

Parent Objectives for the TAG Program at ACPS:

1. Become one of the strongest TAG programs in Northern Virginia and the country.
2. Ensure gifted students, including those from underrepresented groups (minority, low income, EL and twice-exceptional) are identified and their learning needs met.
3. Support teachers and staff to identify and equip gifted learners from ALL groups.
4. Deliver first-rate TAG services consistently and uniformly in Grades K-12.
5. Recognize that gifted learners have special academic, social and emotional needs.

How to Meet These Objectives:

1. Provide teachers and staff throughout ACPS with resources and training about the unique qualities, educational and social needs of gifted learners and the benefits of properly educating them; including identification of gifted children across all cultures, ethnic backgrounds, socioeconomic groups and twice-exceptional.
2. Commit to the ACPS TAG Master Plan that addresses not only the needs of the various levels of the TAG program: Grades K-3, 4-5, 6-8, 9-12 but also the transitions between these levels to assure a consistent program approach and uniform delivery of services throughout a student's career.
3. Expand the **Young Scholars Program** to all elementary schools.
4. As recommended in the TAG Study Report (October 2017 by Joyce VanTassel-Baska, et al), **hire a K-3 curriculum coordinator** to build the foundation for a strong and consistent TAG program that will serve its students for their tenure at ACPS.
5. Develop or purchase a **TAG specific curriculum** and classroom resources that meet or exceed the recommendations in the TAG Study Report (October 2017 by Joyce VanTassel-Baska, et al).
6. Hold teachers/administrators accountable for utilizing TAG specific curriculum, particularly at the **middle school level**.
7. Provide regular, consistent communication of TAG offerings at the elementary, middle and high school levels.

Why ACPS Should Meet These Objectives:

1. **To fulfill its promise that "Every Student Succeeds"** ACPS must implement a Talented and Gifted Program that allows **ALL ACPS students** to have equal access to appropriate educational services. This access should not be dependent on the school they attend or their status of EL, Free and Reduced Lunch, twice-exceptional, et al.

What Happens if ACPS Fails to Meet These Objectives:

1. ACPS's reputation will remain secondary to Arlington County, Falls Church City and Fairfax County school systems. Without a stellar image, the victories of ACPS students and staff (*Worldwide Odyssey of the Mind winners, 1st place winner in math and computer science at the US Junior Science and Humanities Symposium, Student awarded the Barron prize for her work with the Watershed Warriors Initiative*) are under recognized and the abilities of teachers and pupils are not visible.
2. Classroom teachers may spend unnecessary hours attempting to differentiate for gifted students without the proper curriculum or administrative support leading to frustration and attrition.

3. Classroom teachers may not deliver differentiation as articulated in the current Local Plan thus perpetuating the existing problem of not meeting gifted learners needs.
4. ACPS risks losing TAG students and teachers to school districts seen as superior to ACPS in program or professional support.

DEBUNKING Myths bout TAG:

1. If TAG students' needs are not met, parents can send them to private schools to meet those needs.

TRUTH

- ACPS promises that "Every Student Succeeds". TAG students are not exempt because we do not currently have a curriculum and staff support in place to meet them.
- TAG parents want their children to have the public school experience. These parents are committed to their – and to their children's – full participation in their communities.
- Private schools generally have fewer resources for meeting the academic and psychological needs of gifted learners.
- Not all TAG families can afford private school.

2. TAG students don't need special services because they are smart and will be okay, we need to concentrate on the students who are below grade-level.

TRUTH

When TAG students' academic and psychological needs are not met, the resulting boredom and frustration can lead to despondency, negativity and unhealthy work habits. These emotions can further result in poor academic performance, classroom disruptions and lower test scores for the individual student and the class/school average.

3. TAG students are all part of a homogenous group.

TRUTH

Gifted learners are found in all cultures, ethnic backgrounds, physical abilities and socioeconomic groups. Many ACPS educators are taking advantage of programs like Young Scholars to better identify and nurture students from underrepresented groups so that they can participate in TAG programs.

4. TAG is for white kids.

TRUTH

Eligibility for TAG is defined by having superior performance in 3 out of these 5 areas: Ability Test, Achievement Test, Classroom Grades, Characteristics & Classroom Behaviors, and Advanced Transfer Tasks. A student's race, gender, EL, socioeconomic and/or cultural status are not considered. However, many students lack advocacy or have gifted traits masked by these factors and are denied the opportunity to maximize their potential. Strong support from the community and school system must be leveraged to identify and address the needs of these children.

TAKE ACTION!

Email the School Board: <https://www.acps.k12.va.us/site/Default.aspx?PageID=572>

Attend a Meeting on Dec. 14 or Jan. 11 to show support for TAG Advocates who will be speaking.

Sign-up to Speak at a School Board Meeting on Dec. 14 or Jan. 11:

<https://acpsweb.wufoo.com/forms/zjkmhmk0tyb47r/>

SAMPLE LETTER TO SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

Dear School Board Members,

As a parent with child(ren) attending (insert school), I am writing to express concern that ACPS will neglect to immediately fund and implement ALL of the recommendations presented in the Talented and Gifted (TAG) Study Report (October 2017 by Joyce VanTassel-Baska, et al).

Of most importance to me is that ACPS:

- Become one of the strongest TAG programs in Northern Virginia and the country.
- Ensure gifted students, including those from underrepresented groups (minority, low income, EL and twice-exceptional) are identified and their learning needs met.
- Support teachers and staff to identify and equip gifted learners from ALL groups.
- Deliver first-rate TAG services consistently and uniformly in Grades K-12.
- Recognize that gifted learners have special academic, social and emotional needs.

ACPS can achieve these goals by:

- Expanding the Young Scholars program to all elementary schools.
- Hiring a K-3 Curriculum coordinator.
- Developing or purchasing TAG curriculum as articulated in the TAG Study Report.
- Regularly communicating with parents and teachers about TAG services available K-12.
- Taking immediate action to solve the problems identified at the middle school level.
- Building seamless transitions for TAG students between elementary, middle and high school.

ACPS has promised me and my child(ren) (or insert child(ren's) name and school) that "Every Student Succeeds", only by fully implementing the recommendations can this be a reality for my child. The time for action is now. I look forward to following your upcoming budget proceedings and URGE you to address this important issue.

Sincerely,

WRITE A LETTER TELLING YOUR PERSONAL STORY AS A PARENT