

**Gifted and Talented
Advisory Committee**

**Status Report on Gifted and Talented Programs
of the Fairfax County Public Schools**

May 6, 2008

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Introduction

The Gifted and Talented Advisory Committee (GTAC) is pleased to provide a Status Report on Advanced Academic Programs of the Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS).

It has been an informative year and a great opportunity to continue our work with Assistant Superintendent of Instructional Services, Peter Noonan; the Director of the Office of Elementary Instruction and Library Information Services, Mary Ann Ryan; the Director of the Office of Middle School Instruction, Linda Whitfield; and the Coordinator of Gifted Programs, Carol Horn, all of whom have done an outstanding job of providing us with requested information and historical perspective. We are also grateful for the assistance of Cheryl McCullough and Anne Horak, GT Specialists for Elementary Instruction and for Middle School Programs respectively. Also attending several of our meetings throughout this year was FCPS School Board member Kaye Kory.

Our report this year has two components:

- Status Report for the 2007-08 year
- Review of the Local Plan for the Education of Gifted Students

The GTAC appreciates the efforts of the School Board, the Superintendent, administrators, teachers and staff in continuing to address the needs of the growing and changing population of gifted students in Fairfax County.

Status Report for the 2007-08 year

For the 2007-08 school year, the Gifted and Talented Advisory Committee (GTAC) was given the following charge: “GTAC will provide recommendations on how the school system can support and meet the needs of gifted students in achieving the School Board’s three student achievement goals with additional consideration given to how to implement the goals in a way that addresses the unique needs of gifted students.”

Initially, our Committee decided to break the charge into the four academic core areas for discussion. However, we quickly questioned what information we might need to gather and how we would then proceed. To begin our work, we asked for and received a great deal of information on the curriculum frameworks for elementary Levels II, III, and IV for grades three through eight. The following information was shared by ISD staff:

- Samples of the curriculum and resources that are used to challenge advanced learners in grades K-8 in all subject areas. The samples included text books, lesson plans, exercises, extensions, and tools.
- A presentation and review of the Proposed Revisions to the Regulations Governing Educational Services for Gifted Students.
- Discussions of the Recommendations of the Middle School Task Force, Advanced Academic Programs, FCPS.
- A detailed explanation of the Student Achievement Goals in Language Arts, Social Studies, Mathematics, and Science that had been previously presented to the School Board.
- An article from the Virginia Association of the Gifted entitled, “A Beacon of Light and Hope: The Growth Model and Its Potential for Evaluation the Academic Progress of Gifted Learners.”
- A presentation by Pat Murphy and Kathy Oliver on how FCPS is studying and exploring growth models in both short and long term planning.

In the course of this year, the group decided not to divide the charge into four sections. It also became clear that assessments were a recurring theme in our discussions and should become our focus for next year. In order to provide the School Board with a reasoned recommendation, or set of recommendations, we have concluded that time for further study and evaluation is needed. Based on the information that we reviewed this year, we suggest that our charge read: “GTAC will provide recommendations on how the school system can support and meet the needs of gifted students in achieving the School Board’s three student achievement goals with an emphasis on assessment.” The Committee looks forward to providing a thorough report to the School Board during the course of the 2008-09 school year.

Finally, it should also be mentioned that considerable time was spent this year discussing the FCPS budget situation and its impact on students in Advanced Academic Programs. School Board member (and GTAC liaison) Kaye Kory and Assistant Superintendent of Instructional Services Peter Noonan provided monthly updates on the status of the budget process and answered many questions concerning the budget impacts on the AAP community. We appreciate their continued support of our work and our efforts.

Review of the Local Plan for the Education of Gifted Students

Virginia Code Section 22.1-18.1 requires the GTAC to review the local plan for the education of gifted students and determine the extent to which the plan was implemented. The Local Plan for Fairfax County Public Schools was submitted to the Commonwealth in 2006 and will be in effect until 2011. The objectives due in 2008 and their results can be found in Attachment B.

Conclusion

As described earlier, in order to provide the School Board with a reasoned recommendation, or set of recommendations, we have concluded that time for further study and evaluation of assessments is needed. The Committee looks forward to providing a thorough report to the School Board during the course of the 2008-09 school year.