

# Evaluation Report on the TAG Program

Alexandria City Public Schools

Board Presentation, October 12, 2017

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# Key Assumptions from Evaluation Research

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- The role of evaluation and review is to improve and advance gifted programs.
- Evaluation and review is a collaborative process.
- The use of multiple data sources helps to illuminate the complexity and salience of program issues.
- Rational decision-making is mediated by values.



# Consultants

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- Gail Hubbard—expertise in gifted education teaching and administration
- Janice Robbins—expertise in curriculum design and development, teaching and administration of gifted programs
- Joyce VanTassel-Baska—expertise in gifted education program and curriculum design, development, and evaluation

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# Evaluation Design

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# Research Questions

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1. To what extent is the gifted program being implemented according to its stated goals and objectives?
2. To what extent is the program progressing in its attempt to identify underrepresented groups for the program?
3. To what extent is the written, taught, and assessed curriculum sufficiently rigorous and differentiated for TAG-identified students?
4. To what extent is the program beneficial to students participating in it?

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## Research Questions (continued)

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5. To what extent is the program perceived to be effective by relevant stakeholders?
6. To the extent is the program aligned with best practices in the field of gifted education?
7. What are the strengths and areas for improvement in the program? What are the recommendations for improvement in this area?



# Research Methods

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- Samples selected by random and purposive methods
- Instrumentation designed/adapted for surveys, focus groups, classroom observations, and best practices
- Data collection – online, on-site, and off-site
- Data analysis – descriptive, using statistics and content analysis
- Findings derived from triangulation of data sources
- Commendations, recommendations, and conclusions formulated

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# Data Sources

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- Curriculum materials, texts, and resources used in the TAG Program (N=142)
- Reports documenting program status and progress over the past three years, including curriculum and identification data (N=8)
- Surveys of parents (N=569), students (N=127), and staff (N=368)
- 38 Focus groups of parents (N=108), students (N=131), and staff (N=138)
- Selected interviews with ACPS and program leadership (N=5) and with the TAG Advisory Committee
- Classroom observations at K-12 levels at 12 school sites (N=120)
- NAGC National Programming Standards

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# Commendations

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- Comprehensive Advanced Placement (AP) Program available from 9th grade
- Dual Enrollment (DE) opportunities for linkage to community college (NOVA)
- Grades 4-5 language arts and math advanced programs for TAG learners
- Young Scholars Program (YS) for underrepresented populations at grades K-5
- Revised acceleration policy and regulation

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# Research Question #1

## Implementation of Stated Goals and Outcomes

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### Findings

- Limited attention to TAG curriculum development, including a lack of scope and sequence K-12 within subject areas for TAG learners
- TAG program uneven, based upon level, program type, and location
- Limited use of differentiation practices

### Recommendations

- Develop a comprehensive K-3 Program
- Extend the Young Scholars Program
- Revamp the middle school TAG program
- Assess TAG student growth annually
- Appoint coordinators for K-3 and high school
- Target professional development on key differentiation strategies, including flexible grouping

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# Research Question #2

## Addressing Underrepresented Groups

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### Findings

- Several appropriate approaches used in current identification system for identifying students from underrepresented groups
- A disproportionality of students from underrepresented groups receiving TAG services
- Additional features needed for the identification system

### Recommendations

- Improve strategies and modify processes for the identification of students from underrepresented groups
- Incorporate research-based checklist items that focus on learning characteristics of students from underrepresented groups
- Train teachers and building administrators annually on the general and specific aptitude characteristics of gifted learners
- Develop tailored program emphases for identified students from underrepresented groups

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# Research Question #3

## Rigor of the Curriculum for TAG Students

### Findings

- Materials limited in differentiation and specificity for use with TAG learners
- Use of lower level materials with advanced learners at K-3 and 6-8
- Need for improvement of Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) format, implementation, and monitoring at K-8
- Stakeholder concerns about the written curriculum and its implementation
- Low frequency classroom use of differentiated curriculum and instruction

### Recommendations

- Revise TAG and honors course curricula
- Select advanced text materials and/or resources
- Design revised DEP format and guidelines for use
- Ensure that teachers of gifted learners possess a skill set of best practices in differentiation.
- Monitor curriculum implementation

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# Research Question #4

## Benefits to Participating Students

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### Findings

- TAG Program perceived as highly beneficial for students; limited evidence except for AP data
- Need for the development of the TAG Program at K-3 and grades 6-8
- Strong support for the language arts and math TAG programs at grades 4-5 and the challenge of AP
- Effective teacher behaviors for TAG learners focused on higher level thinking
- Program successes and gaps in service delivery.

### Recommendations

- Continue to monitor the performance of TAG students
- Collect off-level performance data on TAG student performance at all levels prior to AP.
- Develop/revise curriculum guides in all grades and content areas for TAG learners.
- Provide professional development on strategies and learning assessments for the gifted
- Design K-12 scope and sequence guides for program articulations

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# Research Question #5

## Stakeholder Perceptions of Program Effectiveness

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### Use of Stakeholder Data

- Survey and focus group data are perceptual in orientation and require supporting documentation from other sources
- Low rate of online survey response (less than 30%)
- Focus group data used to corroborate survey results and other data sources
- Recommendations from these sources triangulated and noted in the recommendations for Research Questions #1, 2, 3, 4, & 6

### Findings

- Overall satisfaction with the program varied, based on stakeholder group and program type
- Majority of parents across levels found TAG Program challenging; teachers/administrators perceived it as less challenging
- Elementary parents were positive about the TAG 4-5 program; secondary parents perceived limited opportunities in counseling; middle school parents perceived a lack of TAG programming
- Students had strong positive reactions to program benefits, citing critical thinking and challenging work as strongest benefits
- Changing the identification process to include more students from underrepresented groups and improving the middle school program were universal perceptions

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# Research Question #6

## Alignment with National Best Practice Standards

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### Findings

- Met most indicators for identification and professional development standards
- Need for improvement in programming, assessment for learning, counseling, and differentiation practices
- Differentiation strategies used effectively by a limited number of teachers observed
- Revised acceleration policy and regulations consonant with national standards.

### Recommendations

- Offer ongoing professional development for building administrators
- Tailor professional development for central program leadership and curriculum specialists
- Refine a counseling program for TAG students at secondary levels
- Personalize TAG student services through improved DEP implementation

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# Other Findings and Recommendations

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## Findings

- About a quarter of parents and staff lacked information about identification and curriculum in the program
- Focus group data corroborated this lack of understanding by both stakeholder groups.
- Lack of program cohesion due to gaps and fragmentation

## Recommendations

- Design strategies to gain building administrative support
- Institute community outreach procedures
- Develop parent education programs.
- Design a curriculum scope and sequence framework K-12
- Expand the website

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# Conclusion

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- Findings and recommendations demonstrate TAG program strengths and areas for improvement.
- These findings and recommendations also document gaps in service delivery and suggest further program development.
- A three year plan of action converts the recommendations into program design, development, and implementation outcomes.



# Questions?

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*In human affairs the logical future,  
determined by past and present conditions,  
is less important than the willed future,  
which is largely brought about by deliberate choices.*

--Rene Dubos

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# Talented and Gifted Program Action Plan



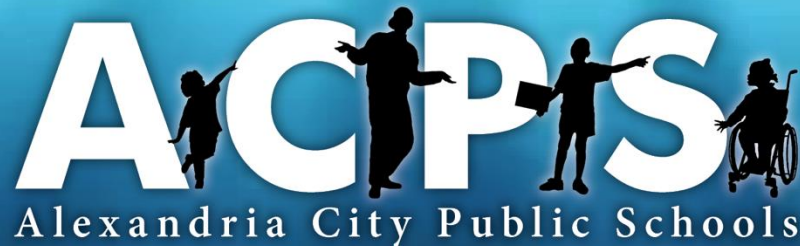
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**Chief Academic Officer**



**Donna Brearley**  
**Talented and Gifted Program Coordinator**



***Every Student Succeeds***



# Research Questions

1. To what extent is the TAG program being implemented according to its **stated goals and objectives**?
2. To what extent is the program progressing in its attempt to identify **underrepresented groups for the program**?
3. To what extent is the **written, taught, and assessed curriculum** sufficiently rigorous and differentiated for TAG-identified students?
4. To what extent is the program **beneficial for students** participating in it?
5. To what extent is the program perceived to be effective by **relevant stakeholders**?
6. To what extent is the program **aligned with best practices** in the field of gifted education?
7. What are the **strengths and areas for improvement** in the program? What are recommendations for improvement in this area?



# Research Question 1

## (Stated Goals and Outcomes)

### Recommendations

1. Develop K-3 **General Intellectual Aptitude (GIA)**  
**Curriculum**
2. Expand the **Young Scholars Program**
3. Revamp **middle school TAG**
4. Assess TAG student growth **annually**
5. Appoint **coordinators** for K-3 and high school
6. Target professional development related to **TAG**  
**differentiation strategies**





# Research Question 1

## (Stated Goals and Outcomes)



### Action Steps

1. Develop **new curriculum options using research-based curriculum** in Canvas for grades K-3
2. Consider adding another **TAG level of curriculum** in SOL-tested areas
3. Report on TAG student achievement growth in an **annual report to the ACPS School Board**
4. Continue to offer **gifted endorsement coursework**
5. Utilize an existing TAG position to support the K-3 program development and implementation



# Research Question #2

## (Addressing Underrepresented Groups)

### Recommendations

1. Improve strategies and modify processes for the **identification of students from underrepresented groups**
2. Incorporate research-based checklist items that focus on learning **characteristics of students from underrepresented groups**
3. Train teachers and building administrators **annually** on the **general** and **specific** aptitude **characteristics of gifted learners**
4. Develop tailored program emphases for identified students from **underrepresented groups**





# Research Question #2

## (Addressing Underrepresented Groups)



### Action Steps

1. Expand **TAG identification** for students with **intellectual/cognitive proficiency** that may not be captured by traditional aptitude testing models (i.e. Naglieri NonVerbal Ability Test and Cognitive Abilities Test)
2. Expand access to the **Young Scholars program to K-3 elementary students** in all elementary school sites
3. Revise existing characteristics rating scales to include **learning characteristics of students from underrepresented groups**
4. Expand the availability of **academic preparation options** to enhance students' access to and success in Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment (ie, AP Boot Camp)
5. Integration of **AVID-supported strategies into SOL content courses** beyond the AVID elective classroom resulting in AVID Schoolwide

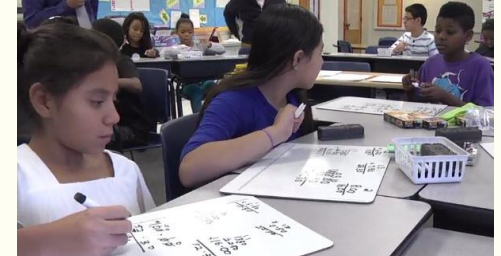


# Research Question #3

## (Rigor of TAG Curriculum)

### Recommendations

1. Revise **TAG and honors course curricula using research-based curriculum** to include heightened emphasis upon rigor and engagement
2. Select **advanced text materials and/or resources**
3. Design revised **Differentiated Education Plan (DEP)** format and guidelines
4. Ensure that teachers of gifted learners possess a skill set of **best practices in differentiation**





# Research Question #3

## (Rigor of the TAG Curriculum)



### Action Steps

1. As part of the Canvas curriculum revision process, enhance TAG-designated and honors courses (**eg, Socratic seminars, debates, simulations, problem-based learning scenarios, projects**)
2. Purchase **high Lexile level texts** to comprise an enhanced canon of fiction and non-fiction literature for TAG-identified learners
3. Use an expanded and updated DEP format, including exploration of potential use of electronic student work products and portfolios
4. Continue to offer **professional development workshops (including TAG Certification)** related to differentiation strategies for TAG students



# Research Question #4

## (Benefits to Participating Students)

### Recommendations

1. Continue to **monitor the performance** of TAG students
2. Collect **off-level performance data** on TAG student performance at all levels prior to AP
3. Develop/**revise curriculum guides incorporating research-based curriculum** in all grades and content areas for TAG learners
4. Provide **professional development** on strategies and learning assessments for the gifted
5. Design **K-12 scope and sequence guides** for program articulation



# Research Question #4

## (Benefits to Participating Students)



### Action Plan

1. Expand the **disaggregation of data** to include TAG-identified students
2. Use data to identify areas of **underachievement and/or underperformance among TAG learners**—including early intervention in such areas as reading comprehension, writing performance, mathematical problem solving, and scientific reasoning and inquiry
3. Integrate TAG-specific strategies, recommendations, and project-based learning suggestions aligned with each of the updated curriculum units in Canvas, including an **enhanced TAG scope and sequence**
4. Expand the availability of **professional development options** leading to gifted endorsement as well as teachers' use of TAG strategies for differentiation



# Research Question #5

## (Stakeholder Perceptions)

### Recommendations

1. Overall **satisfaction with the program varied**, based on stakeholder group and program type
2. **Parents** across levels found TAG Program **challenging**; **teachers/administrators** perceived it as less challenging
3. Elementary parents were **positive about the TAG 4-5 program**; secondary parents perceived limited opportunities in counseling; middle school parents perceived a lack of TAG programming
4. Students had strong positive reactions to program benefits, citing **critical thinking and challenging work** as strongest benefits
5. Changing the identification process to include **more students from underrepresented groups** and improving the middle school program were universal perceptions



# Research Question #5

## (Stakeholder Perceptions)



### Action Steps

1. Expand and enhance **opportunities for TAG groupings** at the middle school level aligned with counseling services and Honors course offerings
2. Continue to emphasize **higher-level questions, project-based learning, and discourse strategies**
3. Begin the TAG improvement process via a comprehensive review and updating of the curriculum at the **middle school level** in English, mathematics, science, and social studies
4. Expand efforts to **identify more students from underrepresented groups** throughout secondary school and provide appropriate support services to ensure success



# Research Question #6

## (Alignment with National Standards)



### Recommendations

1. Ongoing **professional development** for building administrators
2. Tailored professional development for **central program leadership and curriculum specialists**
3. Strengthen **communication about existing counseling** supports and resources
4. Personalize TAG student services through **improved DEP implementation**



# Research Question #6

## (Alignment with National Standards)

### Action Steps

1. Integrate **strategies and contemporary issues related to TAG identification and the teaching-learning process** in principal and assistant principal workshops and monthly meetings
2. Provide **cross-level workshops and other professional development** opportunities to support school-based and central office staff in addressing the needs of TAG students
3. Develop opportunities for **partnership initiatives** involving the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and Student Services to address the counseling recommendations and implications of the TAG evaluation report
4. Refine and **enhance the DEP format and implementation process**, including renewed emphasis upon the DEP as a key component of TAG students' progress monitoring process



# Research Question #7

## (Other Recommendations)

### Recommendations

1. Design strategies to gain **building administrative support**
2. Institute **community outreach procedures**
3. Develop **parent education programs**
4. Design a curriculum **scope and sequence framework K-12**
5. Expand the **website**





# Research Question #7

## (Other Recommendations)

### Action Steps

1. Enhance **administrators' understanding and skills** in addressing the needs of TAG students and their teachers
2. Expand the availability of **community and parent education and outreach opportunities**, including a major focus upon TAG identification and service delivery for underrepresented student populations
3. Expand the **availability of TAG resources** posted on the Canvas curriculum platform
4. Continue to **articulate expected outcomes for TAG students** within the context of the ACPs curriculum



# Local Plan Revision

**2017-18**

Develop revised 5-year Local Plan based on evaluation findings  
Incorporate input and feedback from various stakeholder groups  
Seek School Board approval in May 2018

## Curriculum Projects

- Develop TAG curriculum on Canvas to ensure differentiation strategies and rigorous multicultural text selections for gifted students K-12 are evident
- Develop K-3 GIA curriculum using research-based curriculum developed for gifted students
- Explore the development of an Advanced Humanities and STEM course sequence for middle school
- Develop performance-based assessments to monitor and report gifted student growth
- Work with student services to ensure counseling services are tailored to include the social-emotional and career needs of gifted learners.

## Personnel

- Identify personnel to assist with the K-3 curriculum and service model implementation



# Local Plan Revision

- **Identification**

- Create new identification tools such as revised characteristics checklist, work sample/ tasks and portfolio processes to be more inclusive of underrepresented groups
- Expand the Young Scholars Program to other elementary schools
- Explore a universal screening process or tool for rising 6<sup>th</sup> grade students

- **Professional Development**

- Design and conduct required training for administrators, teachers and other staff on gifted program components including assessments
- Continue to provide opportunities for gifted endorsement and other forms of gifted teaching preparation

- **Communication**

- Continue to build support and advocacy through improved community outreach
- Develop parent education programs
- Expand website information and explore other ways to disseminate information to a wide audience



# Implementation Timeline

## Design

Yr 1

SY 18

- **Revise** ELA curriculum grades 4-8 to provide more rigorous text selections and differentiation strategies
- **Revise** K-3 services – add Coordinator and develop curriculum
- **Expand** Young Scholars
- **Revise** identification to include strategies for the inclusion of more underrepresented populations
- **Design** assessment system to monitor and report annually growth of gifted learners
- **Expand** required professional development to include K-3 teachers, counselors, parents and administrators
- **Create** new documents for communication to all stakeholders
- **Organize** task forces of teachers at each level to collaborate on new curriculum materials and DEP design

## Develop

Yr 2

SY 19

- **Develop** K-12 curriculum framework and scope and sequence
- **Review** and adopt research-based curriculum
- **Revise** curriculum on Canvas to include learning plans
- **Revise** DEPs to include goals, outcomes and assessments
- **Develop** middle school opportunities to provide for accelerated Humanities and STEM courses or electives
- **Develop** grade 6 whole grade screening
- **Provide** professional development on new DEP design, new curricula
- **Review** existing framework for college-career planning
- **Pilot** assessment system

## Implement

Yr 3

SY 20

- **Create** program handbook
- **Report** annual growth of gifted students
- **Implement** new middle school coursework.
- **Strengthen communication regarding** counseling services provided to meet the needs of gifted learners



# Questions and Discussion

