

MEETING MINUTES
ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
GIFTED SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (GSAC)

DATE AND TIME: SEPTEMBER 11, 2023 AT 7:00 PM

ATTENDEES: Carlisle Levine, Co-Chair
Sherri Oliver, Secretary
Katherine Partington, K-12 Specialist, Advanced
Academics and Talent Development Office
Nine Other Advisory Committee Members

AGENDA:

I. INTRODUCTION OF ATTENDEES

II. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

- Meetings will be held on the second Monday of each month at 7:00pm, with the exception of October's meeting, which will be tentatively moved to Monday, October 16th to accommodate the holiday

III. EXPLANATION OF ROLES OF THE ADVANCED ACADEMICS AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT OFFICE AND THE GIFTED SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- The Advanced Academics and Talent Development Office seeks to support advanced learners in APS by collaborating with classroom teachers and school administrators to lead the school-based committee to identify advanced learners, offer instructional coaching for planning/implementing of advanced academic resources and critical and creative thinking strategies, and work collaboratively with teachers in the development of extended or differentiated units or lessons.
- GSAC is a subcommittee of the Advisory Council on Teaching & Learning (ACTL), which reviews materials and makes recommendations concerning the educational needs of Arlington's gifted students.

- GSAC's draft recommendations are due November 20th in preparation for the January 2024 Arlington School Board meeting.

IV. UPDATE FROM THE ADVANCED ACADEMICS AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

- The Office's name was changed to the Advanced Academics and Talent Development Office to better align with the collaborative cluster and talent development model which has been in place for years. The main deliverer of services for advanced/gifted learners is the classroom teacher with support from the school's AAC. The AAC also works with all teachers, as schedules allow, so that all students have access to critical and creative thinking opportunities.
- Data on school clustering of students identified as gifted will be available soon, once schedules are finalized. In general, schools appear to be making progress in meeting the former policy of clusters of 5 but not the current policy of 10. The Office is still working to make sure that schools are striving to meet clustering policies and provide assistance.
- Open enrollment, intensified middle school courses are being offered for 7th and 8th grade students this year. The Academics Office is monitoring curriculum and enrollment figures and will be evaluating to determine the best next steps to ensure open access, diversity, and training.
- Data suggests that, while work is still needed, the identification of gifted students and enactment of the Young Scholars model that better tracks the student population are progressing in the Arlington Public Schools system.

V. OUTLINE OF SY 2022-23 ACTIVITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF GSAC

- GSAC has been advocating for open enrollment intensified middle school course offerings for 6th, 7th, and 8th graders for over 12 years and is delighted to see intensified course offerings this year for 7th and 8th graders. GSAC is looking forward to offerings being provided to 6th graders for the 2024-2025 school year.

- GSAC members reached out to school administrators, community leaders, and nonprofits providing services to marginalized populations, informing them of APS' new intensified course offerings in efforts to help inform parents and students of the offerings.
- GSAC advocates for adherence to clustering policies for advanced learners.
- GSAC desires staffing support for the Advanced Academics and Talent Development Office and was pleased when Arlington Public Schools added at least one full-time employee that was previously on a grant, bringing the total number to 3, though this number is still not close to the level of support that the other similar program areas of English Learner and Special Education Offices have.

VI. DISCUSSION AND BRAINSTORMING FOR SY 2023-24 RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRIORITIES

- **GSAC Immediate Action Items:** (i) request clustering date for review; (ii) request data on enrollment in new middle school open enrollment intensified courses (which we understand will become available in the next week or so); and (iii) discuss possible GSAC name change to align with new office name.
- **Possible 2023 Recommendations Discussed:** (i) advocating for Director position for the Advanced Academics and Talent Development Office; (ii) requesting opt-out policy (following certain established criteria) for open enrollment intensified middle school classes (similar to how the intensified math courses are administered) to ensure greater diversity and access to all; (iii) ensuring that open enrollment intensified courses are offered to 6th grade students; and (iv) advocating for involvement of Advanced Academic Coaches in planning factors study and clustering.