| **Virginia Board of Education Agenda Item** | **Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia** |
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# Agenda Item: N

## Date: June 20, 2019

### Title: Report from the Virginia Advisory Committee for the Education of the Gifted: *Recommendations to Promote Equitable Access to Effective Gifted Education Programs*

#### Presenter: Dr. Donna L. Poland, Specialist for Governor’s Schools & Gifted Education

**Laura C. Kelly, VACEG Member, Supervisor, Gifted & Advanced Programs and RtI, Roanoke City Public Schools**

**Valerie Tuck, Past VACEG Member, Retired Senior Coordinator for Academic Rigor, Norfolk City Public Schools**

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## Purpose of Presentation:

For information only. No action required.

## Executive Summary:

In December 2017, the Virginia Board of Education (VBOE) charged the Virginia Advisory Committee for the Education of the Gifted (VACEG) with the following:

“The VACEG shall advise the Board of Education with respect to policies that promote equitable access to effective gifted programming. The VACEG shall recommend guidelines for school divisions to measure gifted student outcomes across subgroups over time, improve teacher professional development, and facilitate communication with the broader community.”

The VACEG examined the charge in light of the recent 2017 document they produced, [*Increasing Diversity in Gifted Education Programs in Virginia*](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/gifted_ed/increasing-diversity.pdf), and the goals and priorities of the [*Virginia Board of Education Comprehensive Plan for 2018-2023*](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/plan/index.shtml). Four categories were identified by the VACEG and recommendations were made within each category that impact policies and documents in support of the VBOE’s charge. The four categories were as follows:

* High Quality Platforms: Acceleration and effective learning environments for gifted students
* Teacher Preparation: Training for gifted education coordinators and teachers
* Closing Excellence Gaps: Identification and access to effective gifted programs that addresses the gaps across underrepresented sub-groups
* Accountability: Gifted student academic growth

**Action Requested:**

No action requested.

**Superintendent’s Recommendation:**

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board of Education receive this report from the Virginia Advisory Committee for the Education of the Gifted.

## Previous Review or Action:

No previous review or action.

Background Information and Statutory Authority:  
Article nine, section two of the Bylaws of the Board of Education state that “an advisory committee may be created by the Board for special purposes to include, but not limited to, federal and state-mandated committees…The Board possess legal powers and prerogatives that cannot be delegated or surrendered to others; therefore, all recommendations of an advisory committee must be submitted to the Board for action.”

In 1982, the VACEG was formally established by the Virginia Board of Education to provide guidance to the Board and the Superintendent of Public Instruction about the educational needs of students identified as gifted in school divisions. The committee is composed of representatives from school divisions, professional organizations, institutions of higher education, Governor's Schools, business and industry, and parent groups. The VACEG meets four times a year.

In December 2017, the VBOE charged the VACEG with advising the Board with respect to policies that promote equitable access to effective gifted education programming. Over the 2017-2019 timeframe, 23 members contributed to this document. VACEG members conducted research, discussed information, and wrote components of the report in sub-committees outside of the meeting dates. At the meetings, collaborative discussions and research were supported across the four category sub-committees.

Timetable for Further Review/Action:  
No further action is required of the Board. VDOE will post this report on the Website and notify school divisions that the document has been posted.

## Impact on Fiscal and Human Resources:

None.

**Attachment A**

**Recommendations to Promote Equitable Access to Effective Gifted Education Programs**

**2019 REPORT**

**VIRGINIA ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR THE EDUCATION OF THE GIFTED (VACEG)**

**Acknowledgements**

**Virginia Department of Education**

Dr. James F. Lane, Superintendent of Public Instruction

Ms. Gena C. Keller, Assistant Superintendent, Department of Learning

Dr. Tina Manglicmot, Director, Office of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

Dr. Donna L. Poland, Specialist, Governor’s Schools and Gifted Education

**Virginia Advisory Committee for the Education of the Gifted**

The Virginia Department of Education would like to express its gratitude to each committee member who has been instrumental in the successful completion of this project. The following subcommittee members met from September 2017 through April 2019.

Mandy Barrett, Co-Director, Southwest VA Community College Regional Governor’s School, SWVCC

Dr. Rodney L. Berry, Superintendent, Nottoway County Public Schools

Dr. Carol B. Carter, Superintendent, King and Queen County Public Schools

Rebecca Dangerfield, Teacher and Governor’s School Liaison, Radford City Schools

Sandra Cole, Retired Secondary and Gifted Education Supervisor, Buchanan County Public Schools

William Ellis, Parent, Floyd County

Teresa Ellison, Reading Specialist, Allegany County Public Schools

George Fohl, Gifted Education Coordinator, Chesterfield County Public Schools

Patricia A. Griffin, Educational Specialist, Henrico County Public Schools

Dr. Dara Hall, Parent, Rockingham County

Sarah Haywood, Gifted Education Coordinator, York County Public Schools

Robert L. Hundley, Jr., VSBA Board of Directors Representative, Hanover County

Rebecca Johnson, Facilitator of Gifted Services, Accomack County Public Schools

Laura Kelly, Supervisor of Gifted and Advanced Programs and RtI, Roanoke City Public Schools

Kirsten Maloney, Advanced Academic Programs Coordinator, Fairfax County Public Schools

Shawanna Poarch, Parent, Suffolk

Melissa Powers, Gifted Resource Teacher, Brunswick County Public Schools

Dr. Janice C. Robertson, School Psychologist, Lunenburg County Public Schools

Valerie Tuck, Senior Coordinator for Academic Rigor, Norfolk City Public Schools

Kimberly Kay Tupponce, Gifted Resource Teacher, King William County Public Schools

Kimberly Waite, Assistant Head of School, Richmond Montessori School

Dornswalo Wilkins-McCorey, Gifted Education Coordinator Instructional Specialist, Virginia Beach City Schools

Korri Williams, Honors Program Facilitator/Teacher, Williamsburg-James City County Public Schools

# Recommendations to Promote Equitable Access to Effective Gifted Education Programs

## Introduction

In December 2017, the Virginia Board of Education (VBOE) charged the Virginia Advisory Committee for the Education of the Gifted (VACEG) with the follow:

*“The VACEG shall advise the Board of Education with respect to policies that promote equitable access to effective gifted programming. The VACEG shall recommend guidelines for school divisions to measure gifted student outcomes across subgroups over time, improve teacher professional development, and facilitate communication with the broader community.”*

This charge was reviewed by VACEG members with consideration of both the 2017 document produced by the VACEG, [*Increasing Diversity in Gifted Education Programs in Virginia*](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/gifted_ed/increasing-diversity.pdf), and the goals and priorities of the [*Virginia Board of Education Comprehensive Plan for 2018-2023*](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/plan/index.shtml). Initial discussions of the charge led to a reaffirmation of the VACEG’s commitment to equity in gifted education and programming as a guiding philosophy for their work. A commitment to equity relates to importance of identifying and developing all students who are capable of high achievement. This commitment requires an examination of student representation and the diverse ways giftedness manifests itself, as well as meeting the needs of gifted learners at their advanced levels of achievement to develop their potential.

Over the next 18 months, the VACEG worked to determine alignments and misalignments among best practices and research in the field of gifted education, the components of the Virginia Board of Education’s (VBOE) Comprehensive Plan 2018-2023, and the current Virginia *Codes* and Regulations that affect gifted students, teachers, and gifted education programs. This report was developed as a result of close examination and discussion of that research. Recommendations for policy revisions to better support equity and access to gifted programs across all demographic groups are the culmination of this 18 month endeavor.

## Research and Data Collection

Initially, the committee reviewed various sources of information surrounding equity and gifted programs. Examining and discussing many sources of information helped to establish a common foundation for committee members. The following list provides only a sample of reviewed resources highlighting various issues regarding equitable representation in gifted programs across all sub-groups:

* A short related video, “[Give Excellence a Chance](https://vimeo.com/219587170)”,
* The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) Advocacy 101 presentation,
* Dr. Jonathan Plucker’s works related to the “The Excellence Gap”,
* Jack Kent Cooke Foundation’s “[Equal Talents, Unequal Opportunities, 2nd Edition](https://www.jkcf.org/research/equal-talents-unequal-opportunities-second-edition-a-report-card-on-state-support-for-academically-talented-low-income-students/)”,
* Dr. Julia Roberts’ work in Kentucky with advocacy, equity, and ‘The Excellence Gap’,
* Statistics from Dr. Matthew Makel (Duke University) and Dr. Matthew McBee’s (East Tennessee State University) recent NAGC presentation “How Many, Does it Matter, and How to Make it Matter”,
* Sample gifted education annual reports from other states showing current standings and trend lines,
* An interactive graph relating achievement levels and average socio-economic standing from the [New York Times](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/04/29/upshot/money-race-and-success-how-your-school-district-compares.html), and
* The Acceleration Institute’s [“Developing Academic Acceleration Policies: Whole Grade, Early Entrance, & Single Subject”](http://www.accelerationinstitute.org/Resources/Policy_Guidelines/)

Next, the committee reviewed the newly-approved *Virginia Board of Education Comprehensive Plan for 2018-2023*. The VACEG brainstormed various implications about the comprehensive plan relative to the charge and to the issues of equity and accessibility in gifted programs. After much dialogue, the VACEG divided issues in gifted education into four categories as they related to the comprehensive plan. The categories are as follows:

* High Quality Platforms: Acceleration and effective learning environments
* Teacher Preparation: Training for gifted education coordinators and teachers
* Closing Excellence Gaps: Identification and access to effective gifted programs
* Accountability: Gifted student academic growth

Subcommittees were formed for each category. The subcommittees researched and discussed additional information specific to their areas of focus and gathered documents/articles for further review. Each subgroup then examined the *Codes* and Regulations relative to their specific areas of focus. Subsequently, subgroup and whole committee discussions ensued, and the following are the recommendations from the committee for each category. These recommendations work independently but are stronger together to promote identification of all students capable of high levels of achievement and to ensure programs and curriculum to meet these students’ advanced academic abilities.

## High Quality Platforms

Acceleration and talent development are two high quality platforms that emerged from gifted education research and practice and from state policies. These platforms provide multiple entry points to gifted programs, access to accelerated programs, and remove some barriers that may prevent access to effective learning environments for gifted students but especially those from underrepresented populations. The VACEG makes the following recommendations:

**Recommendation #1:**

An effective way for children with advanced skills to excel is to allow them early entrance into kindergarten or first grade. The Virginia *Regulations Governing Educational Services for Gifted Students* 8VAC20-40-60.A and the VDOE Local Plan for Gifted Education template part VI-A, C, and/or E should require school divisions to include a statement that specifies their procedures for early admission to kindergarten/first grade. These procedures should be incorporated into item 8VAC20-40-60.A.10 by adding the following statement, **“Procedures for early entrance into kindergarten and/or first grade should include multiple measures of a child’s readiness for school. Multiple measures and sources for information are essential to making the best decision regarding early entrance and may include but are not limited to the following:**

1. **a common kindergarten/first grade readiness assessment,**
2. **a comprehensive evaluation that uses multiple valid and reliable instruments,**
3. **an assessment of cognitive, social, and emotional developmental domains, and**
4. **a supervised transition period with consideration to the transition points all children experience.”**

**Recommendation #2:**

Decades of research cumulated by the Belin-Blank Center in [*A Nation Deceived*](http://www.accelerationinstitute.org/nation_deceived/) and [*A Nation Empowered*](http://www.accelerationinstitute.org/nation_empowered/) validate the importance of providing students with opportunities for whole-grade and single-subject acceleration. The Virginia *Regulations Governing Educational Services for Gifted Students* 8VAC20-40-60A.10 and the VDOE Local Plan for Gifted Education template part VI-A, C, and/or E should include a statement that requires school divisions to specify their procedures for both whole-grade and single-subject acceleration. This statement should read: **“Procedures for whole-grade and single-subject acceleration shall be included**. **These procedures should include**

1. **a referral and screening process,**
2. **an assessment and placement process,**
3. **a supervised transition period, and**
4. **professional development regarding current research on acceleration practices.**

In addition, the annual school division gifted report should include a data point to reflect the number of students recommended for acceleration and those actually determined eligible for acceleration.

**Recommendation #3:**

Less common types of acceleration provide curricular modifications for middle and high school students. There are several means to provide accelerated content to students. For example, common options for middle school students include high school courses, Pre-Advanced Placement, honors classes, and online educational opportunities. High school curricular opportunities include dual enrollment and on-line opportunities. The Regulations 8VAC20-40-60A.10 and the VDOE Local Plan for Gifted Education template part VI-A, C, and/or E should include a statement that reads, **“Opportunities for dual enrollment and additional high-level courses for middle school and high school students shall be included.”**

**Recommendation #4:**

There is extensive research for talent development that supports nurturing potential in young students from historically underrepresented populations in environments that support critical and creative thought and foster opportunities to demonstrate giftedness. These learning experiences and nurturing talent development programs are provided in a variety of formats. While many programs by other names exists, Young Scholars or Emerging Scholars models of talent development are common programs in Virginia.

The Regulations 8VAC20-40-60A.3 and the VDOE Local Plan for Gifted Education template part III-A should include a statement that requires school divisions to specify their procedures for including rich learning experiences specifically developed to elicit critical and creative thinking from young students in primary grades K-2. This statement should read, **“Procedures for talent development in the primary grades K-2 shall be included.” Procedures should include:**

1. **a plan to expose all students to advanced learning opportunities, and**
2. **a method of documenting student progress to demonstrate the need for differentiated instruction and/or future gifted education referral and identification.**

## Teacher Preparation

The Teacher Preparation subcommittee examined guidelines to improve teacher professional development as it relates to effective gifted programming. These recommendations are based primarily on best practices from the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC). These recommendations provide more flexibility for teachers and gifted education coordinators to be endorsed in gifted education, more training for teachers about serving under-represented populations, and more information about gifted populations in beginning teacher programs.

**Recommendation #5:**

Upon a review of *Code* §22.1-253.13:1, the following areas should be reviewed and potentially amended and/or considered with respect to any policies that are developed to highlight the importance of professional learning for teachers:

‘The General Assembly and the Board of Education find that the quality of education is dependent upon the provision of (i)….. (iv) the adequate commitment of other resources; **(v)** **professional learning for all teachers’**.

**Recommendation #6:**

The *Code* §22.1-253.13:1 D. 6 does not fully describe the expectations of gifted education. The code should be expanded in a similar way as CTE’s bullets in *Code* §22.1-253.13:1 D. 3. This enhanced code should include expectations for teachers who have received ongoing professional learning for differentiated instruction; enrichment, extension and acceleration to meet learning needs; social emotional needs; and recognizing characteristics of gifted learners from underrepresented populations and diverse backgrounds as well as twice exceptional students (identified gifted and special education). A proposed example is suggested as follows:

‘Early identification of gifted **and twice exceptional students** and enrollment of such students in appropriately differentiated instructional **programs which employ teachers who have received ongoing professional learning based on current, research-based strategies to:**

1. **Differentiate instruction based on student readiness, knowledge, and skills,**
2. **Enrich, extend, accelerate group of gifted students to meet their academic needs,**
3. **Support the social emotional needs of gifted learners, and**
4. **Recognize and respond to characteristics and needs of gifted learners from underrepresented populations and culturally, economically, and diverse backgrounds.’**

**Recommendation #7:**

While currently 60% of Virginia’s gifted education coordinators do not have endorsement in gifted education, an even higher percentage of teachers working with gifted students do not have gifted education endorsement. The VACEG believes that gifted education coordinators and teachers should be endorsed in order to demonstrate the competencies needed to promote equitable access to gifted programs. We recommend that an alternate route to an endorsement in gifted education be met through a successful completion of a Praxis Subject Assessment coupled with a 45 hour internship or practicum in gifted education. ETS Praxis offers a nationally standardized [Gifted Education Subject Assessment](https://www.ets.org/s/praxis/pdf/5358.pdf) (5358) which “is designed for candidates who are preparing to enter the field of gifted education. The test measures the knowledge, skills, and abilities judged by a national advisory committee and a survey of experts in the field to be necessary for safe and effective practice.”

**Recommendation #8:**

Since a growing percentage of students are identified as twice exceptional, the licensure requirements should ensure that all newly licensed individuals have a general knowledge of both gifted and twice exceptional learner characteristics. The following is recommended:

1. Consider an amendment of *Code* § [22.1-298.4](http://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/22.1-298.4) that makes reference to all students – **even gifted students – need to be identified for learning disabilities.**
2. Consider that new teacher preparation programs should have core competencies related to gifted behaviors with a focus on twice exceptional, disadvantaged, and ESL identification.

## Closing Excellence Gaps

Closing the Excellence Gaps for school divisions across the Commonwealth involves highlighting any excellence gaps and a better align with the Accountability and Accreditation section of the BOE Comprehensive Plan: 2018-2023 in order to communicate with the school community. Recommendations for Closing Excellence Gaps will encourage schools and school divisions to address concerns of access and performance across all reporting groups of gifted students.

The VACEG recommends the VDOE make changes to the reporting of the school quality profile, the Gifted Annual Report, and to the *Regulations Governing the Education of the Gifted* 8VAC20-40-10 through 60 with respect to the *Standards of Accreditation* referencedbelow:

*In revising the system for accrediting schools, the Board’s goals were to (1) provide a more accurate picture of school quality by including additional factors that impact student academic achievement; (2) emphasize a philosophy of continuous improvement for all schools—from encouraging increased performance for high-performing schools to reducing the gap in performance across reporting groups; (3) address some of the unintended consequences from the current accreditation system; and (4) provide the data to inform areas of VDOE technical assistance and prioritize the use of school improvement resources to the areas most in need.*

*To foster continuous improvement in schools benefitting all students, the Board will:*

*∙ Support statewide systems that track achievement and improvement for all students.*

**Recommendation #9:**

Reformat the “School Quality Profile” and Gifted Annual Report in SSWS to convey more user-friendly information (Attachment A examples). The information should highlight current and trending division data relating to gifted education, such as

* referral and identification trends over time including subgroups that are traditionally underrepresented in gifted education, and
* gifted students as a sub-group on AP scores.

**Recommendation #10:**

Under 8VAC20-40-60.A of the Regulations, the addition of an item D should be included in the local plan. This item should read:

**D. The information and data/graphs from the Gifted Annual Report shall be shared each year by school division leadership to school board members and the community.**

## Accountability

Measuring student growth for advanced students is complex and needs to match the program goals. Measures of many program goals in gifted programs (e.g. critical and creative thinking, problem solving) do not easily lend themselves to efficient or singular scoring measures. NAGC recognizes that gifted student growth cannot be measured on many standard assessments, and recommends measures that are constructed using a vertical scale of continuous progress over multiple grade levels. The following VACEG recommendations will help to provide consistency across classrooms in a school division for a higher level of accountability toward continuous academic growth. In doing so, the school division will be communicating clarity about the gifted program expectations and providing feedback to parent, students, and community groups.

**Recommendation #11**

VACEG recommends adding language to the review of program effectiveness in the Regulations that discourages using singular measures or over reliance on standardized testing in measuring effectiveness of student growth in gifted learners. The VACEG recommends making the following bolded addition to

8VAC20-40-60 14. *Procedures for the annual review of the effectiveness of the school division's gifted education program, including the review of screening, referral, identification, and program procedures toward the achievement of equitable representation of students, the review of student outcomes and the academic growth of gifted students* ***that do not overly rely on standardized test measures****. Such review shall be based on multiple criteria and shall include multiple sources of information.*

The VACEG recommends that differentiated product-based assessments, differentiated pre- and post- performance-based assessments, multiple indicators that measure mastery of content, higher level thinking skills, achievement in specific program areas, and affective growth, and off-level standardized assessments, be specifically stated in the Regulations as possible measures for evaluating student growth.

**Recommendation #12**  
The VACEG recommends the expansion and updating of the guidance document *Reference Guide for the Development and Review of Local Plans for the Education of the Gifted,* published in 2011,that provides assistance to districts to support establishing local guidelines and methods for documenting, assessing, and reporting gifted student growth. The VACEG could compose this update/expansion of the Reference Guide to contain rubrics developed using resources from state and national gifted organizations, from published research, and from best practices in the field.

## Conclusions

The 12 recommendations in this document are categorized in four areas as aligned to the *Virginia Board of Education Comprehensive Plan for 2018-2023* and the BOE’s charge to the VACEG: 1) high quality platforms, 2) teacher preparation, 3) closing the excellence gaps, and 4) accountability. High quality platforms recommendations allow for multiple entries to advanced academic programs and remove ceilings for academically gifted students. Teacher preparation recommendations prepare teachers and candidates to recognize potential and to meet the needs of gifted students through a deeper understanding of gifted education principles. For closing the excellence gaps, divisions will be encouraged to address performance and identification across all reporting groups of students. Finally, accountability recommendations allow for a clear understanding of student academic growth measures throughout the school division and community.

These recommendations are grounded in research-based best practices to provide advanced learning opportunities for a diverse population of gifted students. Each recommendation helps to increase accessibility to gifted education programs through policy and documents that will guide and monitor school divisions in the identification of and programming for gifted students, gifted education coordinator and teacher training, gifted education data, and the reporting of gifted student academic growth. These recommendations will allow more students to have an opportunity to achieve at their highest academic level.