

BOARD MEMO

Date: TBD

For ACTION

For INFORMATION

Board Agenda: Yes

No

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

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

TO: The Honorable Cindy Anderson, Chair, and
Members of the Alexandria City School Board

TOPIC: SY 2020-2021 TAG Advisory Committee Scope of Work

ACPS 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL:

Goal 2: Instructional Excellence
Goal 4: Strategic Resource Allocation
Goal 5: Family and Community Engagement

SY 2020-2021 FOCUS AREA:

Focus Area 3: Strategic Plan Implementation

FY 2021 BUDGET PRIORITY:

Improving Customer Relationship Services and Management

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:

Tracking the impacts of virtual learning on TAG and Young Scholar students by monitoring the academic and social-emotional services they receive.

Addressing equity issues within the TAG program by monitoring the identification of students and delivery of services for the Young Scholars Program, GIA and 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 services, including: assuring multiple entry points to the program; improved transitions from elementary to middle school and middle

BOARD MEMO

school to high school; monitoring the academic rigor provided via differentiation and honors classes; improving the Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) and improved training, curriculum extensions, 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 this resource for TAG students. TAGAC also encourages ACPS to leverage low-cost, high impact opportunities (i.e. academic field experts, nationally recognized leaders, etc.) for all students to have their academic and emotional needs met. 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 non-white students in the program; we have identified several possible contributing factors. 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 programs like Renzulli, Kahn Academy and other tools that allow students to self-pace under teacher guidance. Teachers should be trained to recognize not only the students that excel in these tools but also those that show other signs of giftedness through

BOARD MEMO

non-traditional indicators such as depth of emotional struggles, unique emotional needs, heightened sense of moral justice and level of expectations of themselves and others.

K-12 Roadmap

TAGAC hopes to present a holistic 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 SY 2020-2021 TAG Advisory Committee Scope of Work.

IMPACT:

The TAGAC Scope of Work will drive the work of the committee which focuses on addressing the needs of Talented and Gifted (TAG) students in ACPS.

ATTACHMENTS:

(List attachments here)

CONTACT:

Laura Rose, roselauraw@yahoo.com

Donna Brearley, frances.brearley@acps.k12.va.us