



Alexandria School Board / District A

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Question 1. For several years the TAGAC has been making recommendations to improve equity in the testing, evaluation and screening methods used to identify students for TAG services. Please give an explanation of a specific testing, evaluation or screening method that you feel would improve equity in identifying students for TAG services.

The idea has been proposed to develop a “Talent Search Team” that will visit schools and help identify students who might benefit from TAG services. I believe this idea has great potential to identify students from underrepresented groups in TAG, including Black, Latinx, English Learner (EL), economically disadvantaged, and twice-exceptional students. The Talent Search Team should consist of individuals specifically trained to understand the learning characteristics of students from underrepresented groups. Not only will team members know what to look for, but they can share this knowledge with teachers and administrators so that these characteristics are more widely understood and recognized throughout the school division.

Question 2. Specific to the delivery of TAG services to students in ACPS, what do you see as the next biggest challenge ACPS needs to address?

One area of the TAG program that stakeholders have consistently advocated for improvement is in the delivery of services in middle school. The School Board recently adopted areas of focus for the 2021-2022 school year and one of our priorities is the “Middle School Educational Experience.” This presents a timely opportunity to examine how the delivery of TAG services in middle school can be improved. This work should include expanding professional development opportunities for teachers to support differentiation strategies, as well as strengthening the middle school TAG curriculum. ACPS should also develop a plan to support the transition of TAG-identified students and their families from elementary to middle and from middle to high school.

Question 3. What is the single biggest impact you feel you will bring to the TAG program by sitting on the school board?

I am an experienced School Board member, an educator, and an ACPS parent. My family has personal experience with the TAG identification process and delivery model. I have read the TAG Evaluation Report and thought deeply about the strengths and weaknesses of our current program. Throughout my service on the School Board, I have demonstrated a commitment to listen to stakeholders and thoroughly understand issues being deliberated. My knowledge, experience and commitment will enable me to positively contribute to future School Board discussions and decisions regarding the TAG program.



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Dr. Michelle Rief is a former college professor and education non-profit executive. She is a parent of three Alexandria public school students and has held leadership positions in the Mount Vernon Community School PTA, and the Alexandria PTA Council.

Michelle was born into a military family and attended public schools in Iowa, California, and Florida. She was the first in her family to graduate from college and earned her undergraduate degree from Florida State University. She later earned a PhD in African American Studies from Temple University. As a graduate student, she directed a non-profit prison education program. There, she taught life skills to incarcerated individuals, many of whom had dropped out of school. Michelle went on to teach history and sociology as a professor at Borough of Manhattan Community College in New York, and later at Northern Virginia Community College.

Michelle has lived in Alexandria for 15 years with her husband and three children. Her kids attend Alexandria City High School and Mount Vernon Community School. She was first elected to the Alexandria School Board in 2018 and currently serves as the School Board liaison to Alexandria City High School, Naomi L. Brooks Elementary School, the Career and Technical Education (CTE) advisory committee, and the City of Alexandria's IT Commission.