

DRAFT

Date: October 2020
For ACTION ___
For INFORMATION ___
Board Agenda: Yes ___
No ___

FROM: Laura Rose, Chair, Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee (TAGAC)

THROUGH: Gregory Hutchings, Jr., Ed.D, Superintendent of Schools
Gerald Mann, Jr., Ed.D., Executive Director of Instructional Support,
Department of Teaching, Learning and Leadership
Frances Donna Brearley, Talented and Gifted Coordinator

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

TOPIC: SY 2020-2021 Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee (TAGAC) Scope of
Work

SUMMARY

During the 2020-2021 school year, the Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee (TAGAC) will continue its' work to improve the ways that academic and social-emotional needs of Talented and Gifted (TAG) students in ACPS are met by focusing its efforts on key objectives, including:

1. Tracking the impacts of virtual learning on TAG and Young Scholars students by monitoring the academic and social-emotional services they receive.
2. Addressing equity issues within the TAG program by monitoring the identification of students and delivery of services for the Young Scholars Program, TAG GIA and TAG Subject Specific; examining testing practices; advocating for consistency in programming across schools; and understanding additional barriers including language, disability, and social relationships.

Creating a comprehensive K-12 roadmap for gifted TAG services, including: ensuring multiple entry points to the program; improving transitions from elementary to middle school and middle school to high school; monitoring the academic rigor provided via differentiation and honors classes; improving the Differentiated Education Plan (DEP); and improving training,

curriculum extensions, Young Scholar/Tag specific counseling services and supports for teachers and staff supporting TAG students.

BACKGROUND

TAGAC has met online since the school closures in March 2020 and discussed a number of potential items for its Scope of Work for the 2020-2021 school year. This memorandum describes the areas that the Committee plans to undertake for review. Additionally, TAGAC plans to align with the Strategic 2025: Equity for All Plan.

Underlying all of these recommendations is the expectation of *improved communications* between administrators, school board members, teachers, students, parents, and the general public on all of these topics.

Virtual Learning Impacts

TAGAC is extremely concerned about the social and emotional impacts the pandemic has had on gifted students, with particular concern for our twice-exceptional students. The majority of our elementary students received no instruction from gifted teachers last Spring, and, while parents applaud the district for its efforts, the at-home learning kits were too basic to stimulate this group of students. Middle school students reported a reduction of instruction time and little, if any, feedback on independent projects through their Differentiated Education Plan's (DEP). TAGAC was pleased with the addition of the Renzulli online learning system offered this Summer and encourages ACPS teachers to maximize similar resources for TAG and Young Scholars students. TAGAC also encourages ACPS to leverage low-cost, high impact opportunities (i.e. academic field experts, nationally recognized leaders, virtual museum trips, etc.) for ALL students to better meet their academic and emotional needs. TAGAC will monitor and report back to the school board and administration the needs of our gifted students during virtual learning.

Equity Issues

We continue to support the Young Scholars program and are thrilled that, for the first time this academic school year, the program exists in ALL elementary schools. TAGAC is pleased to have refined the year-over-year data we receive from the ACPS Accountability office so that we can continue to monitor trends and identify problem areas throughout the program. TAGAC remains concerned about the under representation of brown and black students in the program; we have identified several possible contributing factors and barriers. Accordingly, we will continue to research the following: testing integrity, testing environment, testing frequency, accessible testing for ESL

students, teacher/administrator demonstrated support of the program, and cultural and diversity training for all teachers.

Sadly, it is our belief that during the virtual learning period both TAG identification and TAG services will suffer and that our underrepresented populations will suffer at disproportionately higher rates. TAGAC encourages that ALL students not only be given the opportunity but also actively encouraged to use curriculum extensions available on Clever that allow students to self pace under teacher guidance. Teachers should be trained to recognize students that excel in these tools as well as those who show other signs of giftedness through non-traditional indicators such as depth of emotional needs, a heightened sense of moral justice, and an unusually high level of expectations of themselves and others.

K-12 Roadmap

TAGAC hopes to present a wholistic and comprehensive view of a TAG student's experience at ACPS. By providing a clear set of expectations about what students will receive and what is expected by participating in the program, we hope to aid students, parents, teachers, staff, and the community to work towards a unified understanding. While individual students will have multiple entry points and distinct subject area opportunities, clear and overarching goals should help students feel more comfortable participating in and excelling in the program. A highlight of this work will be better articulating how and when differentiation is applied in the classroom, which benefits ALL students.

RECOMMENDATION

The Superintendent recommends that the School Board approve the TAGAC 2020-2021 Scope of Work.

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