

BOARD MEMO

Date: November 28, 2022
For ACTION
For INFORMATION
Board Agenda: Yes
No

FROM: Carmen Sanders, Executive Director of Instructional Support
Megan Tempel-Milner, Ph.D., Director of Gifted and Advanced Academic Programs
Nicholas Miller, Chair, Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee (TAGAC)
Kathleen Sheehy, Co-Chair, TAGAC

THROUGH: Wendy Gonzalez, Ed.D., Chief of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership
Melanie Kay-Wyatt, Ed.D., Interim Superintendent of Schools

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

TOPIC: 2021–2022 Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee (TAGAC) Year-End Report

ACPS 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL:

- Goal 1: Systemic Alignment
- Goal 2: Instructional Excellence
- Goal 3: Student Accessibility and Support
- Goal 4: Strategic Resource Allocation
- Goal 5: Family and Community Engagement

SY 2022–2023 FOCUS AREA:

- Social Emotional and Academic Learning Recovery
- Talented and Gifted
- Strategic Plan Implementation

FY 2023 BUDGET PRIORITY:

- Equitable TAG Identification of Black and Hispanic Students
- Social and Emotional Supports for Students

SUMMARY:

The Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee (TAGAC) focuses on assuring that the needs of all Talented and Gifted (TAG) students are met in the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS). The scope of work during the 2021–2022 school year continued its goal to improve the response to academic and social-emotional needs of TAG students in ACPS. In addition, the scope of work paralleled the work associated with updating the Local Plan for the Gifted. TAGAC focused on the following topics:

1. ACPS’s Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted

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2. Continuum of Gifted and Advanced Academic Services Within ACPS
3. TAG-Related Advocacy and Communication in and out of the Classroom
4. Accountability for TAG Services

From work conducted across the subcommittees, TAGAC provided detailed recommendations, including some of the higher items for ACPS to consider:

- Update the Local Plan for the Gifted.
- Adopt a high-quality Tier I curriculum and adopt a standardized advanced curriculum to support those students who need additional rigor.
- Improve strategies and techniques for the identification of underrepresented groups using research-based practices.
- Provide consistent division-wide training for teachers and staff in the areas of identification, curriculum, instructional strategies, and social-emotional supports.
- Hire a secondary TAG specialist to provide support at the middle and high school levels; train Advanced Placement (AP), Honors, and Dual-Enrollment (DE) teachers on the needs of TAG-eligible learners; work with specialists in the Office of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership (TLL) to differentiate subject-specific curriculum; support secondary teachers in identifying underrepresented populations; build partnerships with colleges and organizations; and support students with the Governor's School application process.
- Implement a phased-in approach to implementing the updated Local Plan for the Gifted.
- Institute community outreach procedures to tap into underrepresented groups within the community, including minority, low-income, and English Language Learner (ELL) groups.
- Engage in a strong and coherent communication plan about the TAG services.
- Add a TAG data liaison to better position ACPS to meet its objectives to identify, deliver, and improve services for its students with more technical and data-driven support.
- Expand Differentiated Education Plans (DEPs) to students in Young Scholars (YS).

The 2021–2022 TAGAC Year-End Report covers these topics and recommendations in a detailed report. TAGAC encourages the School Board to read the report in its entirety.

BACKGROUND:

TAGAC's end-of-year report represents a high-level overview of our activities from seven full committee meetings and numerous separate subcommittee meetings during the 2021–2022 school year, including a mix of in-person and virtual Zoom formats. In addition, TAGAC has approved minutes for all of our meetings in the ACPS archives.

TAGAC adopted four topics for its Scope of Work for the 2021–2022 school year, a continuation of previous years' work. TAGAC worked in several subcommittees to address each topic with small-group discussions, research, and various presentations from ACPS and external parties. After an extensive review of these topics, TAGAC has made recommendations to improve gifted services and meet the goals of ACPS's Strategic Plan.

Finally, TAGAC again felt the continued impacts of COVID-19. While this is hardly a unique challenge, the committee did discover some advantages to virtual meetings and thought that the School Board

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should investigate ways to make all meetings, including School Board and Advisory Council meetings, available in a hybrid format so that in-person and virtual attendance is possible. The committee feels that this is possible with the current state of technology and would significantly increase the accessibility to the general public. In addition, it acknowledges that in-person TAGAC meetings occurring for two hours in the evenings are generally more accessible to more people than midday or afternoon meetings. The committee also recognizes that transportation, child care, providing meals, and general family time needs—such as helping with homework—are limiting factors to attendance for the many people and communities with whom we would like to be involved in TAGAC's work.

RECOMMENDATION:

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

STAFF RESPONSE:

ACPS recognizes and appreciates TAGAC's efforts during the 2021–2022 school year as the school system and committee navigated the continued COVID-19 pandemic and full-time return to in-person instruction. In addition, this year's TAGAC report provides foundational knowledge that will be the impetus for future work in gifted programming.

Points made in TAGAC's full end-of-year report and additional discussions with stakeholders provide the catalyst and support of a revised Local Plan for TAG. Our top priority for the 2022–2023 school year is to continue to revise our Local Plan. The recommendations in TAGAC's annual report will be considered as we continue the work with the Local Plan steering committees. As an advisory committee and school division, we must review our current plan to determine if we are using the most updated, research-based practices that promote equity and rigor. At the same time, we must work to ensure our students remain engaged in classroom instruction and learning experiences.

As a division and committee that needs to keep equity as a top priority, we must take courageous steps to ensure we use identification procedures that are culturally, linguistically, and economically unbiased. Immediate steps have been taken due to the work and support from TAGAC during this year's committee work. From 2021 through 2022, the TAG office expanded the automatic referral criteria to include two different ability tests and the use of achievement tests. For 2022–2023, the automatic referrals data will continue using ability and achievement tests and automatically referring students receiving YS services. The TAG office will also use a new gifted observation scale to identify students from low-income and culturally diverse families. In addition, we must create a continuum of advanced and rigorous services for all students, including students identified for TAG services. During our work, ACPS will involve continued input from students, parents, and staff to develop and check in for feedback as we revise, approve, and implement the Local Plan.

Throughout 2021–2022, the TAG, Technology Services, and Accountability offices worked closely to update our data input and retrieval systems. As a result, referral forms, permission to screen, and parent information forms are now online through our data management system software. In addition, the TAG office used testing data stored online to run TAG screening matrix reports. This allowed the TAG screening leads to access more accurate and up-to-date data instead of looking through paper

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copies held in cumulative files for every area a student was referred for services. The goal of the 2022–2023 school year is to create a central location for all screening data to be stored so that data analysis can be completed in a more time-efficient and accurately effective manner.

In keeping with the agreement with TAGAC, we believe that clear communication is a key mitigating factor to reduce identification and program placement inequities in our system. Therefore, our office has worked and will continue to work with ACPS's Communications and English Learner (EL) offices to update forms for clarity and translation purposes. All our screening documents are translated into English, Spanish, Amharic, Arabic, and Dari. In addition, we are in the process of updating our website, which will be done in increments as we revise and adopt a new Local Plan. The work on communication will be a multiyear approach as we refine our policies, practices, and procedures.

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

IMPACT:

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

ATTACHMENTS:

TAGAC Year-End Full Report 2021–2022

REFERENCES:

None

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