



1340 Braddock Place
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Telephone: (703) 619-8000
Facsimile: (703) 619-8090
TTY: 711 (Virginia Relay)
www.acps.k12.va.us

MEMO

To: Ramee Gentry, Chair, Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee
From: Donna Brearley, Coordinator, Talented and Gifted Program
Through: Dr. Terri Mazingo, Ed.D., Chief Academic Officer
Mr. Gerald Mann, Director, Secondary Education
Date: May 28, 2015

Superintendent
Alvin L. Crawley, Ed.D.

In response to draft recommendations made regarding revisions to the delivery of services to Talented and Gifted (TAG) students in ACPS middle schools, the following comments are submitted for your consideration:

School Board

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Recommendation #1: Cluster TAG-identified students into TAG-only sections during advisory period.

Staff Response:

This recommendation is under consideration as master schedules are being built at this time. The impact on the balance of class size, demographics and gender within the homeroom period will be reviewed to determine feasibility. Please Note: For the school year 2015-16 “advisory” has been changed to “homeroom.”

Recommendation #2: Assign TAG-identified students to teachers who have completed (or are currently obtaining) a gifted endorsement qualification.

Staff Response:

It is a priority for ACPS to have highly trained teachers working with all students. Our goal is to fully implement the Local Plan which calls for all teachers of middle school Honors classes to be trained in gifted education strategies by offering a variety of options.

A robust professional learning plan has been developed and will be communicated to all teachers, providing individual choice and scheduling flexibility. All Honors teachers will be expected to participate in one of the various options offered within two years, as stated in the Local Plan. Participation rates will be monitored and communicated to principals and the Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee for inclusion in their annual report.

The professional development options include:

- **Gifted Endorsement** –Division-sponsored cohorts or individually through online coursework offered by a variety of universities and supported through tuition reimbursement, pending budget approval;
- **Local Middle School Professional Learning Series Entitled “Teaching Honors in ACPS,”** which includes best practices in gifted education, differentiation strategies and techniques for implementing the ACPS Honors curriculum; and
- **International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Certification** (Jefferson-Houston).

Recommendation #3: Increase clustering minimums for TAG-identified students in core courses.

Staff Response:

Clustering is a research-based practice shown to help meet the needs of gifted students by providing intellectual peers within their instructional grouping. Increasing the current cluster sizes in the Honors classes is a viable option for school year 2015-16. As scheduling of classes is completed this spring, every effort will be made to better enhance the size of TAG-identified clusters to eight (8) or more within each core Honors class.

In this context, “TAG- identified” means that any student who has TAG identification in general aptitude or any specific subject (ELA, math, science or social studies) would be included in any Honors course TAG cluster, regardless of subject. Clustering of TAG students according to their identified area is a future goal when there is sufficient enrollment in all content areas. Final results will be communicated back to TAGAC after all schedules have been built.

Recommendation #4: Require written TAG differentiation plans for each quarter core course.

Staff Response:

In addition to course syllabi, plans (one plan per TAG cluster in each core Honors class) describing the differentiation for TAG students in the Honors courses will be developed in collaboration with the Honors teachers and the Middle School Resource Teacher each quarter to ensure that parents are well-informed. Training in the development of these plans will be included in the local professional development. A template will be created and teacher workdays will be utilized to write them.

Recommendation #5: Create sections of Language Arts 6, 7, 8 that are reserved for TAG-identified students.

Staff Response:

Sample master schedules are being built and reviewed to determine possible impacts. Consideration must be given to the middle school team structure and schedule as well as the balance of class size and special course needs outside the grade level for some TAG-identified students.