

Date: June 11, 2021

BOARD INFORMATION: X

MEETING PREPARATION: _____

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THROUGH: Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr., Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools,

TO: The Honorable Meagan Alderton, Chair, and
Members of the Alexandria City School Board

TOPIC: Updated Talented and Gifted (TAG) Screening Procedures for the 2020-2021 School Year

ACPS 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL

Goal 3: Student Accessibility and Support

SY 2020-2021 FOCUS AREA

Focus Area 3: Strategic Plan Implementation

Focus Area 5: Academic Disparities

FY 2021 BUDGET PRIORITY

Outreach to Underserved Communities to Increase Engagement

SUMMARY

The purpose of this brief is to explain modifications to the 2020-2021 talented and gifted (TAG) screening procedures. The Gifted and Advanced Academic Programs office have made these changes due to inequitable access to testing for all 1st and 3rd-grade students. The plan was shared with all elementary and middle school principals, Mr. Chris Suarez, a school board member and TAGAC board liaison, the Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee (TAGAC), some assistant principals, and the central office administrators, and TAG designees. Various stakeholders provided feedback during the process.

1. The changes are to pause General Intellectual Aptitude (GIA) universal screening for all students in 1st grade who have not been referred for services during the 2020-2021 school year. The continuation of universal screening for all current 1st grade students will occur when they are in 2nd grade during the fall.
2. The changes include pausing all 3rd grade Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) testing for students who have not been referred for services during the 2020-2021 school year. We will resume CogAT testing for current 3rd grade students when they are in 4th grade during Fall 2021.
3. The changes also include that all current 3rd grade students, regardless of having a CogAT score, will go through an oversight eligibility committee to determine Specific Academic Aptitude (SAA) services for 4th grade Language Arts and Math placement in Fall 2021. The oversight eligibility committee, which will meet at the end of June, will review information from previous ability test scores (Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test - NNAT), new achievement test scores, gifted rating scale scores, work samples, and report card grades and determine eligibility for services.

BACKGROUND

In the fall of 2020, ACPS adapted the gifted identification procedures for this school year because the universal screener of nationally normed, in-person ability testing was not an option at the beginning of the year. A memo was released and posted to the ACPS TAG website explaining that teachers would create a work-sample portfolio for all students in the 1st and 3rd grades instead of using testing as the universal screener. The portfolios included samples of the student work that both the teachers and students selected to showcase the student's strengths. The work samples were screened throughout the early spring to determine if a more detailed screening process was needed. In addition to universal screening, parents and staff members still had the option to refer students.

At the end of April 2021, the TAG screening committee looked over the portfolios' data and determined that additional information was needed to be more equitable and complete the screening process. Given the limited timeframe, multiple test windows open, and test resources, access to universal testing became limited, which pointed to a need to adapt the screening procedures for this school year. Below is a chart outlining the final screening procedures for the 2020-2021 school year. Please note, the only changes occur in the 1st and 3rd grades. Next year, our screening timelines will revert back to CogAT and NNAT testing in Fall 2021, with screening portfolios being completed following the typical non-Covid year timeline. In addition, next year, we will implement a checks-and-balance system to manage the portfolio screening process.

Chart 1: Final Screening Process for Grades K-8

Grade Level	Students Referred by Parents/Staff	Universal Screeners for All Students	Testing for Next Year	Notice of Eligibility
Kindergarten	Will receive the NNAT before 6/23/21	Not applicable to this grade level.	All rising 1 st graders will receive the NNAT in Fall 2021.	End-of July 2021
1 st Grade	Will receive the NNAT before 6/23/21.	The universal screening is paused until additional information can be collected. <u>Only students referred</u> will be tested and screened. All students will go through universal screening for general intellectual aptitude (GIA) in 2 nd grade during the 1 st quarter of the 2021-2022 school year.	All rising 2 nd graders will receive the NNAT in Fall 2021.	End-of July 2021
2 nd Grade	Will receive the NNAT before 6/23/21.	Not applicable to this grade level.	All rising 3 rd graders will receive the CogAT in Fall 2021.	End-of July 2021

Grade Level	Students Referred by Parents/Staff	Universal Screeners for All Students	Testing for Next Year	Notice of Eligibility
3 rd Grade	Will receive the CogAT before 6/23/21.	<p>All 3rd-grade CogAT testing is paused, except for students who were referred by January 28, 2021.</p> <p>Oversight Committee Process: <u>Regardless</u> of taking the CogAT test, <u>all third-grade students</u> will go through an oversight eligibility committee for specific academic aptitude (SAA in math and language arts. The committee will review information from previous ability test scores (NNAT), new achievement test scores, gifted rating scale scores, and report card grades.</p>	All rising 4 th graders will receive the CogAT in Fall 2021.	Mid-July 2021
4 th - 8 th Grade	Will receive the CogAT (Grades 4-5) or NNAT (Grades 6-8) before 6/23/21.	Not applicable to this grade level.		Mid-July 2021

RECOMMENDATION

The Superintendent recommends that the School Board review the information within this brief.

IMPACT

The pause in universal screening for 1st-grade students will provide greater equitable access to students to be screened for gifted and talented services during a school year that has modified our typical processes for screening. The pause of the CogAT exam in 3rd grade for non-referred students will provide greater equitable access to students to be screened for gifted and talented services during a school year that has modified our typical processes for screening. The proposed use of a universal oversight screening committee for all 3rd-grade students will increase equity and screening access for all students, regardless of taking a CogAT exam, so placement for students in the SAA program in 4th grade can occur in the fall. Third grade (rising 4th- grade students) parents/guardians will be notified mid-to-late July with eligibility results.

Parents will be notified of this plan via the TAG website, through TAG designees, and written communication to parents in Grades K-8.

CONTACT

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