

**Alexandria City Public Schools  
Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee**

**December Minutes**

**Meeting: December 14, 2015**

**TAGAC Members Present:** Zion Bezu, Saud Al Halabi, Gregg Murphy, Scott Oswald, Donna Brearley, Stacy Hayden, Alexis Stackhouse, Amanda Eisenhour, Alex Griffin, Renee Reynolds, Pam Jones, Steve Gordon, Ashley Chappell

**Guests:** Clinton Page, JC Herz, Ramee Gentry

**Old Business:**

- November 2015 minutes approved.
- Annual Report approved.

**Public Comments:**

None

**Chair Reports:**

Two new members have joined the TAG Advisory Committee. They are Suad Al Halabi and Zion Bezu.

**ACPS Updates:**

Governor's School

Governor's school recruitment is currently happening at the high school level. Created fliers to target different groups of students that have been distributed. January 29th is when the applications are due.

DEPs

DEPs have gone out for middle school students. Parents in the committee mentioned that they received them. Mrs. Brearley was commended by multiple members for the letter that was sent out with the DEPs since it was very well written and coherent. A few parents have reached out to her and asked questions and she has been able to respond.

Although we have made strides with the DEP, parents of middle school students on the committee have noticed a few different things with the DEPs that they received. A few comments were that it seemed like it was just more work. Additionally, a parent noted that they did not receive a DEP in one subject area. Another parent mentioned that they had not seen any DEPs at all. Mrs. Brearley thanked them for their specific comments. This helps her to continue to work with the middle school resource teachers to improve them in the future.

Mrs. Brearley's next step is to help to make the process and the DEPs better for the future. Although some of the DEP project or activity may have to happen at home, there should be time given in class. She will be meeting with the middle school teachers to work on this and other suggestions. In the future, the big picture goal is that these plans will be more individualized and tailored for the students.

She is also looking into other ways to provide these DEPs to families. They have considered the possibility of posting them on the student's individualized blackboard pages. Parents would also be able to request a hard copy. The committee discussed that receiving an email notification would also be very helpful.

#### Young Scholars

A committee member raised a question about the Young Scholars program. They were concerned that the superintendent had decided not to expand Young Scholars to other schools. Mrs. Brearley responded that she believed this was due to the fact that the TAG Program was having a full review by an outside organization. The committee member inquired about students from other schools being able to attend. Mrs. Brearley explained that because of identification and other pieces, this would not be possible.

#### Odyssey of the Mind

The committee discussed the success Odyssey of the Mind is having this year. In the district this year we have about 10 teams at multiple schools. The committee discussed that is wonderful to see it growing and starting to spread to schools it has not been at previously. The Odyssey of the Mind registration fees are paid for with the TAG budget because they serve TAG students well. It was also noted that although the program serves TAG students well, other students are also welcome to join.

#### **ACPS Data Research from Steve Gordon:**

TAGAC had the opportunity to hear about some research that Mr. Gordon, committee member, was able to compile. He presented his research comparing ACPS to other districts using SAT data. His report is attached for review. Some key points include:

- SOLs did not have information that allowed him to see how the high students are doing since it only provides information of how many students received a score of pass advanced, pass, or fail. Because of this he decided to review SATs. He mentioned that because this measures college readiness, he believes it represents the accumulated effect of K to 12 curriculum including TAG.
- Decided to compare our SAT data to neighboring districts and the state average. However, neighboring school districts have widely varying demographic composition. Still felt that these could be compared, but it could not be a head to head comparison. He chose to compare the same subgroup in different districts.
- SAT does reporting on each graduating cohort on an annual basis.
- Mr. Gordon's data showed that ACPS was performing lower in most cases.

Since the committee also had Mr. Clinton Page, accountability office, in attendance this evening, the committee asked him for his thoughts. Mr. Page shared that analyzing certain schools that are similar was a good approach. He shared that the district does this each year and chooses specific schools to compare our schools with. His office then sends these reports out to the principal at each school and encourages them to collaborate with the other schools they were compared to.

Mr. Page mentioned that our SAT scores have been something that ACPS has been looking at for some time. Over the years T.C. Williams has done things with a triage approach to try to help these SAT scores. Nothing yet has happened to show a change in performance. Additionally, these scores are not due to an increase or decrease of students taking the SAT each year since ACPS has about 63%-67% of students who take this test each year.

Mr. Page further discussed SOL Tests vs. SATs. He mentioned that the SOLs have a ceiling effect. The committee discussed that a student receiving a 600 (a 100%), doesn't really tell us much about a student. He also mentioned that SATs and SOLs are designed to measure different things. With the SAT there is not as much of a ceiling effect. About 70% of students at TC take the SAT in their high school career, so TAGAC also must remember that this is not representative of the whole population.

Finally, the other thing to be remembered with using SATs as a data point to evaluate the TAG Program is that there is lag time, it is not representative of the whole population, and that it requires a manual entry process into Powerschool and is labor intensive. These factors make it so that this may not be the best measure for the TAG program.

## **Presentation from Clinton Page:**

### Getting Data for TAGAC

At the beginning, Clint tried to answer some of our questions. TAGAC had asked the time frame that it took for different parties (including TAGAC) to get data that is requested from the Office of Accountability. He responded that they try to get to it as quickly as possible. He has received three official requests from TAGAC over the past three years. His proposal for the future would be to attempt to determine an agreement on timeline and needs for data to see what can reasonably happen. As a committee, we can determine the key indicators that help us. Since Donna has worked so hard with Technology Services to identify TAG students in the computer, we can now track those students. Donna and Clint can come up with metrics TAGAC would like to see in addition to the ones that the group has already suggested. With a timeline agreed upon, we can be given this data at certain points instead of having to ask.

When regular citizens ask for data, he tries to link them to publicly available data. Typically this fills their needs.

### SOL Data vs. Other Data

Clint engaged TAGAC in a discussion about SOL data. He shared that you can measure SOL data over time, you just have to understand what you are looking at. VDOE revises assessments every 5 years. To look at data over time, you must footnote the data changing in these years so trend lines can be analyzed. Historically, SOL data has been reported as pass advanced, pass, and fail.

The SOL Scale Score is not an equal interval scale. The difference between a score of 400-405 is not the same as the difference between 500-505. A 400 is about 50-55% of the information correct. In order to get a 500, you are getting about 95% of the items correct on the SOL. Even if we had access to specific scores within pass advanced it doesn't necessarily tell us much because it may be the difference between a 95% and a 97%.

He feels that an assessment such as the SRI may be more appropriate since it is vertically scaled. This could fulfill our need for data with reading. Since everything happened with the SMI, it is not as easy with math. The district is creating an internal workgroup to determine where we go from SMI. Another challenge that we will continue to experience in the future is with the mandates to test less, we will have less data to analyze. Two years ago we reduced our assessment requirements by 40%.

### Other Assessments and TAG

Committee members asked about tests for students to get into TAG at the third grade level. The CoGAT is given in third grade as a TAG screening tool. A few years ago (2002) we changed the testing from just the CoGAT in 2nd grade to our current plan involving that NNAT and the

CoGAT. The office of accountability is working to find TAG specific assessments in the next few years.

It was mentioned that a lot of the goals from 2011 for the TAG program were how assessments were driving the current TAG program. We wondered, what the key variables with this identification process were. We also wondered about the application of the program and how the written/ taught curriculum affects the program?

Clint shared that they are doing a full curriculum evaluation currently. It is an 18 month process. Hopefully it will be completed in the summer of 2016. They have done an evaluation of the written curriculum and are now doing an evaluation of the taught curriculum. One of the research questions is how the written curriculum is serving our special populations (TAG, SPED, etc).

Donna and Clint have discussed the importance of involving stakeholders in any evaluation process. This involves engaging principals, staff, TAGAC, and others. TAGAC mentioned that they would like to be involved in a parent survey when it comes out.

There will be outreach with the curriculum surveys to try to get them into the hands of a better representative group. They are additionally looking at timelines that are the most appropriate such as doing it around conferences so that schools can share the information. Additionally, they will be having students take the curriculum survey since they live it.

Historically, Clint cannot point to a formal evaluation of the TAG program during his time within ACPS. Donna also does not know of one.

### Analyzing Data

The question was brought up that If Steve's research about SATs is a good way to indicate success of the TAG program, why have we not been using this?

Clint responded that we will come to an agreement to determine what metrics we should look at. He explained that data will not tell you the why, it will tell you the what. In order to find the why you have to evaluate hypotheses through research. Donna and Clint will work together to determine metrics we should be using.

Clint feels that if we are making changes to the TAG program at the elementary level, SAT scores take 10 years for this data to be available. He would look at an indicator across grade levels to see a snapshot of performance of different levels. He mentioned that you should also look at an indicator that does not have a ceiling effect. This is one of the problems with using the SOL as a primary indicator.

He shared that the SRI may be a good data point. It is designed to evaluate reading comprehension, not to evaluate TAG Programs, but can be a good indicator. It is given in grades 3-8 in the fall and spring. SRI was introduced division wide in 2012.

Last spring we were told that the new SMI was not valid and we decided to wait and see what happened with the new data. The decision was ultimately made to not go back to the SMI. Now the internal group is happening to determine where ACPS should go with math data.

When analyzing data there is a limitation since some students were not marked in Powerschool, however, we have been marking them since 2013-2014.

The committee discussed the possibility of finding out data from other districts with these other assessments. We wondered if any other districts nearby would be able/ willing to share. Donna has been reaching out to other districts to see about the program evaluation, this may be a possibility.

### TAG Program Evaluation

The Division's TAG Plan is scheduled to be coming up for review. The revision of the plan has been delayed so that we can take a full comprehensive look of the TAG program. It has not had a summative evaluation previously. This is the year that we can define how we are doing.

### **Wrap Up:**

We didn't have time to get through all of the questions. Alex would like for that to happen in some way. She will contact Clint and get this information out to TAGAC.

Donna and Clint will meet to propose metrics.

TAGAC mentioned that we would like to be a part of the parent survey at some point in the spring.