

To: Arlington School Board  
From: Gifted Services Advisory Committee (GSAC)  
Date: March 15, 2018  
Subject: 2016-17 Report to Arlington School Board

Summary: The Gifted Services Advisory Committee made three recommendations in our report to the School Board last year:

1. We recommended that APS middle schools provide intensified course offerings, open to all students, in all core subjects.
2. We recommended that APS add a Teacher Specialist staff position to the Office of Gifted Services.
3. We recommended that APS improve and increase consistency and uniformity of gifted services implementation across the county.

Our first two recommendations have not been implemented. We have observed minor progress toward our third recommendation, improving consistency across schools.

#### **Status of 2016-2017 Recommendations**

##### **Past Recommendation 1: Provide intensified course offerings, open to all students, in all core subjects at the middle school level.**

GSAC has recommended the implementation of intensified classes across the core subject classes in middle school since at least 2011. ACI voted this recommendation #5 overall for 2016/17, and the nationally recognized consultant APS hired to perform the gifted services program evaluation recommended that APS implement intensified classes as part of the program evaluation in 2016. Yet again, the recommendation has not been implemented.

##### **Past Recommendation 2: Add a Teacher Specialist staff position to the Office of Gifted Services**

This recommendation has not been implemented. At present, roughly one third of APS school students are identified as gifted. Currently, only one staff member – the Supervisor of Gifted Services – supports this entire population. Adding a Teacher Specialist position in the Gifted Services area would enable the office to maximize its support for Resource Teachers for the Gifted in APS schools across the county and integrate with other programmatic services such as ESOL/HILT, Title 1, and Special Education. Adding a Teacher Specialist to the Office of Gifted Services would be consistent with other APS programs including English Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, ESOL/HILT, Special Education, Mental Health, Arlington Tiered Support Services, Minority Achievement, and STEM. Likewise, adding a Specialist would allow better teacher training and education on delivery of differentiation – areas needing remediation per the 2017 Program Evaluation.

**Past Recommendation 3: Improve and increase consistency and uniformity of gifted services implementation across the county.**

Consistent feedback to GSAC from parents across the county is that gifted identification and delivery of services is still inconsistent. An individual student's experience is highly dependent on the school he or she attends and even more so on the student's teacher.

The cluster grouping of students who are identified as gifted was significantly improved in all middle schools, but the actual delivery of differentiation is still lacking across APS. As differentiation is the most important aspect of APS' gifted services, the inconsistency in delivery is a serious hindrance to meeting the needs of 30% of the student population.

**Looking Forward**

GSAC will continue to use the data we have from APS and published research studies to advocate for the needs of advanced learners in APS. The recommendation to implement intensified classes is based on multiple factors, including the data we have, and the research into published papers that we continue to perform.

We thank you for your time in reading our report, the time that you spend meeting with us to discuss the needs of the gifted, as well as all the effort you put into supporting all of the students in APS.