



## TAG ADVISORY COMMITTEE

*August 29, 2022 meeting*

### **INCOMING CHAIR'S REMARKS Summary of TAGAC work 2017-2022**

#### **2021-22**

*TAGAC focus areas from Scope of Work (<https://bit.ly/3cq6zLE>)*

- ACPS's five-year plan (the "local plan")
- The continuity of TAGAC services within ACPS
- TAGAC-related advocacy in and out of the classroom
- Accountability

*TAGAC recommendations from EOY report (not yet approved by SB)*

- Improve strategies and techniques for the identification of underrepresented groups through techniques recommended by both the evaluation team and the two multicultural consultants working with the ACPS TAG Local Plan Draft Steering Committee. These recommendations focus on the use of lower cutoff scores with more oversight of the school-based committee process.
- Incorporate the use of research-based checklist items that promote recognition of giftedness in cultural, racial minority groups; ELLs, and other underserved student groups, including dissemination through teacher materials, training, and community outreach activities.
- Continue the use of existing screening tools, as they constitute the best tests available for the purposes intended in finding students from underrepresented groups, based on research data and as noted by all five consultants who reviewed them. TAGAC recommends modifying the cutoff scores on the two standardized ability instruments by two percentile points, as it may decrease the underrepresentation of African Americans by as much as five percentage points, based on a three-year historical analysis of the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test® (NNAT) data from 2014–2016. A 2014–2015 analysis of one year of the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) data showed that the identification of Hispanic students would have increased by two percentage points. Based on the analyses of historical results of both tests, the committee feels that it is prudent to lower the score cutoffs in this way in order to assist in reaching the goal of reducing disparity among minority groups in the program.
- Train teachers and principals annually on the general and specific aptitude characteristics of gifted learners and those from underrepresented groups to improve identification and assist advancing TAG students' diversity goals.
- Develop program strategies that tailor Language Arts and Social Studies curricula for students from underrepresented groups, including the choice of reading materials and content that highlights accomplishments of minority groups and individuals as well as practice with higher-level thinking using scaffolded materials.
- ACPS should adopt and implement a robust Tier 1 curriculum for all students. A rigorous, standardized, and connected baseline curriculum—not developed in-house at ACPS from a variety of disconnected sources—supports all teachers and all students.
- TAGAC recommends observing proven best practices in implementing a thoughtful time-phased approach to implementing the new plan. TAGAC urges the Steering Committee to consider a "whole-of-system" approach to ensure meaningful change across the division, pilot programs to facilitate implementation, and incorporate metrics for accountability.



- Improve the rigor of the curriculum across all grades and all schools through the adoption and implementation of a high-quality, pre-differentiated Tier 1 curricula.
- Promote and implement project-based learning across the school division.
- Develop and provide consistent division-wide training for teachers and staff in:
  - Identifying students across all grade levels who show the characteristics of TAG students, particularly students from underrepresented groups
  - Facilitating differentiated instruction in all subject areas
  - Identifying and supporting specific academic and social-emotional needs of TAG-eligible students
- Prioritize a vertically aligning curriculum and support services for K–12.
- Hire TAG specialists for high schools who can:
  - Provide instruction and support for teachers and counselors to address the needs of TAG-eligible students
  - Offer information sessions about Honors classes
  - Train AP and DE teachers on TAG-eligible learners
  - Support high school teachers and staff in identifying TAG-eligible students in underrepresented populations
  - Lead Professional Development in gifted education for high school teachers
  - Build partnerships with groups (colleges/organizations) that can support advanced courses for students identified as gifted learners.
  - Support high school students and teachers with the application process for the Virginia Governor's School
- Institute community outreach procedures to tap into underrepresented groups within the community, including minority, low-income, and ELL groups.
- All stakeholders involved in TAG services must be considered in this communication plan, including administrators, School Board members, staff members, teachers, students, parents, and the general public.
- ACPS should expand its translation services to focus on communicating about the benefits of and the process for TAG services as well as by making translation services more accessible for one-on-one conversations between the TAG-designee at each school and prospective parents.
- ACPS should recruit and train advocates across all subgroups who can speak about the benefits of the TAG program and the identification process. These advocates can be recruited from the teacher, parents, TAG-alumni community, and even from TAG students currently enrolled at the high school. Advocates could be formally equipped with information about the TAG program and their contact information shared with TAG designees at each school. They could act as a vital bridge between ACPS TAG staff and the varied communities that potential TAG students can and do come from. In particular, these advocates could speak to how students who are intellectually advanced can benefit from additional support at school with no cost to the parents.
- The plan should take advantage of the creative communication methods ACPS utilized to overcome the limitations placed on communication by COVID-19. For example, relying on text-based communications as the norm and making sure that information is available via mobile devices in multiple languages have been key enablers in improving communication, and they should be used by the TAG program as well.
- Adding a TAG Data Liaison
- Including Effectiveness of Differentiation in Measures of Staff Effectiveness

2020-21

*TAGAC focus areas from Scope of Work* (<https://bit.ly/3cmbpJG>)

- 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 students' identification and delivery of services for the Young Scholars Program, General Intellectual Aptitude (GIA), and Subject-Specific Aptitude (SAA); examining testing practices; advocating for consistency in programming across schools; and understanding additional barriers to access including language, disability, and social relationships.
- Creating a comprehensive K-12 roadmap for gifted services, including the following: assuring 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 improved training, curriculum extensions, and supports for teachers and staff supporting TAG students.

*TAGAC recommendations from EOY report* (<https://bit.ly/3AtD6rV>)

- Review work to date on new Local Plan (still operating under 2011-17 plan)
- Use identification procedures that are culturally, linguistically, and economically unbiased.
- Create a continuum of advanced and rigorous services for all students, including for students identified for TAG services.
- Prioritize improving communication.

## 2019-20

*TAGAC focus areas from Scope of Work* (<https://bit.ly/3KnWXNM>)

- Following and advocating for the implementation of the SY 2020 updates to the TAG Local Plan;
- Being vocal contributors to the update of the Local Plan incorporating the recommendations from the 2017 TAG Consultants Report;
- Examining delivery of services at each level (Elementary, Middle, and High School) and the effectiveness of the academic rigors in the differentiation of the teaching of curriculum offered to TAG students based on their specific and individual needs as well as accountability for the delivery of these services;
- Examining appropriate identification of ACPS students for TAG services with a specific focus on underrepresented populations and programs; and
- Focusing on the social and emotional needs of TAG students in ACPS.

*TAGAC EOY report* (<https://bit.ly/3R46UCm>)

(the end of the school year was disrupted by COVID-19 closures)

## 2018-19

*TAGAC focus areas from Scope of Work* (<https://bit.ly/3CuG5mO>)

- The Talented and Gifted (TAG) program evaluation on the efficacy of TAG identification with specific focus on traditionally under identified sub-groups.
- Following and advocating for the implementation of the Local Plan; Being vocal contributors to the update of the Local Plan.
- Examining delivery of services at each level (Elementary, Middle, and High School) and the effectiveness of the academic rigors in the differentiation of the teaching of curriculum offered to TAG students as well as accountability for delivery of these services.
- Improving communication and transparency by ACPS with TAGAC and the student and parent communities on issues regarding TAG programs, including involvement with strategic decisions and policy changes.

*TAGAC recommendations from EOY report* (<https://bit.ly/3cmROt1>)



- Execute on the recommendation from the TAG Evaluation Report, “Design and develop a General Intellectual Aptitude (GIA) program around advanced content at the K-3 level, consistent with the grades 4-5 curriculum structure and delivered to clusters of students in the classroom.”
  - Staff response: *This recommendation is currently under development. The first stage, an English/Language Arts (ELA) research-based curriculum supplement (Jacob’s Ladder), has been aligned to the Standards of Learning (SOL) and provided to all schools. Training is available through the Professional Learning Management System (PLMS) on request by individual school and offered division-wide at various times throughout the year. A similar math curriculum supplement (M2/M3) will be aligned and available in School Year 2020. Additional supplemental integrated curriculum units and problem-based units will be added this year. All materials will be available in Canvas as well as physical copies at each school through the TAG teacher.*
- Execute on the recommendation from the TAG Evaluation Report, “Revamp the middle school TAG Program so that it includes opportunities for an accelerated English/Language Arts (ELA), Science, and Social Studies program beyond honors which currently fails to provide differentiated curriculum or instruction. Develop an interdisciplinary option in the humanities and STEM areas for students who have aptitudes and interests in the underlying areas of learning.”
  - Staff response: *The 2019-2020 school year will be spent exploring how to best align and design new middle school courses with the Connected High School Project and the emerging 2025 Strategic Plan. These courses will include accelerated options wherever possible.*
- Commit to continuing an exemplar from the TAG Evaluation Report by maintaining the current delivery method of gifted specific curriculum/self-contained services for 4th and 5th grade TAG ELA.
  - Staff response: *No decisions have been made at this time to change any existing service. The Division will be reviewing and analyzing all available data in order to make suggestions for the future during this school year. The Division recognizes this type of change would require long term efforts including building new curricula and capacity for teachers and students to be successful.*
- Complete roll-out of the Young Scholars program to all ACPS elementary schools. Move the Young Scholars program fully under the ACPS TAG program so that Young Scholars can be considered for TAG grouping in class structures.
  - Staff response: *The timeline for the expansion of the Young Scholars program has been accelerated so that all schools will have the program in place by the 2021-2022 school year. The process for moving the program fully under the TAG umbrella of services is in place for this school year. Young Scholars students are to be clustered with specific teachers to facilitate the grouping of TAG students to include Young Scholars whenever possible. There will be a Young Scholars/GIA curriculum aligned for these students and their cluster teachers to use throughout the school year. The curriculum will be posted on Canvas and professional development scheduled through PLMS. This new pathway will prepare and support students to fully participate in TAG curriculum in future years.*
- Improve training for general education teachers in the areas of identifying and working with TAG and Young Scholars. Increase training in differentiating classroom instruction for all students.
  - Staff response: *A Division-wide initiative in differentiation is underway. All elementary schools have formed cross-functional teams of teachers and administrators to be the catalysts of this effort on their campus. A differentiation consultant is working with these teams and will continue to support their efforts throughout the school year. A middle school consultant is being sought to provide similar support through the development of middle school professional development and courses. The Division is also seeking a university partner to guide the development of a local endorsement process for general education teachers working with TAG and Young Scholars students. In addition, the gifted endorsement cohorts are provided for any teacher seeking full licensure.*
- Implement a universal test/screening in the 5th grade in the areas of Math, Language Arts, Science and Social Studies to solidify identification for TAG students as they graduate to Middle School.
  - Staff response: *This recommendation will be considered during the redesign of middle school services and offerings to assure alignment to the Virginia Profile of a Graduate and the ACPS*



#### *High School Project.*

- Address a gap in TAG services by implementing push in ACPS Counseling to address the unique needs of TAG students from a social and emotional perspective, paying specific attention to twice exceptional students, as well as provide academic advising.
  - Staff response: *The Student Services Department will begin to work with the TAG office to discuss and determine the best way to ensure the social/emotional and academic advising needs are met. Collaboration with school psychologists and counselors is critical to the implementation success of these efforts.*
- Devise a rigorous assessment plan to measure the effectiveness of gifted instruction. The current model of “provide” does not address if the gifted services are being delivered and if so are services truly meeting the needs of students both academically and socially. This should be distinctly separate from test score monitoring.
  - Staff response: *A variety of assessment data to measure the achievement of students identified for TAG services is currently collected and analyzed annually by the Office of Accountability. In addition to these metrics, both formative and summative measures are developed by the classroom teacher to monitor and measure growth. The development of a specific program effectiveness measure could be a future project and developed from the National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC) Standards for Programming.*

## **2017-18**

### *TAGAC focus areas from Scope of Work (<https://bit.ly/3RbzIZv>)*

- Review 2017 Consultants Report (outside review conducted 2016-17)
- Incorporate 2017 Consultants Report recommendations into current Local Plan (2011-2017) and new Local Plan
- Improve communication about TAG
- Begin practicing new procedures SB has set down for advisory committees
- Follow up on recommendations about delivery of services at all levels

### *TAGAC recommendations from EOY report (<https://bit.ly/3KvH7Rp>)*

- Hire a K-3 coordinator to improve consistency of TAG services across ACPS
- Provide better communication and processes for a smooth transition for TAG identified students new to a different school within ACPS or ACPS altogether
- Educate teachers on the availability of resources provided through Donna Brearley and her office
- Differentiated curriculum that would embed SOLs and benchmark expectations
- Incorporation of a TAG curriculum that is directly aligned and embedded within the Gen Ed curriculum
- 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
- General/Language Arts TAG: ACPS should continue the 4th and 5th grade pull-out programs for both Math and Language Arts. With regard to Language Arts, the current TAG program teaches 4th and 5th graders the same Virginia standards as the general education classes, but with added depth and complexity.
- We recommend that the TAG Language Arts program for 4th and 5th graders be modified to add specific additional curriculum goals. This would further differentiate the content that is being taught in 4th and 5th grade TAG Language Arts. This additional curriculum should be the same at each elementary school. We also recommend that the TAG Language Arts curriculum include both reading and writing instruction at every school.
- Science/Social Studies TAG: The Science and Social studies TAG programs for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5th graders are comparatively very small. Students identified in those areas are currently provided with enrichment and extension from their homeroom and/or subject teacher. We recommend that the TAG programs for Science and Social Studies also have specific additional curricula added to the programs as well as a





formal/nationally-normed measure for entry. This could create an environment in which more students want to participate in an advanced curriculum in those subject areas.

- Young Scholars Program: While this covers more than just 4th and 5th grades, we recommend that every elementary school have a Young Scholars program. We believe it should grow and be as consistent as possible at each school (e.g., serving the same grade levels, curriculum). However, we must be careful that it not become a “2nd tier” TAG substitute for underserved populations, including English language learners.
- TAG Communication: TAG-related communication with parents/guardians continues to be a troubled area across the board. For many, there continues to be a “veil of secrecy” about the TAG program for 4th and 5th graders. Each elementary school must do more to engage and communicate with both students and parents, especially in 3rd grade, in anticipation of possible participation in TAG programs in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades. This communication is inconsistent among the schools. Even in schools that have a high TAG participation rate, many parents are not fully informed about exactly how the process works. Information presented at PTA meetings is good, but hardly sufficient. Ideally, this information (in the four languages currently made available by ACPS) would be provided on-line at ACPS, in students’ flyers, and in emails sent to all parents/guardians, describing the exact criteria needed for possible TAG inclusion in 4th and 5th grades, as well as the timelines for inclusion. This could increase the participation of the currently underserved student population.
- Identification of underserved students: We recommend that specific policies and procedures/guidelines be developed by the Board for implementation at all elementary schools, to improve the currently disparate system of students who are TAG-identified. While this issue has been heavily discussed, as of yet there are no identified policies or procedures/guidelines to assist in alleviating this problem.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 to district to focus its TAG-related training resources on a smaller, focused group of educators.
- 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.
- 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.
- If not already created, make a middle/high school specific presentation for beginning of the year inservice.
- 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.
- 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.