

My name is Jeremy Miller, and I am the parent of a second grader at Douglas Macarthur who was identified for GIA in kindergarten. It came to my attention in February that ACPS was in the midst of considering substantial changes to the TAG program. I was put in touch with this advisory committee and was notified in an email of the 3 remaining meetings for the school year. It should be noted that the dates and locations of these meetings were not readily available to the public. The TAGAC website remained out of date, and the school board calendar only posted the May meeting, perhaps only after I had sent several emails to the school board about that issue. I attended and spoke at the 3 remaining TAGAC meetings. I raised some very substantial concerns regarding the changes that were being proposed. But more importantly, I implored the committee repeatedly to reach out to parents of currently identified TAG students and make sure they were part of the conversation. It is these students who are most directly impacted by any changes, so it should have been imperative that the parents be given an opportunity to provide input.

Unfortunately, this committee, the school board, and the central office all failed to make any effort whatsoever to engage with parents of TAG-identified students. The excuses I heard were hard to take seriously - including that the TAG Director's office was "still learning how to use ParentSquare". But in reality, this was all by design - to keep parents in the dark until the new local plan had been pushed through. And now here we are, with a number of parents saying they had no idea any of this was going on and wondering why it was kept from them.

At the April TAGAC meeting, Dr. Tempel-Milner provided the committee with an update on some of the changes that would be in the new local plan to be presented to the school board the following month. She said that GIA for grades K-3 would be phased out, and that they would no longer be formally identifying students for it. Her rationale was that we don't have enough data to determine whether a child is gifted or not at that age, and that the tests we've been using don't really tell us that a child is gifted - it just means that the child's parents have advanced degrees, have a lot of books in the house, and read to that child at an early age.

I find this viewpoint to be downright dangerous, as it marginalizes gifted learners and essentially denies that they even exist. Furthermore, state law *requires* districts to have processes for identifying and serving gifted learners beginning in kindergarten. The notion that the new local plan would do away with this requirement is not only harmful to gifted learners - it is non-compliant with state law.

While the new local plan does mention identification of K-3 students, the intent expressed by Dr. Tempel-Milner at the April meeting is still front and center. The plan says that for K-3 students, even if a child is identified for GIA, the services they receive will be no different from everyone else. State law requires that identified students receive "appropriately differentiated curriculum and instruction provided by professional instructional personnel trained to work with gifted students". Given that this new plan explicitly does *not* provide identified K-3 learners with appropriately differentiated curriculum, the plan remains non-compliant.

My message to this committee is the following – you are, according to the school board, the parent stakeholder group. Whatever scope of work you are considering for this year needs to be put aside for now so that you focus on one thing and one thing only – fixing the local plan immediately so that gifted learners can be served properly. Every day that goes by with this new plan in place is causing real harm to these students. It was pushed through under the guise of equity, but denying that gifted learners exist and deserve to be served properly is about as inequitable as it gets.

Here is what I would offer as an improvement for the K-3 level:

- Re-introduce universal screening, which according to the National Association for Gifted Children, has “been found to increase the number of low-income and minority students identified as gifted by 180%”
- Provide the opportunity for identified K-3 students to work with a TAG specialist in a cluster grouping for 3 hours per week

Thank you.