

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF HARFORD COUNTY
INFORMATIONAL REPORT
ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON
GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION
OCTOBER 24, 2016

Background Information:

Each year, the Superintendent of Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) recommends to the Harford County Board of Education the areas of study to be pursued by each of the Citizen Advisory Committees appointed by the Board of Education. A charge or area of study is provided to each Citizen Advisory Committee to be completed during the following calendar year. The Citizen Advisory Committee reports their findings in October of each year.

The Harford County Citizen Advisory Committee on Gifted and Talented Education was established by the General Curriculum Committee in 1990 to advise the Board of Education in the development and implementation of gifted and talented education in HCPS.

This committee was charged with the responsibility to revisit the gifted and talented identification process to investigate ways to expand identification services for all students especially students in underrepresented populations in elementary schools.

Discussion:

Over the past school year, the Citizen Advisory Committee on Gifted and Talented Education (herein referred to as “the Committee”) notes the following accomplishments, recommendations, and proposed charge for the 2016-17 school year.

Accomplishments

1. Identified criteria for use in quality screening measures.

The Committee researched a variety of resources and best practices available with regard to the identification process of gifted and talented students and determined that the use of a universal screening tool was a critical component in this process. A universal screening tool is an assessment administered to all students in order to ensure that all students have the opportunity to demonstrate their ability and performance. The Committee identified the following criteria when applying a universal screening tool. The cost effective tool should:

- Determine an ability measure that does not have a grade level or age level ceiling;
- Determine an academic measure of performance in mathematics and English/Language Arts;
- Align with the current instructional standards; and
- Provide accurate mathematics and reading levels.

2. Reviewed the identification assessment measures currently utilized in HCPS to qualify students for gifted and talented services.

The Committee reviewed the following assessment measures utilized to identify students for gifted and talented services:

- *Screening Assessment for Gifted Elementary and Middle School Students (SAGES-2)*: A combination ability and achievement test that measures ability in Math/Science or English/Social Studies. The non-verbal assessment (reasoning test) can be used as an ability measure.
- *Test of Mathematical Ability for Gifted Students (TOMAGS)*: A mathematics achievement assessment that measures students in a normal or gifted sample.
- *Cognitive Abilities Test (CoGAT)*: A comprehensive achievement and ability assessment. The COGAT is currently administered to all students in second grade that provides a verbal, non-verbal, and mathematical level. A fourth grade version is also available to teachers for students who may be identified as gifted.
- *Fountas and Pinell*: A diagnostic reading assessment that provides a comprehension measure and readability measure (achievement equivalent).
- *Slocumb-Payne Teacher Perception Inventory*: A checklist assessment that provides a picture of the affective side of giftedness. This assessment helps a teacher recommend a student for further assessment.
- *Iowa Acceleration Scales*: Portfolio assessment that collects a myriad of assessment topics, and through a Likert-type scale, determines a student's eligibility for content-level or grade level acceleration.

The Committee was informed that each elementary school has access to these assessment tools; therefore, a variety of assessment options currently exist to assist in the identification of students. Most of the assessment tools meet the aforementioned criteria established in Accomplishment 1.

3. Compared HCPS GT screening processes with other districts across Maryland.

Committee members analyzed the identification processes from several districts around the state in tandem with the National Association of Gifted Children's recommended criteria for identification and screening. The following patterns were noted:

- Universal screening provides a quantitative measure while ensuring equity in the identification process. Universal screeners that provide an ability measure are most useful, but academic screeners will also work.
- Qualitative measures provide more affective data on students and help balance the quantitative measure. Checklists often times meet this need.
- School flexibility in placement into programming is important. HCPS Levels of Service Model provides flexibility with the types of services provided to students.
- Professional development for teachers is important to ensure students are receiving the best services possible. GT teachers are provided annual training on the identification process used in HCPS.

Recommendations

1. The Committee found all schools have access to a myriad of assessments to assist in the identification of students for gifted and talented services. The Committee recommends working in conjunction with the Office of Mathematics to evaluate the alignment of TOMAGS with the Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards (MCCRS) as a viable mathematics assessment to identify gifted and talented students.
2. The Committee found that the universal screener is a best-practice for identifying gifted and talented students. The Committee recommends that the team investigate other more cost-effective options for universal screeners besides the COGAT. Suggestions include:
 - a. Establishing a combination cut score of SRI and TOMAGS to identify a pool for further testing. From there, potential students could take the SAGES II Reasoning portion to determine the ability of the child. All three data points would then determine the level of service that could be provided to the student.
 - b. Establishing a cut score using PARCC data in mathematics and English-Language Arts to identify a pool for further testing. From there, potential students could take the Reasoning portion to determine the ability of the child. All three data points would then determine the level of service that could be provided to the student.Once revised initial criteria is established, determine a process for identifying local norms for underrepresented populations in our elementary schools.

Proposed Charge for 2016-17 School Year

The Committee requests to pursue the following areas of study during the 2016-17 school year:

1. Provide feedback and insight to the General Curriculum Committee's Ad-hoc Committee on Gifted and Talented and Intervention programming. On September 13, 2016, the HCPS GCC approved the formation of an ad-hoc committee to evaluate current gifted and talented and intervention programming. The CAC perspective in providing recommendations and feedback to the evaluation process will be critical and helpful to ensuring that programming is robust and meets the needs of all students.

The Committee would like to thank the Harford County Board of Education for allowing the Committee the opportunity to present our views. These views are from professionals, parents, and students in many of our public schools throughout Harford County. We would like to thank Superintendent Mrs. Barbara Canavan, Dr. Peter Carpenter, and all of the current Committee members. We look forward to serving the Board of Education and the citizens of Harford County by providing the citizens' perspective and advice related to the gifted and talented programming in Harford County Public Schools.