition rates and the effectiveness of communications within ACPS. Additionally, Dr. Mozingo offered to investigate the matter to insure that the curriculum is differentiated.

**** The panel on Middle School TAG then addressed many issues and responded to inquiries from the Committee. In summary, it was reported that:

**about 90% of the Middle School Honors and Elementary TAG teachers have participated in at least 24 hours of TAG professional development;

**language arts is challenging and that the PLC structure is strong, with lesson plans exchanged to meet needs of all students;

**approximately 26% to 29% of the middle schoolers at GW are TAG identified and as such there may be an over-representation as the Lexile levels of the TAG clustered students range from 6th grade to 12th grade (at Hammond only 12% are identified and most are minority students, and therefore there needs to be better engagement with the Elementary School Principals to understand why more aren't tested and identified), with the earliest students can be tested is 4th grade; more training;

- ** localized advocacy and implementation of programs like Young Scholars and academic bootcamps should be considered;
- ** student surveys have been conducted to help inform students and their teachers of the student perspective of honors versus AP courses and thus, as a part of the curriculum audit and meeting with the students, one of the recommendations has been to infuse more writing in the honors courses in Middle School, including full essays with analytical writing rather than mere descriptive recitals;
- **removal of a non-performing TAG student is a laborious process that should take only weeks but it presently takes months and therefore few are ever removed;
- **6th grade screening has been enhanced and is identifying more TAG qualified students;
- **TAG students have been too invisible at times and should be pushed to the degree of their abilities;
- **more teachers need to be trained with DBQ's;
- **AVID and TAG strategies are similar and different models should be utilized in teaching;
- **continued professional development for teachers is necessary to achieve these goals;
- ** DEP process should be used as a point of extension and challenge;
- **communications are in multiple languages and should utilize several platforms such as robocalls and email to disseminate information;
- **there are seven standards for evaluation of teachers, including professionalism, instructional delivery, and classroom learning environment, but not SOL pass rate;
- **suggestions for improving TAG include multiple model classrooms across different content areas, rich feedback, more text-based writing, engagement of parents, and looking at what else exists instead of just having AP or DE classes;
- **providing students a voice in DEP and provide passion projects;
- **For the TAG student you need to “pop the top”. You need to give the student the voice.

The Committee continues to encourage TAG advocacy at monthly School Board meetings to help promote the findings of the TAG audit results.

Chair Report:

Sub-committee assignments were finalized as follows:

- Elementary K-3: Cailin Dore and Emily Wang Garrahan
- Elementary 4-5: Leigh Dugan and Joan Harvath
- Middle School 6-8: Julia Egy and Mark Lacy
- High School 9-12: Stephen Lally and Ana Humphrey

- Communications: Stacie Andersen and Laura Rose
- Ad Hoc Assignments: Nicholas Miller and Erica Berson

Sub-committees will provide a final report of their findings by April, with a draft for review by the March meeting so that the TAGAC's Annual Report can be preliminarily presented in March for Staff review and finalization at the April meeting; the content of reporting was provided and to be reviewed and commented on before the next meeting.

First draft of composition for a TAGAC Manual will be available for Committee review at a subsequent TAGAC Meeting for completion and future use by year's end.

Annual Report Summary:

The TAGAC continued with its review and assessment of the state of TAG within ACPS through an informative discussion with Middle School principals, TAG teachers and Coordinator, and ACPS's Chief Academic Officer and its Lead Administrator for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment. The comments and suggestions elicited can be found in the Minutes for this meeting.

Alexandria City Public Schools
Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee
February 2018 Minutes

Meeting: February 26, 2018, @ George Washington Middle School

TAGAC Members Present: Vivian Awumay, Erica Berson, Donna Brearley, Cailin Dore, Leigh Dugan, Julia Egy, Emily Garrahan, Pree Ann Johnson (Principal at Polk Elementary), Molly Kaiman (Lyles Crouch and George Washington parent), Mark Lacy, Stephen Lally, Gregg Murphy, Rene Paschal (Principal at Samuel Tucker Elementary), Lisa Piehota (Executive Director of Elementary Education), Laura Rose, and Dr. Patricia Zissios (Principal at Lyles-Crouch Traditional Academy).

Old Business:

Approved January 2018 Minutes.

Chair Report:

- A. **Scope of Work:** Our submission was presented for and received Committee approval.
- B. **Talented and Gifted Plan Revision Steering Committee:** Gregg attended the first *Talented and Gifted Plan Revision Steering Committee* meeting. The *Committee* is comprised of the following Members with the goal to create a revised **Local Plan for Gifted Education** which is representative of all stakeholders:

Department/Group	Name
Accountability	Tina Constantine
Admin-Elem	Rae Covey
Admin-Sec'dry	Jesse Mazur
TAGAC	Gregg Murphy
TAG Teacher	Cynthia Zimmerman
Counselor/TAG Designee	Brittany Hopkins
Psychologist	Ursula Rocha
English Learners	Michael Suppa
Specialized Instruction	Terri Werner
Curriculum	Julia Neuffer
Student Services/Equity	Marcia Jackson
FACE	Krishna Leyva

The following essential questions will guide the Committee's work:

- How does the **Local Plan for Gifted Education** support the needs of high achieving students and those with potential in ACPS?
- How does the **ACPS Talented and Gifted (TAG) Program** help to meet the needs of identified students?
- How does ACPS find and support underrepresented talented and gifted students across all cultures and socio-economic groups within the division?

While there are many exceptional programs offered for students to take advantage of, it is apparent that families, students, and even teachers and staff are not fully aware of these options. Consequently, the Committee Members will serve as the communication link between the Committee and the stakeholder groups that they represent to provide information, input and feedback to the process. This will include taking into account the recent evaluation conducted for the School Board. This will be an iterative process rolled out over the next three years.

C. Sub-Committee Reports: As a reminder, TAGAC Sub-Committees will provide a Report of their findings by April with an initial draft for review by the March meeting. Our **Annual Report** needs to be completed for Staff review before May 11th in order for it to be submitted for final approval at the School Board's June 7th meeting. The first draft of the TAGAC Manual will be available for Committee review at an upcoming TAGAC meeting.

New Business:

1. **Community Input:** Molly Kaiman, a member and parent from the community, returned to the February TAGAC meeting to inform that many other families share the same frustrations that she articulated during the January TAGAC meeting. In particular, some families have voiced opposition to the January deadline for TAG identification because it is too late in the year, while also expressing concern over the lack of rigor in the Middle School TAG curriculum. More specifically, she reported that 6th grade Honors Language Arts classes at GW included students who were not as prepared as some 4th graders and were therefore the curriculum was a repeat from prior years, raising the question as to who decides eligibility for open Honors. As a point in fact, DEP is no more than a couple of extra assignments, which is a disservice to TAG students. This was reported by parents to GW in 2016, but nothing has changed or improved. Gregg responded by advising that these issues have been identified by TAGAC and are shared concerns that need to be addressed, including whether the differentiated teaching method, without pull-outs of students, results in teaching to the lowest common denominator. Donna advised that curriculum changes must be included in the program of studies the previous Fall in order for the courses to be offered.
2. **TAG Budget:** Donna shared that our TAG advocacy has succeeded and the School Board moved forward with a budget that allows for a K-3 TAG coordinator to be appointed, utilizing existing resources, and expanding the **Young Scholars Program** to four additional schools (Ferdinand Day, John Adams, Ramsey, and MacArthur Elementary Schools).
3. **Elementary Schools' TAG Review:** Ms. Johnson, Mr. Paschal, Ms. Zissios, and Dr. Piehota attended the meeting and discussed at length the state of TAG curriculum and offerings at the Elementary Schools level, including the following topics {with a recitation of comments made in brackets]:

- TAG qualifications of teachers teaching TAG [most have completed, or do so shortly after hire, at least a four college level course sequence in order to teach]
- Update and status of early identification (GIA) and TAG identification in general [this has been effective in identifying more under-represented groups, and the differentiated services in effect have helped even at K-2]
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- Effectiveness of the TAG program at the Elementary School Level [Language Arts has been more robust, while Math is more difficult; late January identification also causes many students be missed]
- Consistency of GIA offerings across ACPS [while Kindergartens are already masters of differentiation, it should be done weekly for upper grades; additionally, there should be better differentiation instruction and gifted and differentiated teachers should be working together]
- Young Scholars Program [this program presently is at four Elementary Schools (Cora Kelley, Mt. Vernon, Patrick Henry & Polk) and is expanding to four more (Ferdinand Day, John Adams, Ramsey & MacArthur) this coming year and it should run year round; some schools cluster students thru pull-outs at least weekly to be taught by a gen-ed teacher as they usually do not have the resources from home or otherwise; to date 22 students have been identified for the program each year, with about 8 on average transitioning to TAG; the numbers inexplicably range disproportionately amongst the schools, with some being attributed to the socio-economic mix in the school due to location, and where some schools have trained their teachers better to recognize the characteristics for identifying TAG potential from all groups; others schools have monthly meetings to discuss cultural competency]
- Facilitating the transition of students from Elementary to Middle School [Middle School advocacy and understanding is not there for potential TAG students, and all are not necessarily challenged to their ability; while meetings are held with staff and teachers about the students transitioning, it isn't working; some of the Elementary Schools are more effective in this process than the others, having their students visit a 6th grade class, focusing on mastering the skills necessary for Middle School curriculum, holding small group teaching sessions for the rising students, and preparing students to transition from a broad perspective generalist style teaching to specialized curriculum]
- Availability of services for twice exceptional students[the advanced educational needs beyond Language Arts and Math, such as Sciences and Social Studies, are met through various methods, including a visiting flex Science teacher, encore teachers working with GIA special projects, group work during open periods in school or after thru PTA sponsorships]
- Whether TAG referral should be centralized, as opposed to processing at individual schools, due to the cumbersome paper bureaucracy associated with it{centralization would create continuity and make its equitable system-wide; request for a K-3 coordinator is in the budget; the individual schools know their students best, not a centralized faculty; teacher and testing result referrals are working the best, while parent referrals are causing an overload]
- Communication of TAG services offered [Back-to-School night offers an introduction to TAG, as does a TAG presentation in the **Local Plan**; more needed]

After the meeting, Dr. Piehota stated that she will take the following discussion points for immediate exploration:

- Transition for students from Elementary School to Middle School and how the schools can help with that transition
- Differentiation implementation at the K-3 level

ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY:

The meeting was devoted to a thorough discussion of the issues affecting TAG, beginning with Kindergarten and proceeding thru to the transition to Middle School. A panel of staff, principals and teachers associated with TAG identification, teaching, and curriculum development examined the issues that continue to plague ACPS, including but not limited to effective identification of those qualified and/or with TAG potential and providing the latter with the resources to succeed; diversification; challenging each student to his/her ability; effectiveness of differentiation in the classroom teaching versus pull-outs; establishing a uniform curriculum; and communicating TAG opportunities throughout the community. The above Minutes provide the detail to these undertakings.

Alexandria City Public Schools
Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee
March 2018 Minutes

Meeting: March 19, 2018, @ Tucker Elementary School

TAGAC Members Present: Stacie Andersen, Erica Berson, Donna Brearley, Cailin Dore, Leigh Dugan, Julia Egy, Emily Garrahan, Joan Harvath, Mark Lacy, Nicholas Miller, Dr. Mozingo, Gregg Murphy, and Laura Rose.

Old Business:

The Chair made a minor correction to the previously approved January 2018 Minutes. Gregg Murphy also offered a special congratulations for the record recognizing TAGAC Member Ana Humphrey for winning the Outstanding STEM Award from the Science Museum of Virginia, which noted her as being a STEM Phenom.

Committee approved February 2018 Minutes.

Mark Lacy suggested an addition to the Program Evaluation section of the *Scope of Work*. Committee approved the *Scope of Work* including the modification.

Laura Rose shared an update regarding TAG advocacy efforts. City Council is currently reviewing the budget and has started to hear from TAG advocates in support of both fully funding the Superintendent's proposed operating budget, as well as the School Board's additional funding request. It was suggested to reach out to Justin Wilson, and potentially City Council members, regarding possible attendance at future TAGAC meetings in order to have an open discussion of TAG within ACPS and its needs.

New Business:

Donna Brearley shared that the TAG Steering Committee for recommending revisions to the *Local Plan* has begun to meet and discuss the TAG program. There is a new report published by the Iowa Department of Education called *Identifying Gifted and Talented English Language Learners* that Donna also shared with the Steering Committee and recommended to any TAGAC Member who wished to become informed as to it. Donna and Cailin Dore also reported that the Regional Odyssey of the Mind tournament was held the previous weekend and that there were twenty-five ACPS teams competing. These included teams from Maury, George Washington and MacArthur, all of which won their divisions and will move on to the State finals in April.

The Committee continued its discussions and conclusions on the topics reviewed at the February and March meetings with the Middle/High School and Elementary panels. Due to the feedback from families, it was suggested that ACPS's Central Office provide brief updates to the ACPS community about efforts that are already underway to address concerns with TAG in the Middle Schools.

The Committee concluded by finalizing the format for the *Sub-Committee Reports* due by May. As a reminder, the substance for each Sub-Committee's eventual *Report* will be the subject of discussion and refinement as to its findings at the April TAGAC meeting.

Annual Report Summary:

The *Scope of Work* for the year was revised due to a re-direction by TAGAC in its efforts to better understand the evolution and efficacy of TAG programs within ACPS, looking particularly at articulating necessary recommendations and setting realistic goals and objectives for the future. TAG advocacy efforts continued to be monitored, as well as the successes within ACPS that spoke to the achievements of its students. Continuing efforts were embarked upon in order ensure that the School Board would be presented by year's end with a realistic appraisal of TAG within ACPS and given recommendations that would serve, benefit and enhance its programs to challenge its students to the fullest extent of their ability. Moreover, emphasis was also placed again on identification of those with TAG potential and toward providing them with the resources to succeed at a TAG academic level. Finally, renewed concern was raised over the ineffectiveness of communications as to the availability of what TAG offered to the community generally as it was noted that this continuing problem was yet to be resolved.

Alexandria City Public Schools
Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee
APRIL 2018 Minutes

Meeting: April 16, 2018, @ MacArthur Elementary School

TAGAC Members Present: Stacie Andersen, Erica Berson, Donna Brearley, Cailin Dore, Leigh Dugan, Julia Egy, Emily Garrahan, Joan Harvath, Mark Lacy, Stephen Lally, Gregg Murphy, Laura Rose, and Dr. Mozingo.

Old Business:

Committee approved March 19, 2018, Minutes.

Donna Brearley provided an update on the TAG Steering Committee for Regions to the Local Plan and on the Leadership Advisory Committee.

The *Scope of Work* for 2018-2019 was calendared for approval by the June 2018 meeting for 2018-2019.

A general discussion was then held for the analysis and content to be presented in the various Sub-Committee Reports on each school tier level and regarding communications within ACPS.

New Business:

It was suggested that invitations be given to Mayor Silberberg and Vice-Mayor Wilson to attend the May meeting for a dialogue with the Committee as to the status of TAG within ACSP and the recommendations seen as necessary by the Committee for consideration by the School, Board and City Council.

While most of the meeting's discussion pertained to what will be presented in the various Sub-Committee Reports due next month, there was a free-flowing exchange on issues that were generally important to the Committee members. These again included the critical problem facing ACPS with regard to transitioning TAG identified students from Elementary to Middle School and then the TAG program failing them. There was also a concern over instructional inconsistency and non-alignment of standards. Suggestions included enriching the Honors curriculum and implementing a more comprehensive writing program in the lower elementary grades. It was suggested that comparisons should be sought as to how the Virginia Beach school system dealt with TAG issues, as well as Fairfax County which has level 4 schools for TAG students where an entire school is set up as a magnet for them, while some other of its schools establish their own programs internally amongst regular classes. It was recommended that ACPS benchmark what other school systems do to validate what is working and then to replicate the "best practices" from those systems to achieve success.

Finally, attention was once again paid to the benefits of the Young Scholars program and to implement it systemwide as soon as possible. While the issues confronting each school tier level were drilled down on, those will be addressed in the forthcoming Sub-Committee Reports and so they will not be summarized here, although they were extensively discussed.

Annual Report Summary:

The Committee devoted its time to reviewing the results from its efforts during the past year in analyzing the metrics for identifying and measuring the success of those students participating in TAG and through entertaining a dialogue with Principals, TAG teachers and coordinators, school counselors and ACPS's Chief Academic Officer and others in order to finalize how it would present its work effort and recommendations in each school tier level Sub-Committee's Report and regarding the effectiveness of communication on TAG within ACPS.

Alexandria City Public Schools
Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee
May 2018 Minutes

Meeting: May 21, 2018, @ Charles Barrett Elementary School

TAGAC Members Present: Stacie Andersen, Donna Brearley, Cailin Dore, Leigh Dugan, Emily Garrahan, Ana Humphrey, Mark Lacy, Nicholas Miller, Dr. Mozingo, Gregg Murphy, and Laura Rose.

Additional Guests Present: David Andersen, JC Herz, and Jenny Ware. George Mason PTA was present via Facebook Live during the question and answer session with Mayor Silberberg and Vice Mayor Wilson.

Old Business:

Committee approved April 2018 Minutes.

The Committee is asking for nominations for 2018-19 leadership positions (Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary). They are to be submitted to the Chair, who will present them to the other members of the Executive Committee to then nominate a slate for the full Committee's consideration at the next meeting, along with any further nominations from the floor.

Gregg shared that he will draft a *Scope of Work* for discussion, with any changes, approval at the June meeting. In addition, he will also submit a draft of the *Annual Report* for discussion as well and final approval at the next meeting.

New Business:

Congratulations to Committee member Ana Humphrey who won "Best in Category" at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair.

Donna shared that the K-3 coordinator position will be funded internally and that some of the recommendations from the TAG audit will move forward internally without an additional funding request.

Both Mayor Allison Silberberg and Vice Mayor Justin Wilson attended the May meeting. The Committee shared what it has seen through its efforts this past year in analyzing the TAG programs across all levels of ACPS, including key strengths and challenges endemic to school systems generally and more localized issues at different grade levels. The Committee also endeavored to answer questions from both mayoral candidates about the TAG program and to inform them of needed improvements. The Committee invited both Mayor Silberberg and Vice Mayor Wilson to review the *Annual Report* once it is complete and available. During this period, the George Mason PTA observed the discussion via Facebook Live, along with several members of the community who attend the discussion.

Chair Report:

The Talented and Gifted Steering Committee, composed of representatives for all stakeholder groups within ACPS who have a vested interest in the TAG programs, has met on several occasions to grapple with revisions proposed for *SY 2019-2023 Local Plan for the Gifted*. Gregg reported that the issues percolating there are not unfamiliar to TAGAC and thus our concerns are being or will be addressed as the Steering Committee moves forward. However, he advised that it is important that we, as probably the most important stakeholder on the Steering Committee since we have the entire community as our concern, stay engaged and stress the initiatives we see as important to the Local Plan.

Annual Report Summary:

In continuing our primary initiative for the past year, TAGAC reached out to two important members of City Council, one being the Mayor and the other Vice Mayor (and where one would be the Mayor for the coming year), to have a dialogue as to the health and needs of TAG within ACPS in order to make sure that City Council was engaged in hearing what TAGAC has learned from its exhaustive efforts the past year analyzing the efficacy of its programs at every school level. The exchange was fruitful and hopefully will result in informing City Council of the important improvements that TAGAC sees as necessary to implement in the future to insure that every student is challenged to his or her ability.

It was also emphasized that TAGAC, as representative of the largest stakeholder speaking for the community, needs to maintain an instrumental participatory role in the Talented and Gifted Steering Committee's review of, and its making revisions to *SY 2019-2023 Local Plan for the Gifted*.

Administratively, TAGAC reevaluated its timeline for each year to include filing by June of each year the *Annual Report* and adopting a *Scope of Work* for the next year that follows on the recommendations of the *Annual Report*. Elections of new officers will also proceed at the June meeting to take over as of July 1 each year. The Executive Committee shall nominate a slate of officers at the June meeting, and nominations may be made from the floor.

Alexandria City Public Schools
Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee

June 2018 Minutes

Meeting: June 18, 2018, @ Mount Vernon Elementary School

TAGAC Members Present: Donna Brearley, Cailin Dore, Leigh Dugan, Julie Egy, Emily Garrahan, Joan Harvath, Ana Humphrey, Mark Lacy, Stephen Lally, Nicholas Miller, Gregg Murphy, and Laura Rose.

Additional Guests Present: Jacintha Green, candidate for School Board District A

Old Business:

Committee approved May 2018 Minutes.

Gregg will incorporate the Committee's suggested edits into the *Scope of Work* and *Annual Report* and, as such, they will stand as approved, subject only to submission to and input from Staff and revisions made subsequently by the Committee if deemed necessary before filing with the School Board.

New Business:

The Committee proposed and approved moving meetings from the third Monday of each month to the first Monday. The Committee will continue to hold meetings at a different school each month.

Donna shared that Tiana Dominick, the new K-3 coordinator for ACPS, will begin duties on July 1, 2018. She is currently the Title I Elementary Science Specialist in the Central Office.

Gregg advised that the TAG Steering Committee addressing revisions to ACPS's *Local Plan* was delaying its submission of comments for six months so that the Steering Committee can have a chance to discuss their suggestions with new Superintendent, Dr. Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr. He also informed the Committee of discussions being held at the Steering Committee meetings where there was a disparity of knowledge as to all aspects of TAG and varying opinions as to the recommendations under the *Local Plan*, some of which were in conflict with the audit study authorized and obtained by the School Board pertaining to the implementation of certain changes under consideration. Nevertheless, he reported that the Steering Committee was still in the incipient stages of making its recommendations and that there was still much opportunity to influence the outcome.

In accordance with what it was presently hearing, TAGAC members shared some concerns about the recent preliminary discussions by the Steering Committee to move away from pull-out services to push-in only for TAG ELA Services. The Elementary School principals are intending to visit area schools that use this delivery model prior to further discussion in the fall. The Committee approved the Chair forwarding a letter to the Steering Committee to voice concern about this new delivery model and ignoring the recommendations that were set forth in the consultant's external audit Report provided for the *Local Plan* and which were consistent with TAGAC's own internal assessment of TAG.

Additionally, George Washington Middle School is considering a school-wide clustering model to deliver TAG services. Principal Mazur is also looking to visit other schools that use this model.

The Committee nominated and confirmed the following leadership positions for the 2018-19 school year:

Chair: Nick Miller; Vice Chair: Laura Rose; and Secretary: Emily Garrahan

Chair Report:

Drafts of the 2017-2018 *Annual Report* and the *Scope of Work* for 2018-2019 were presented for comment. Subject to revisions suggested and approved, final drafts will be emailed to the Committee for a further assessment and then sent to Staff for comment so that they will be finalized and submitted to the School Board prior to its September 2018 meeting. The revised *Scope of Work* for 2018-2019 will set forth more specifically the suggestions of TAGAC as to what it perceives as necessary for the revisions to the *Local Plan*, as well as its goals and objectives for the coming year, including especially accountability for delivery of services and more effective communication with students and parents regarding TAG to achieve better community involvement and transparency throughout ACPS as to policy changes. Discussion of the appropriateness of the use of the words Talented and Gifted in defining its programs was deferred.

Annual Report Summary:

The final meeting for the 2017-2018 focused on creation and submission of TAGAC's *Annual Report* and crafting its *Scope of Work* for 2018-2019. Those approved drafts, which will be submitted to Staff for comment, are attached hereto as they are self-explanatory. In brief but without limitation, concern was expressed over departure from the "pull-out" in grades 4-5 to conform with Middle School "push-in," the latter of which has been a failure while the former a success. This raised further apprehension over the TAG Steering Committee considering making recommended revisions to the *Local Plan* that are not in conformance with the consultant's audit Report authorized by the School Board and which initiatives are also inconsistent with the findings of TAGAC's internal assessment arduously conducted over the past year.

TAG Advisory Committee

Primary (K-3) Elementary Sub-Committee Report

By: Cailin Dore and Emily Garrahan

A. Historical Summary of TAG for K-3

According to the *Evaluation Report on TAG Program* conducted in 2017 by Joyce VanTassel-Baska, Gail Hubbard, and Janice Robbins:

- Limited attention to TAG curriculum development, including a lack of scope and sequence K-12 within subject areas for TAG learners
- TAG program uneven, based upon level, program type, and location
- Limited use of differentiation practices
- A disproportionality of students from underrepresented groups receiving TAG services
- Need for improvement of Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) format, implementation, and monitoring at K-8
- Need for the development of the TAG program at K-3 and grades 6-8

B. Course Offerings and Curricula:

1. What are the curricula and teaching methods offered at each tier level for TAG students:

For K-3, the General Intellectual Aptitude (GIA) program was not originally designed for pull-out. Currently, each principal is able to decide what GIA looks like at their individual elementary school and that can vary year to year. The amount of “pull-out” time varied across elementary schools from twenty minutes a week to an hour a week. Currently, it is not the practice to automatically require “pull-out” time. Depending on the circumstance, “pull-out” services are not always better than “push-in” services because of potential social consequences. However, proper “push-in” services can require a great deal of resources.

While not all of the elementary schools have dedicated K-3 TAG teachers, the TAG teacher is supposed to coordinate with the classroom teacher to develop a DEP. The TAG department in the central office has additional resources and curricula that the teachers can use by contacting Donna Brearley with a request.

The recent TAG audit of ACPS did show that “materials [are] limited in differentiation and specificity for use with TAG learners”¹ and that there was a “need for improvement of DEP format, implementation, and monitoring at K-8.”² While the majority of differentiation at the K-3 level is supposed to happen with the classroom teacher in coordination with the TAG teacher, the audit also found “low frequency classroom use of differentiated curriculum and instruction.”³

¹ Slide 13, Evaluation Report on the TAG Program, Joyce VanTassel-Baska, Gail Hubbard, Janice Robbins

² Slide 13, Evaluation Report on the TAG Program, Joyce VanTassel-Baska, Gail Hubbard, Janice Robbins

³ Slide 13, Evaluation Report on the TAG Program, Joyce VanTassel-Baska, Gail Hubbard, Janice Robbins

“ACPS also provides additional curriculum resources for K-3 GIA students. These resources include *Jacob’s Ladder* (Prufrock Press) for grade 1, *Journeys and Destinations* (Kendall Hunt) for grades 2 and 3, and units from *Project Clarion*, (Prufrock Press) for kindergarten through grade 2 in science. Additional specific units and materials are also provided.”⁴ The reports states that “while the observation team did not observe these materials being used in the classroom nor, with one exception, in the TAG resource program, materials were available in each elementary school visited.”⁵

Based on the recommendations of the audit, the School Board recently requested funding in the budget for a K-3 TAG coordinator. The hope is that the K-3 TAG coordinator will help to standardize TAG offerings to K-3 students across all elementary schools.

2. How does ACPS, and each school in particular, approach identifying TAG qualified students:

Students can be identified for TAG at the K-3 level via a referral (from parents, teachers, and community members) or via screening tests. Currently, referrals must be submitted within the first ninety days of the school year and students can only be referred once every calendar year.

A September issue of the *Mason Messenger*⁶ shared that all 1st grade students take the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT) in the fall. Students that score over a certain threshold are automatically referred for GIA TAG. In the 3rd grade, students take the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) in the fall. Again, students that score over a certain threshold are automatically referred for GIA TAG. In 2017, ACPS switched from the NNAT2 to the NNAT3.

Anecdotally, we have also heard from several families across many different elementary schools that especially in Kindergarten, they are actively discouraged from referring their children for TAG. The children of the majority of the families that we talked to qualified for TAG through the Naglieri test in the first grade. We have also heard some challenges from families that have moved to the area and were previously identified as TAG in a different state. The designation does not seem to transfer once they enroll in ACPS. Finally, some staff and families shared frustration with the January referral deadline. While it seems to be a larger problem at the 4th and 5th grade level due to pacing, some children struggle to catch up with the mid-year switch to TAG services.

The number of TAG identified students per school over the past four school years is listed the in the table below.

⁴ Page 21, Evaluation Study Report TAG Program, Joyce VanTassel-Baska, Gail Hubbard, Janice Robbins

⁵ Page 21, Evaluation Study Report TAG Program, Joyce VanTassel-Baska, Gail Hubbard, Janice Robbins

⁶ Mason Messenger, News from George Mason Elementary School, September 18, 2017.

Number and Percentage of TAG Identified Students by School												
School Year	2013-2014			2014-2015			2015-2016			2016-2017		
School Name	# TAG Identified	# of Students	% TAG Enrolled	# TAG Identified	# of Students	% TAG Enrolled	# TAG Identified	# of Students	% TAG Enrolled	# TAG Identified	# of Students	% TAG Enrolled
John Adams	39	776	5%	86	864	10%	78	884	9%	83	911	9%
Charles Barrett	51	420	12%	58	438	13%	87	460	19%	67	472	14%
Patrick Henry	31	488	6%	35	505	7%	54	528	10%	59	582	10%
Jefferson-Houston	14	279	5%	29	381	8%	37	458	8%	43	530	8%
Cora Kelly	14	368	4%	13	351	4%	11	358	3%	13	408	3%
Lyles-Crouch	74	421	18%	60	387	16%	64	408	16%	79	431	18%
Douglas MacArthur	121	701	17%	115	708	16%	124	708	18%	118	699	17%
George Mason	106	507	21%	110	549	20%	108	544	20%	109	553	20%
Matthew Maury	81	429	19%	87	433	20%	110	438	25%	122	409	30%
Mount Vernon	101	765	13%	79	815	10%	78	854	9%	94	894	11%
James K. Polk	54	692	8%	76	732	10%	72	762	9%	78	796	10%
William Ramsay	27	831	3%	32	839	4%	32	874	4%	33	890	4%
Samuel Tucker	39	719	5%	50	728	7%	58	756	8%	56	755	7%
Elementary School	752	7396	10%	830	7730	11%	913	8032	11%	954	8330	11%
Francis C. Hammond	111	1399	8%	120	1449	8%	141	1434	10%	155	1451	11%
George Washington	257	1172	22%	304	1229	25%	386	1292	30%	427	1338	32%
Middle School	368	2571	14%	424	2678	16%	527	2726	19%	582	2789	21%
T.C. Williams	359	3233	11%	341	3393	10%	330	3545	9%	377	3800	10%
High School	359	3233	11%	341	3393	10%	330	3545	9%	377	3800	10%
Division Total (incl special situations)	1480	13298	11%	1597	13896	11%	1772	14392	12%	1913	14973	13%

3. What testing, resources, and programs are offered to aid in identification of potential TAG students?

“Students are referred to the TAG Program. Referrals may result from ability tests given to all students in grades 1 and 3, along with assessment data in K thru 5. Referrals may also be submitted by parents, teachers or community members during the first ninety (90) days of the school year.

Once referred, students must show evidence of superior performance in at least three of the qualifying categories, one of which MUST be an ability or achievement test (including):

- I. **Ability Test:** This is usually the Naglieri test (NNAT) and/or the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT). Each test score is reported as a national or local norm.
- II. **Achievement Test:** This may be an Imagine Math Benchmark and/or the Reading Inventory. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) may be administered when your child is being evaluated in Social Studies or Science. Each test score is reported as a national or local norm.
- III. **Standards-Based Performance:** In grades K-3, all progress report scores are averaged. For subject-specific ability referrals in 4th-5th grades, progress report scores in the subject being evaluated are averaged. In Kindergarten, teachers complete an observation form.

- IV. Characteristics/Behaviors/Gifted Rating Scale:** Classroom teachers complete a valid, well-designed and well-researched rating scale for observable student behaviors indicating giftedness. A student's raw score is compared to other children in that age group nationally to find a percentile. The percentiles are listed on the eligibility profile.
- V. Product Rating:** Students referred for TAG complete an advanced ACPS transfer task to demonstrate independent mastery of instruction they have received in class. Transfer tasks are an integral part of ACPS curriculum and graded by teachers using standards-based rubrics.⁷

Young Scholars

As reported by the audit, all ethnic minorities, with the exception of Asians, are underrepresented in the TAG program at ACPS. A 2017 study by the Department of Accountability provided data with lowering the cut-off for scores from the Naglieri and CogAT would identify additional students from underrepresented groups. However, it would also identify additional students from overrepresented groups.

ACPS has requested \$22,000 of funding in the budget to expand the Young Scholars program to four additional schools- Ferdinand Day, John Adams, William Ramsey, and Douglas MacArthur. The mission of the Young Scholars program is *to nurture gifted potential in students from historically underrepresented populations.*

“The Young Scholars program serves talented students who excel in creative and out-of-the-box thinking and are sometimes underrepresented in talented and gifted programs. Select students are invited to participate in the Young Scholars program based on specific observational activities done in the classroom at least once a year. During the school year, Young Scholars at Mount Vernon Community School, Cora Kelley School of Math, Science and Technology, Patrick Henry K-8 School and James K. Polk Elementary School participate in clustered activities in their regular classrooms that extend the concept of systems throughout the year. They might also work on special projects or other enrichment activities throughout the school year.”⁸

⁷ <https://www.acps.k12.va.us/domain/55>

⁸ <http://www.acpsk12.org/news/?p=6526>

School	2013-14				2014-15				2015-16				2016-17			
	Grade levels served	# Young Scholars	Total # students in grade levels served	% Young Scholars	Grade levels served	# Young Scholars	Total # students in grade levels served	% Young Scholars	Grade levels served	# Young Scholars	Total # students in grade levels served	% Young Scholars	Grade levels served	# Young Scholars	Total # students in grade levels served	% Young Scholars
Patrick Henry	2-4	33	239	14%	1-5	55	408	13%	1-5	67	439	15%	1-5	85	453	19%
James K. Polk	1	22	135	16%	1-2	44	260	17%	1-3	50	388	13%	1-4	63	501	13%
Mount Vernon	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	12	153	8%	2-4	21	435	5%	1-4	37	588	6%
Cora Kelly	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	K	21	59	36%	K-1	28	120	23%	K-2	64	223	29%
Division Total	1-4	55	374	15%	K-4	132	880	15%	K-5	166	1383	12%	K-5	247	1765	14%

“Grade levels served” describes the grade level(s) from which students are identified for services, which begin the following summer and include those students who were identified in previous years.

Subgroup	2013-14		2014-15		2015-16		2016-17			
	# YS	% YS	# YS	% YS	# YS	% YS	# YS	% YS		
American Indian/ Alaska Native	0	0%	0	0%	0	0	0	0%		
Asian	4	7%	8	6%	10	6%	14	6%		
Black	27	49%	68	52%	70	42%	89	36%		
Hispanic	14	25%	44	33%	72	43%	120	49%		
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%		
White	4	7%	12	9%	13	8%	15	6%		
Other	6	11%	0	0%	1	1%	9	4%		
Gender	Female		39	71%	74	56%	100	60%	129	52%
	Male		16	29%	58	44%	66	40%	118	48%

4. What are the demographic enrollment statistics for each school, including ethnicity and socio-economic backgrounds of the enrollees, if available, and how that compares to the general populations within the schools:
5. What is the performance measure for the students compared to national norms and local school systems?

With regard to the overall TAG program at all of ACPS, the TAG audit reported the following strengths:

“Area of strength for ACPS, based on this standards review, were in identification and professional development where research-based processes are in use. However, other

data sources suggest that these areas of program development are not necessarily producing desired outcomes for students.”⁹

It also reported the following areas that require attention:

“Areas in need of attention in the program are in assessment of student learning, the need for a systemic approach to guidance and counseling, more individual opportunities for learning based on need, and better alignment and articulation of advanced curriculum with appropriate group for instruction.”¹⁰

At the individual learner’s level, the accountability of differentiated instruction is left up to each individual principal. Differentiated Education Plans (DEPs) are often used as communication tools with families as well as for accountability and evaluation. In an informal survey of families with children in the K-3 TAG program at a mix of ACPS schools, many of the parents had not heard of a DEP and were unaware of the information it provided.

Additionally, the report found that “DEPs submitted for review do not provide the specificity needed to constitute learning plans for TAG learners at grades K-5. Rather they are general lists of types of strategies and activities that might be used. As goals and outcomes are rarely indicated with specific activities and assessment approaches connected to them, the DEP has limited effectiveness as a communication tool for representing a TAG program delivery option.”¹¹

6. What is the attrition rate of TAG enrolled students from one tier to the next level?

The following table shows the number of TAG students by graduating class year and the percent change. Noteworthy is the particularly large increase of TAG identified students between Kindergarten and 1st grade.

⁹ Page 126, Evaluation Study Report TAG Program, Joyce VanTassel-Baska, Gail Hubbard, Janice Robbins

¹⁰ Page 126, Evaluation Study Report TAG Program, Joyce VanTassel-Baska, Gail Hubbard, Janice Robbins

¹¹ Page 38, Evaluation Study Report TAG Program, Joyce VanTassel-Baska, Gail Hubbard, Janice Robbins

Number and Percentage of TAG Identified Students Over the Years by Cohort																								
Year	2013-2014						2014-2015					2015-2016					2016-2017							
High School Graduating Class	Grade	# TAG Identified	# of Students	% TAG Enrolled	% Change in Enrollment +/-	Growth in # of TAG Identified	Grade	# TAG Identified	# of Students	% TAG Enrolled	Growth in # of TAG Identified	% Change in Enrollment +/-	Grade	# TAG Identified	# of Students	% TAG Enrolled	Growth in # of TAG Identified	% Change in Enrollment +/-	Grade	# TAG Identified	# of Students	% TAG Enrolled	Growth in # of TAG Identified	% Change in Enrollment +/-
Class of 2029	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	KG	12	1477	1%	*	*
Class of 2028	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	KG	9	1433	1%	*	*	KG	9	1480	1%	*	*
Class of 2027	*	*	*	*	*	*	KG	9	1433	1%	*	*	1	92	1411	7%	922%	6%	2	116	1365	8%	26%	1%
Class of 2026	KG	16	1408	1%	*	*	1	63	1394	5%	294%	4%	2	87	1341	6%	38%	1%	3	151	1322	11%	74%	5%
Class of 2025	1	59	1473	4%	*	*	2	94	1409	7%	59%	3%	3	202	1369	15%	115%	8%	4	286	1344	21%	42%	6%
Class of 2024	2	87	1248	7%	*	*	3	133	1221	11%	53%	4%	4	252	1203	21%	89%	10%	5	267	1217	22%	6%	1%
Class of 2023	3	119	1158	10%	*	*	4	245	1142	21%	106%	11%	5	256	1098	23%	4%	2%	6	211	1032	20%	-18%	-3%
Class of 2022	4	242	1067	23%	*	*	5	281	1050	27%	16%	4%	6	232	965	24%	-17%	-3%	7	218	955	23%	-6%	-1%
Class of 2021	5	229	1007	23%	*	*	6	185	968	19%	-19%	-4%	7	173	970	18%	-6%	-1%	8	169	968	17%	-2%	-1%
Class of 2020	6	154	966	16%	*	*	7	148	938	16%	-4%	0%	8	139	954	15%	-6%	-1%	9	128	1190	11%	-8%	-4%
Class of 2019	7	106	883	12%	*	*	8	98	880	11%	-8%	-1%	9	86	1078	8%	-12%	-3%	10	82	992	8%	-5%	0%
Class of 2018	8	109	790	14%	*	*	9	94	1090	9%	-14%	-5%	10	92	1023	9%	-2%	0%	11	90	852	11%	-2%	2%
Class of 2017	9	88	975	9%	*	*	10	85	888	10%	-3%	1%	11	82	778	11%	-4%	1%	12	77	796	10%	-6%	-1%
Class of 2016	10	77	866	9%	*	*	11	70	745	9%	-9%	0%	12	70	722	10%	0%	1%	*	*	*	*	*	*
Class of 2015	11	90	744	12%	*	*	12	92	738	12%	2%	0%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Class of 2014	12	104	713	15%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

7. What criteria and procedures are in place for removing a student from TAG curricula when non-performing?

This question is not answered at the sub-committee level.

8. If not already addressed in the responses above to the above inquiry, summarize what was reported to us from the guests who were invited to speak to us this year, from principals to teachers to academic officers.
- a. Principals from Polk, Lyles Crouch, and Tucker Elementary schools, as well as the Executive Director of Elementary Education, attended the February 26, 2018 TAGAC meeting for a question and answer session. The following topics were discussed at the meeting:
 - i. TAG qualifications for teaching TAG: Most of the teachers have completed, or complete shortly after hire, at least a four year college level course sequence in order to teach.
 - ii. Update and status of early identification (GIA) and TAG identification in general: GIA has been effective in identifying more under-represented groups, though there are still are challenges with helping families understand and navigate the referral and screening process.
 - iii. Effectiveness of the TAG program at the elementary level: It is easier to have a robust and rich Language Arts TAG curriculum rather than Math.
 - iv. Consistency of GIA offerings across ACPS: The amount of differentiation and push-in/pull-out services are inconsistent across schools. Few schools have a dedicated TAG resource for just K-3.
 - v. Young Scholars: In addition to the proposed Young Scholars expansion, some schools have trained their teachers to better recognize characteristics for

identifying TAG potential across all groups. Other schools have monthly cultural competency discussions.

- vi. Facilitating the transition of students from elementary to middle school: The central office and leadership at the individual schools hope to look for ways to improve the transition from elementary to middle school.
 - vii. Services for twice exceptional students
 - viii. Whether the TAG referral process should be centralized or processed at individual schools: Some schools have trouble keeping up with the number of parent referrals for TAG. Some neighboring school systems centralize their TAG referrals, but each elementary school knows their own students best. Large area counties that experience large variation in demographics across their county benefit from centralizing their screening processes. Centralization can help these large counties keep criteria standardized.
 - ix. Communication of TAG services offered: Families would like more detailed and readily available communication around TAG services offered.
- b. At the December 18, 2018 TAGAC Meeting, Dr. Martha Jackson from the ACPS Counseling Department joined the group to discuss counseling services available to TAG students. Specifically, she shared that:
- i. The Department uses data to bring counseling standards up to the national level; and
 - ii. 85% of the program is universal,
 - iii. and 15% of the services are tailored to each specific student.

9. Report on systemic problems identified within ACPS that have hampered the development and implementation of an effective TAG program throughout our schools:

- a. TAG instruction is inconsistent at the K-3 and differs greatly across the elementary schools. Furthermore, some families feel they are actively discouraged from referring their children for TAG services particularly in primary grades.
- b. Many families feel that the TAG teachers at their schools are overstretched and would like more time for pull-out or push-in instruction. Few elementary schools have a dedicated K-3 TAG teacher. Some families report inconsistencies in regular pull out sessions.
- c. Many families feel that communication around TAG must be improved. They would like to see greater coordination between the TAG and classroom teacher, as well as status updates around TAG differentiation provided. Some families report either viewing a DEP that appears to not be specifically about their child or having never seen a DEP. Finally, families feel that they need easier access to information about TAG services available.
- d. According to the TAG audit, K-3 curriculum has been purchased, but there is no evidence of implementation.

- i. Regarding the purchased cross-curricular units from Prufrock Press, “Even when the unit was referenced specifically, the evaluation team did not observe instruction that addressed the conceptual framework of the unit.”¹²
 - ii. Regarding additional curriculum resources like *Jacob’s Ladder* (Prufrock Press) for grade 1, *Journeys and Destinations* (Kendall Hunt) for grades 2 and 3, and units from *Project Clarion*, (Prufrock Press) for kindergarten through grade 2 in science... “While the observation team did not observe these materials being used in the classroom nor, with one exception, in the TAG resource program, materials were available in each elementary school visited.”¹³
 - iii. Evidence of a clear scope and sequence of learning was not observed to be well articulated in K-3¹⁴
- e. The TAG program relies heavily on classroom teachers for majority of differentiation at the K-3 level.
 - i. “The issue of unevenness was especially evident in the lack of research-based grouping of identified gifted students at primary and middle school levels.”¹⁵
- f. “Instructional capacity of teachers to deliver a differentiated curriculum to TAG students was questioned by parents who had children in the K-3 GIA and grades 6-8 honors programs. The written curriculum also was viewed as deficient in respect to differentiated strategies and resources being identified for classroom use. Finally, classroom observation data corroborate these concerns in respect to limited use of differentiated instruction.”¹⁶

10. Based on what has been learned and comparing it to the Annual Report and other past studies, make recommendations for implementation and/or further study from what each sub-committee has determined.

- a. Hire a K-3 coordinator to improve consistency of TAG services across ACPS
- b. Provide better communication and processes for a smooth transition for TAG identified students new to a different school within ACPS or ACPS altogether
- c. Educate teachers on the availability of resources provided through Donna Brearley and her office
- d. Douglas MacArthur-specific recommendations:
 - i. “Some things that could make it easier to implement the TAG program would be:
 - 1. Differentiated curriculum that would embed SOLs and benchmark expectations
 - 2. Incorporation of a TAG curriculum that is directly aligned and embedded within the Gen Ed curriculum
 - 3. TAG teacher staff

¹² Pg. 13, Evaluation Study Report on the TAG Program, Joyce Van Tassel-Baska, Gail Hubbard, Janice Robbins

¹³ Pg. 13, Evaluation Study Report on the TAG Program, Joyce Van Tassel-Baska, Gail Hubbard, Janice Robbins

¹⁴ Pg. 114, Evaluation Study Report on the TAG Program, Joyce Van Tassel-Baska, Gail Hubbard, Janice Robbins

¹⁵ Pg. 112, Evaluation Study Report on the TAG Program, Joyce Van Tassel-Baska, Gail Hubbard, Janice Robbins

¹⁶ Slide 11, Evaluation Report on the TAG Program, Joyce VanTassel-Baska, Gail Hubbard, Janice Robbins

4. Direct instruction, coaching, and modeling within the classroom¹⁷
- ii. TAG Program's strengths and weaknesses
 1. Strengths: Our current TAG staff and push-in model that meets students' academic, social, and emotional needs
 2. Weaknesses: Current curriculum K-3 for GIA and lack of diversity within the 4th and 5th grade curriculum¹⁸
- e. George Mason-specific recommendations
 - i. Some things that could make it easier to implement the TAG program would be:
 1. Differentiated curriculum with set guidelines
 2. TAG teacher staff
 3. Resource support to help with identification demands
 4. Changing the deadline for TAG applications – e.g. a child identified for Math who comes in mid-year will struggle because they are way behind
 - ii. TAG Program's strengths and weaknesses
 1. Strengths: 4th and 5th grade curriculum and classes
 2. Weaknesses: Over-identification, parents misunderstanding TAG, lack of diversity

¹⁷ 3/16/18 email from Ms. Brittany Hopkins and Ms. Rae Covey

¹⁸ 3/16/18 email from Ms. Brittany Hopkins and Ms. Rae Covey

**Middle School Sub-Committee Report
April 24, 2018**

A. Historical Summary of TAG at 6-8:

2012: Honors program with clustering of TAG-identified students; new TAG local plan (SY12-17)
 2013: TAG Counselors at each school
 2014: Pull out Math for grade 6-8
 2015-17: Additional Teacher TAG certifications

B. Course offerings and curricula:

At the middle school level, Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) clusters TAG-identified students within open-enrollment (all students may opt-in) honors classes in the 4 core subjects of math, language arts, science, and social studies. While the cluster guideline is set at 5-7 TAG-identified students per cluster, there can be as few as 2-3 in a science or social studies class and as many as 15 in language arts. ACPS does not offer any TAG-only honors sections in middle school, with the exception of 6th grade math. There, TAG-identified students have the option to enroll in a 7th grade math course comprised of only 6th graders.

Within the honors classes, TAG-identified students receive a Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) focused on in-class enrichment activities. This concept was introduced 3 years ago to give honors teachers a structured approach to their TAG clusters; and the DEPS are intended to serve as unique, advanced work in parallel to other classroom work. However, the DEPs are not limited to TAG students. All honors classes/students have access to them. Moreover, the DEPs are not necessarily designed to help meet the specific needs of TAG students.

C. Statistical analysis of enrollment and diversity within student population:

(i) Student identification methods:

Parents, teachers, and students may apply for TAG-related services at the middle school level.

(ii) Census in TAG vs. ACPS population

TAG-identified students constitute 33% and 46% of the overall of honor-class population at FCH and GW, respectively.¹

Grade	2016-2017		
	# TAG Identified	# of Students Enrolled	% TAG
KG	12	1477	1%
1	106	1463	7%
2	116	1365	8%
3	151	1322	11%
4	286	1344	21%
5	267	1217	22%
Elementary School	938	8188	11%
6	211	1032	20%
7	218	955	23%
8	169	968	17%
Middle School	598	2955	20%

¹ TAG Alexandria City Public Schools Evaluation Study Report Talented and Gifted (TAG) Program, p. 120

Grade Level	# of Students Enrolled	TAG ID Students	% TAG	SAA Math	SAA Language Arts	SAA Science	SAA Social Studies	SAA Visual & Performing Arts ²	GIA
KG	1477	12	1%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	100%
1	1463	106	7%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	100%
2	1365	116	8%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	100%
3	1322	151	11%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	99%
4	1344	286	21%	71%	62%	3%	3%	N/A	10%
5	1217	267	22%	81%	65%	4%	4%	N/A	4%
6	1032	211	20%	85%	59%	10%	9%	N/A	*
7	955	218	23%	88%	60%	7%	6%	N/A	*
8	968	169	17%	85%	65%	15%	10%	*	*

(iii) Procedure for identifying TAG students at various grade levels

The vast majority of TAG-identified students arrive at the middle school as TAG-identified in math and/or language arts. ACPS has no formal process for identification of TAG eligibility within either science and social studies. Moreover, there is currently no formal process to reevaluate students for TAG eligibility in 6-8 grade. However, both Frances C. Hammond (FCH) and George Washington (GW) will evaluate students upon request. Each school has evaluated approximately 10 students thus far this year. Most of those evaluated were students transferring into the district from other systems.

D. Teacher qualifications and resources:

(i) criteria

National Association for the Gifted (NAGC) program Standards

(ii) professional development requirements and offerings

Every middle school teacher must teach one honors core class. Professional development options for middle school teachers includes: (1) Gifted Endorsement, (2) Middle School Professional Learning Series - Teaching Honors in ACPS, (3) International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Certification

E. Effectiveness of TAG program performance:

ACPS does not currently provide any formal performance assessment for TAG-identified students in middle school. However, TAG-related services (such as teacher evaluations, curriculum, training programs) are routinely evaluated using national talented and gifted standards. Moreover, the development and implementation of an effective TAG program throughout ACPS continues to be hampered by the middle schools' use of open-enrollment honors courses within science, social studies, and language arts (TAG-identified math classes are offered).

Although DEPs are provided, the spectrum of abilities encountered by teachers is too wide such that any TAG-related services, including DEPs, becomes ineffective. In addition, because ACPS does not perform universal re-testing of students for TAG services, it is unclear whether the district is adequately identifying all eligible students. The practice of requiring every middle school teacher to teach an honors class also drains training resources. Relaxing this mandate could allow the remaining teachers to obtain additional TAG-related training.

(i) local comparison:

Table 9: Reading SOL Performance of TAG-Identified Students

Level	2016-17				
	Pass/ Advanced	Pass/ Proficient	Overall Pass	Fail	n
Elementary	62%	36%	98%	2%	703
Middle	46%	52%	98%	2%	598
High	29%	71%	100%	0%	90
Division	53%	45%	98%	2%	1391

Table 10: Math SOL Performance of TAG-Identified Students

Level	2016-17				
	Pass/ Advanced	Pass/ Proficient	Overall Pass	Fail	n
Elementary	54%	44%	98%	2%	705
Middle	24%	72%	96%	4%	593
High	39%	54%	93%	7%	144
Division	40%	56%	97%	3%	1442

Table 11: Social Studies SOL Performance of TAG-Identified Students

Level	2016-17				
	Pass/ Advanced	Pass/ Proficient	Overall Pass	Fail	n
Elementary	72%	26%	98%	2%	287
Middle	63%	38%	100%	0%	168
High	62%	38%	100%	0%	294
Division	66%	33%	99%	1%	749

Table 12: Science SOL Performance of TAG-Identified Students

Level	2016-17				
	Pass/ Advanced	Pass/ Proficient	Overall Pass	Fail	n
Elementary	60%	39%	99%	1%	267
Middle	33%	67%	100%	0%	168
High	53%	46%	99%	1%	231
Division	51%	48%	99%	1%	666

(ii) national scale:

Data unavailable

F. Recommendation Summary:

(i) effectiveness and success of past recommendations:

Past recommendations have been ineffective. For instance, honor course standards are unevenly applied. Moreover, the clusters of TAG-identified students are insufficient given the small number of students in each class (5 of 30). Although promised, a separate language arts TAG curriculum has never implemented, and middle school has been noted as an area for improvement since 2004.

(ii) improvement objectives going forward:

Nevertheless, the past recommendations remain valid. ACPS could improve the middle school honors program by creating a TAG-based core curriculum beginning with language arts. ACPS should follow with social studies and science, and then with TAG-based elective course curriculum.

G. PRIORITY of RECOMMENDED GOALS:

(i) immediate implementation:

From what the middle school sub-committee has learned, we would recommend that ACPS implement advanced core sections for TAG-identified students. We also recommend that the middle schools provide special class pullouts where full advanced core cluster assignment is not appropriate. We further recommend that the middle schools revise the current honors class curricula and align their trade books to TAG-appropriate Lexile levels in order to document clear objectives and expected outcomes for TAG learners.

(ii) longer term strategic needs:

The district should also create sections of elective classes for TAG-identified students. These sections would support the TAG students' need for intellectual peer interaction. In addition, because there has been a poor transfer of training skills with some teachers assigned TAG students, we recommend that ACPS remove the requirement for all middle school teachers to teach an honors class. This would enable the district to focus its TAG-related training resources on a smaller, focused group of educators.

The sub-committee believes that ACPS would likewise benefit from the employment of universal testing for TAG-services to assist the district's ability to recognize 6th grade students not identified in elementary school. This will include testing for science and social studies areas. We recommend that the district also implement formal student performance metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of TAG-services, such as teacher training, DEPs, and TAG-advisor (peer coaching). We believe that the district would be best served if the TAG-identification process and the development and implementation of TAG-student performance metrics included class counselors and academic principals.

We also recommend that ACPS provide formal opportunities for DEP-related deliverables (student presentations, projects, papers, etc.) to be communicated to both parents and students. Finally, we recommend that the district create a formal communication/coordination system between elementary school TAG teachers and middle school TAG staff to ensure continuity and avoid unnecessary overlap.

(viii) If not already addressed in the responses to the above inquiry, summarize what was reported to us from the guests who were invited to speak to us this year, from principals to teachers to academic officers.

According to the middle school guest speakers, communication of TAG-related information has improved at GW via an introduction provided at the welcome for 5th graders. At FCH, the TAG-coordinator position has only been recently filled with a qualified teacher. Accordingly, the FCH Principal filled this role, providing coaching and guidance to teachers and academic principals. The elementary school speakers noted that there is no formal communication and/or coordination between elementary school teachers and middle school staff. Thus, there is little ability to ensure that the curriculum followed at the elementary level is not repeated in middle school.

Sub-Committee Report: High School 9-11

1. Historical Summary of TAG at High School

Historically, there are not unique course offerings for TAG students and ACPS has not supported students' application to Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (a Virginia state supported and chartered magnet school for the region, designed to meet the needs for TAG math and science students). TAG students' needs are met from through advanced course offerings, both advance placement (AP) and dual enrollment (DE) classes. Traditionally, these advanced offerings were only accessible for sophomores and above. Between 2013 and 2016, there was a small group of TAG 9th graders who were able to access AP World History. Beginning in 2017, ACPS offered AP Human Geography to 9th graders at Minnie Howard campus. There were two sections of the class offered this year. Additionally, during the summer of 2017, ACPS offered a summer camp to prepare students for AP classes. Although open to all students, the main focus was on the 9th graders taking their first AP class.

In 2013, ACPS began offering the STEM Academy. When initially started, the goal was to provide instruction to students who had difficulty learning in the traditional classroom, and whose learning would be assisted by a project-based curriculum. Although initially started as a way to reduce ACPS attrition, in more recent years it has viewed as an academy for students with advance talent or interest in the STEM field. Its official mission has not changed, but it is now seen by many parents as a resource for TAG students.

Outside of the course curriculum, ACPS TAG students are eligible to attend Governor's School during the summer. These residential state-supported programs draw from students across the state, and are competitive in terms of enrollment. TAG students historically have also taken advantage of online courses offered by one of the three approved vendors, participated in academically focused clubs (e.g., Robotics, It's Academic, Model UN, Physics Club, etc). TAG students have also participated in programs external to ACPS (John Hopkins Gifted and Talented Program, Educated Program for Gifted Students-Stanford), and have taken course offerings external to ACPS (colleges offering "pre-college" programs, and MOOCs).

2. Course Offerings and Curriculum

ACPS currently offers a wide variety of advanced classes:

AP Classes:

English: AP English Language and Composition, AP English Literature and Composition

Arts: AP Art History, AP Music Theory, AP Studio Art: Drawing, AP Studio Art: 3-D Design

Math/Computer Science: AP Calculus AB, AP Calculus BC, AP Computer Science A, AP Computer Science Principles, AP Statistics

Science: AP Biology, AP Chemistry, AP Environmental Science, AP Physics II (C),

Social Studies: AP Comparative Government, AP Economics, AP European History, AP Psychology, AP United States Government, AP United States History, AP Human Geography, AP World History

World Languages: AP Chinese Language and Culture, AP French Language and Culture, AP German Language and Culture, AP Latin, AP Spanish Language and Culture, AP Spanish Literature and Culture
AP Capstone: AP Seminar, AP Research

DE Classes:

Business and Information Technology: DE Academy of Finance: Introduction to Business and International Finance

English: DE College Composition, DE College World Literature

Family and Consumer Sciences: DE Early Childhood Education II

Health and Medical Sciences: DE Medical Terminology, DE Surgical Technologist

Math: DE Calculus with Analytic Geometry II, DE Differential Equations

Marketing: DE Entrepreneurship, DE Advanced Entrepreneurship

Social Studies: DE College US History

Technology Education: DE Engineering Statics & Strength of Materials

Trade and Industry: DE TV Production II, DE TV Production & Screenwriting III, DE Automotive Technology II, DE Automotive Technology III

Other Advanced Offerings (on a 5.0 grading scale):

Science: Independent Science Research

3. Resources:

At the high school level, there are no designated TAG teachers or courses, nor are there TAG resource teachers. TAG students learn about course offerings and opportunities from their counselors. There are reports of considerable variability across counselors in the degree they provide such information to TAG students.

4. Recommendations:

Communication. A recommendation that has been made by TAGAC for the last two years is the need to increase formal communication between ACPS and ACPS TAG resources and TAG students and their parents. At the high school level, past communication has primarily been passive (i.e., requiring parents to seek such information on the ACPS website) and been limited to parent-to-parent sharing of knowledge of opportunities and policies. It is strongly suggested that ACPS send a bi-monthly newsletter (both electronically and, if desired by a household, in print) that outlines TAG-relevant policies (the rule around exceptions) and opportunities (e.g., summer AP prep class, Governor's School). Additionally, it is recommended that a listserv be set up (or that ACPS facilitate an external development) between parents of TAG students (and consideration of the establishment of a TAG student listserv).

Flexibility. Although ACPS has increased its flexibility in offering services that impact TAG students (e.g., AP Human Geography), it is recommended that further flexibility be offered to allow students to take advanced classes. Examples of this is allowing advanced students to take AP English classes earlier or having AP Seminar count for English credit.

Support for further online classes. It is recommended that ACPS look into awarding credit for advanced classes offered online by additional vendors such as the Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth. These classes can serve as supplements for students who desire to dive deeper into specific topics as well as follow-up courses for students who have accelerated beyond T.C.'s advanced course offerings. Specifically, students who are currently accelerated in math and take AP Calculus BC as sophomores do not have a math option at T.C. beyond DE Differential Equations. The standard course progression after Differential Equations would be to take Multivariable Calculus or Linear Algebra, classes offered at Thomas Jefferson High School as well as many other Virginia high schools. To ensure that gifted math students have the ability to continue their math studies at T.C., ACPS should have a structure in place for helping to subsidize and award credit for these post-calculus classes.

Increased focus on the rigor of 9th grade classes. In the later years of high school, TAG students are able to take rigorous AP and DE classes that challenged them; however, the weak point of the TAG student's high school experience is the 9th grade curriculum. The recent addition of AP Geography helps, but is not sufficient. Out of this lack of rigor, the nature of the STEM Academy has in some ways to change to meet this need.

Clarifying the mission and goal of the STEM Academy. Without official planning, or blessing, the STEM Academy has in recent years morphed into an honors academy. Given that this change is likely to remain, it is important that ACPS clarify the nature and goals of the STEM Academy and make sure TAG students understand it.

ACPS TALENTED AND GIFTED (TAG) AND COMMUNICATION REVIEW

Presented to TAGAC
Communication Subcommittee:

Zion Bezu and Stacy Hayden

Three Main Focuses

- What is currently in the ACPS Local Plan?
- What can we take away from this?
- Questions/ recommendations/ commendations in this area?



Communication with Teachers

From the Local Plan

- “To provide professional development to all teachers within the Division emphasizing cultural competency, the characteristics and special needs of gifted students.” (page 9)
- “Note: Training on the identification of students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged, and/or underrepresented populations including ELL and Special Education students for TAG services is provided at the beginning of each school year.” (page 10)
- “To provide a comprehensive professional development program that supports teachers in the development and implementation of differentiated instruction in students identified for gifted services, including specialized training for honors teachers in gifted education strategies.” (page 9)

From the Local Plan

- “Professional development focused on teaching gifted students is provided throughout the year and required of all new teachers and teachers who provide direct services to gifted students. Teachers, who are considered teachers of the gifted, whether in full- or part-time positions, are designated in these sections.”

Questions and Recommendations

Questions

- Do all schools train their own teachers at the beginning of the year inservice?
- Although the presentation is created, could it be revised to cover additional topics of importance/ increase effectiveness?
- How many middle school honors teachers currently hold gifted training in some manner?

Recommendations/ Commendations

- If not already created, make a middle/high school specific presentation for beginning of the year inservice.
- ACPS TAG has provided many different opportunities for teachers to receive professional development in regards to gifted/ high-ability students.
- The William and Mary Cohort is an excellent opportunity for ACPS teachers.



Communication with ACPS Families

From the Local Plan

- “Involve and communicate with families of underrepresented populations in their communities and native language materials.” (page 9)
- “To promote an understanding of the need for gifted education and differentiation by involving parents and the community with TAG program communications, opportunities, and support, with a special focus on special populations.” (page 9)
- “Solicit referrals through Parent and Community Announcements- newsletters, Parent Information Nights, memos- October, November” (page 14)
- “Every two years, a comprehensive survey [in regards to effectiveness] of stakeholders will be conducted and results reported.” (page 43)

Questions and Recommendations

Questions

- Have there been TAG Information nights at the middle schools in the past?
- What other ways could we communicate important information with families?

Recommendations/Commendation

- A Middle School TAG Information night would be a good addition. Especially to help parents understand the DEPs.
- Many schools hold their TAG information night at PTA meetings, however this isn't always the best choice.
- ACPS could partner with the FACE Center to support this event at some of the schools.
- ACPS could partner with parents to support TAG informational social meeting.
- ACPS does an excellent job of translating materials into multiple languages.



Communication with Families throughout the Referral Process

With Families: Individual Students

- “Within 10 school days of receiving a referral form, the TAG Designee notifies parents with the Parent Notification Letter and the Written Permission for Talented and Gifted Services Evaluation” (page 12)
- “Within 10 school days following the Identification/Placement Committee meeting, parents are notified of the decision of the Identification/Placement Committee using Not Eligible for TAG Services letter or Eligible for TAG Services letter.” (page 13)
- “Parents/guardians who are in attendance are told of the committee’s placement decision at the meeting. All parents/guardians are officially notified of the decision by letter.” (page 19)

Questions and Recommendations

Questions

- Are the TAG Referral/ Identification forms translated into multiple languages?

Recommendations/Commendations

- All schools should follow the same procedures for notifying families or should have options.
- Ideally, student folders are not a method that should be used for transporting documents.
- If not already, ACPS should translate all TAG forms into multiple languages.
- ACPS has made the notification consistent through the same letters being used at each school.