# Advanced Academics and Talent Development (fka Gifted Services)
# Final Recommendations to the APS School Board
# February 12, 2024

**Recommendation #1: The Office of Advanced Academics and Talent Development should be led by a Director, rather than a Supervisor.**

**Background**: APS's Advanced Academic and Talent Development (AATD) Office is tasked with meeting the needs of all advanced learners at every grade level at every school and **in every subject at APS**. The number of APS students currently identified as "gifted" is **almost 30% percent of total APS students** enrolled – a percentage that reflects APS' talent development model[1] and that does not include students who have not yet been identified as "gifted" or the advanced learners who would also benefit from greater challenges within their school curricula.[2]

**Need**: Currently, Cheryl's Supervisor position slots her in with Content Supervisors, which is not consistent with her APS-wide role that covers students across all content areas. Because the AATD office responds to a special need exhibited by almost 30% of APS students, the AATD office and Cheryl's role are closer to those of the offices for Student with Disabilities covering approximately 15% and English Learners covering almost 26% of APS students. Both of these more comparable offices are led by Directors.

**Solution**: Cheryl McCullough's position should be revised from Supervisor to Director.

**Budgetary Implications and/or Implementation Needs**: Additional compensation cost is a personnel issue and is not included in the memo.

**Strategic Plan Alignment**: Briefly indicate how the recommendation aligns with the 2018-2024 APS Strategic Plan.
Core Values: Excellence and Equity
Goal: Engaged Workforce, Student Success
Strategies: Embed the 5 Cs (critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, communication, and citizenship skills) into curriculum and instruction (S-SS-1) and Deliver curriculum through innovative and relevant instruction that is differentiated to meet the diverse needs of each student (S-SS-2)

**Committee vote**: Everyone voted in favor of this recommendation with 9 in favor and 0 opposed.

**Staff response**: Staff fully supports.

[1] The talent development model is considered the best practice for providing access to advanced academics as it aligns with the National Association of Gifted Children's paper of the year that says the way to achieve equity is to reframe the definition of gifted to move towards advanced academics and talent development as we have done in APS. See "The Challenge of Achieving Equity Within Public School Gifted and Talented Programs" by Scott J. Peters.
[2] Students are still identified as "gifted" in the system as we continue to move towards the advanced academic terminology.

Recommendation #2: **APS's Clustering Policy (SB Policy I-8.1: 10 or more students identified as gifted per cluster) should be consistently followed.**

**Background**: SB Policy I-8.1. reads in relevant part: "In elementary, middle and high school courses without advanced/intensified options, students who are identified as gifted in a content area are placed in classrooms with at least 10 other students identified in this same area… Such grouping benefits all students by providing a wide range of interactions with students of differing strengths, methods of contribution, and perspectives."

**Need**: This clustering policy is not being consistently applied. GSAC reviewed data[3] on clustering, restricting it to situations where the policy could be applied.[4] In settings where clustering could be applied, only one elementary school (Escuela Key) fully applied the clustering policy. Seven additional elementary schools (ES) clustered more than 50% of the time.[5] In the 17 other ES the average rate of clustering was 27%. ES schools averaged 39%, Middle schools (MS) averaged 70% and high schools (HS) averaged 51%.[6]

Gifted services through differentiation are also not consistently provided across APS. We believe that following the clustering policy will help fix the inconsistent application of differentiation, since having more gifted students in a cluster makes it harder to ignore their needs and bringing a benefit to the 30% of the APS population identified as gifted.

**Solution**: We ask that the school board and Superintendent Duran remind the Principals and Counselors about the policy and set up an appropriate accountability system to increase APS compliance with the policy.

**Budgetary Implications and/or Implementation Needs**: "none."

**Strategic Plan Alignment**: Briefly indicate how the recommendation aligns with the 2018-2024 APS Strategic Plan.
Core Values: Excellence and Equity
Goal: Student Success, Student Well-Being
Strategies: Embed the 5 Cs (critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, communication, and citizenship skills) into curriculum and instruction (S-SS-1) and Deliver curriculum through innovative and relevant instruction that is differentiated to meet the diverse needs of each student (S-SS-2)

**Committee vote**: Everyone voted in favor of this recommendation with 9 in favor and 0 opposed.

**Staff response**: Staff fully supports the consistent application of the clustering policy.

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[3] This data is from Fall 2023.
[4] This data only captures situations where clustering is possible. For example, it does not capture Kindergarten as students are not identified at the beginning of the year and therefore cannot be clustered. As the policy requires that 10 or more students be clustered, if a school only had 3 gifted students identified in a grade, it would be considered clustered if those 3 students were together. Per the policy: "When there are less than ten students identified as gifted in a grade level in the same content area, they will be grouped within the same class and differentiation will be provided."
[5] Ashlawn and Taylor were a bit over 50%, Arlington Traditional School, Carlin Springs and Discovery were about 57%, Innovation was 62%, Nottingham was around 83% and Escuela Key was 98%.
[6] HB Woodlawn was about 68%.

Additional area of focus for GSAC: **Faithful implementation of full complement of open-enrollment middle-school intensified courses**

**Background**: APS has had a successful roll out of the new open enrollment, intensified, middle school courses. They have been popular with students. Across all middle schools and all open-enrollment intensified courses, there are 3,488 students enrolled. This number does not reflect unique student enrollments and may include students who are taking multiple intensified courses.

- There are 1,947 7th grade enrollments in English language arts (ELA), science, and social studies intensified courses.
- There are 1,541 8th grade enrollments in ELA and science intensified courses.[7]

With respect to the teacher perspective, we have not done a formal survey yet (teachers have enough on their plates), but the feedback received so far has been consistently positive, with teachers reporting that they enjoy teaching these courses.

With respect to equity, the strong uptake in these courses is evidence these courses are meeting a substantial need for MS students. With respect to racial equity, the enrollments by race in the intensified courses generally mirror the overall racial distribution in APS. There is a very small gap in Black students and a larger gap in Hispanic students that is driven by EL1-4s (removing ELs and the Hispanic percentage is closer to the MS overall proportion). Details are provided in Appendix C.

**Need**: Complete the roll out by offering 6th grade intensified classes in ELA, reading, science and social studies and an intensified 8th grade World Geography, as previously agreed. Provide comprehensive communications to students and parents highlighting the option of taking these courses. 8th grade World Geography, Intensified was left off the program of studies for 2024-2025 and this should be rectified. The large demand by students for intensified courses and the positive feedback by teachers and students shows that these courses are needed.

**Potential Solution**: We understand that APS is planning on implementing an "opt out" model, based on criteria developed by the academic office such that students would be proactively recommended to take the intensified courses.[8] This is likely the most straightforward way to implement an "opt out" model as it parallels the process used by math. We have seen evidence that such an "opt out" policy has been effective in increasing racial equity in Dallas and we support this policy. The title of the reporting captures the impact: "Dallas ISD's Opt-Out Policy Dramatically Boosts Diversity in Its Honors Classes."[9]

[7] There are a total of 2,204 7th grade enrollments and 2,223 8th grade enrollments in all subjects, including math.
[8] We understand that the Office of Academics and the Office of School Support are considering implementing this "opt out" model and we would like to see that implemented.
[9] https://www.the74million.org/article/dallas-isds-opt-out-policy-dramatically-boosts-diversity-in-its-honors-classes/

Additional area of focus for GSAC: **We support recommendations made by other advisory committees.**

We support the following proposals made by other advisory groups:

- The addition of appropriate planning factors so that students with disabilities have access to intensified and other advanced courses.
- Moving APS's hiring windows earlier to get the best candidates for teachers and tutors.
- Increasing the amount of writing and the amount of feedback given on writing across the ELA curriculum.
- Implementing the "away for the day" cell phone policy at all schools as all of the research indicates negative impacts on students' academic achievement from cell phones, which are not needed at APS for any educational purposes because APS provides 1-to-1 electronic devices to students.

**Appendix A**
**Committee Members**

**Co-Chairs:** Greg Eastman, Carlisle Levine
**Secretary:** Sherri Barrier

**Members:** Amen Adera
Jamey Borell
Reg Goeke
Elina Guralnik
Natalie Goldring
Sheila Leonard
Amanda Miesionczek
Ndubeueze Onyike
Maren Pearson
Joe Pruitt
Ramon Reyes
Heather Selig
John Schaus
Bethelehem Tsehai
Mary Wierzbicki

**Members of the public who attend regularly (non-voting)**:
Camille Galdes
Yun Hseih
Elizabeth Cory
Neelam Gill
Elaine Fide

**Staff liaison:** Cheryl McCullough, Supervisor, Advanced Academics and Talent Development

**Appendix B**
**Clustering Data Fall 2023**

## Cluster Data by Elementary Schools Fall 2023

| Elementary Schools | Overall Percentage of Students Who Are Grouped in a Cluster | Total # of Students in Clusters | Total # Students Identified in One or More Content Areas |
|---|---|---|---|
| Barrett | **1%** | 3 | 294 |
| Fleet | **6%** | 22 | 384 |
| Hoffman Boston | **8%** | 19 | 226 |
| Long Branch | **14%** | 43 | 311 |
| Campbell | **16%** | 61 | 376 |
| Dr. Charles R. Drew | **16%** | 33 | 208 |
| Claremont | **24%** | 128 | 536 |
| Abingdon | **26%** | 90 | 342 |
| Glebe | **30%** | 180 | 610 |
| Randolph | **30%** | 82 | 275 |
| Barcroft | **33%** | 75 | 226 |
| Jamestown | **37%** | 164 | 448 |
| Oakridge | **41%** | 269 | 662 |
| Tuckahoe | **41%** | 216 | 529 |
| Montessori | **44%** | 238 | 547 |
| Arlington Science Focus | **47%** | 192 | 405 |
| Cardinal | **47%** | 415 | 879 |
| Ashlawn | **51%** | 324 | 636 |
| Taylor | **51%** | 382 | 756 |
| Arlington Traditional School | **56%** | 424 | 761 |
| Carlin Springs | **57%** | 106 | 187 |
| Discovery | **58%** | 337 | 581 |
| Innovation | **62%** | 198 | 320 |
| Nottingham | **83%** | 429 | 519 |
| Escuela Key | **98%** | 638 | 653 |

Note: SB Policy I-8.1: 10 specifies students should be in a cluster of 10 or more.

This tables identifies students as clustered if they are in a cluster of 10 or more of if a smaller number of students are in a grade those students are clustered.

**Cluster Data by Middle Schools**

| Middle Schools | Overall Percentage Clusters English Language Arts (ELA) Courses | Overall Percentage Clusters Science (SCI) Courses | Overall Percentage Clusters Social Studies (SS) Courses | Overall Percentage Clusters Mathematics (MA) Courses |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kenmore | **55%** | **88%** | **68%** | **74%** |
| Dorothy Hamm | **57%** | **71%** | **54%** | **77%** |
| Gunston | **61%** | **74%** | **36%** | **80%** |
| Williamsburg | **61%** | **68%** | **60%** | **64%** |
| Swanson | **72%** | **80%** | **68%** | **79%** |
| Jefferson | **76%** | **91%** | **79%** | **93%** |

The table shows the cluster data for the following middle school courses: Grade 6 ELA, Science, Social Studies and Mathematics; Grade 7 and Grade 8 Open Enrollment Intensified Courses.

**Cluster Data by High Schools**

| High Schools | Overall Percentage Clusters English Language Arts (ELA) Courses | Overall Percentage Clusters Science (SCI) Courses | Overall Percentage Clusters Social Studies (SS) Courses | Overall Percentage Clusters Mathematics (MA) Courses |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Arlington Career Center | **47%** | **30%** | **20%** | **57%** |
| Wakefield | **51%** | **48%** | **38%** | **57%** |
| W-L | **65%** | **59%** | **50%** | **66%** |
| Yorktown | **70%** | **46%** | **36%** | **74%** |

The table shows the cluster data for high school ELA, science, social studies and mathematics courses in grades 9-12.

**Appendix C**
**MS Intensified Enrollment Data Fall 2023**

| | Intensified Enrollments | | | | | | Overall Enrollment | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 7th Grade | | 8th Grade | | Total MS | | 2022 data grades 6,7,8 | |
| Asian | 233 | 10.6% | 251 | 11.3% | 484 | 10.9% | 482 | 8.7% |
| Black | 171 | 7.7% | 153 | 6.9% | 324 | 7.3% | 606 | 10.9% |
| Hispanic | 257 | 11.7% | 248 | 11.2% | 505 | 11.4% | 1,664 | 30.0% |
| Other | 266 | 12.1% | 274 | 12.3% | 540 | 12.2% | 510 | 9.2% |
| White | 1,277 | 57.9% | 1,297 | 58.3% | 2,574 | 58.1% | 2,517 | 45.3% |
| **All Middle Schools Total** | **2,204** | 100% | **2,223** | 100% | **4,427** | 100% | 5,554 | 100.0% |

Note: The overall enrollment numbers include EL1-4 students who participate in intensified classes at a much lower rate.

| EL Status | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **7th** | **8th** | **Total** |
| EL1-4 | 32 | 15 | 47 |
| EL6 | 128 | 133 | 261 |
| Proficient | 115 | 132 | 247 |
| Non-EL | 1,929 | 1,943 | 3,872 |
| **Total** | **2,204** | **2,223** | **4,427** |

| Economically Disadvantaged Enrollments | |
|---|---|
| 7th | 292 |
| 8th | 256 |
| **Total** | **548** |

| SWD Intensified Enrollments | |
|---|---|
| 7th | 116 |
| 8th | 102 |
| **Total** | **218** |

Data available at: [2023-24 SB 7th 8th Grade Intensified Courses Tables August 31 2023.xlsx - Google Sheets]