Gifted Child Committee Report Submitted by:

Audra Dove

January 12, 2021 gifted@mccpta.org­­

**Selected Meetings/Calls/Events**

December MCCPTA Board Meeting

Curriculum and College/Career Readiness Meeting

GCC and Spec. Ed meeting

GCC and Spec. Ed meeting w/ AEI re: HS Magnet and AP/IB

MCCPTA/MCPS monthly Curriculum Meeting

OCIP Meeting (monthly meeting hosted by Curriculum Committee)

Special Ed SEAC meeting

GCC and Curriculum Meeting with OCIP PreK-12 Director (re: small group instruction)

January MCCPTA Operating Budget Workshop (Spec Ed/GT; Curriculum/Tech)

GCC's GT community zoom presentation

Planning meeting with Spec Ed Committee

MCCPTA Board Meeting

**Upcoming**

January MCCPTA Special Ed and GCC Meeting with MCPS Special Ed re: 2e students 1/28/21

**Key Activities/Concerns**

1. **ELC/CES and middle school expansion courses**

***OSA reports released***

They finally dropped! OSA just released two reports related to GT curriculum.

While we are ecstatic that reports analyzing the effectiveness of GT curriculum were commissioned, we are concerned about their relevancy given the limited statistical analysis they contain and the benchmarks they use to measure success.

*1) Summary of Analysis for Centers for Enriched Studies and Enriched Literacy Curriculum (published and released January 2021)*

https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/sharedaccountability/reports/detail.aspx?id=1528

We believe a comparison of GT identified students who are not at an ELC school or a CES school against the performance of ELC and CES students who receive enriched literacy curriculum is needed. We will need to ask that of OSA. Similarly, we asked that GT identified DCC middle school students who do NOT have access to the expansion courses be compared to GT students who do and to magnet middle school students.

*2) Summary Analysis of Middle School Magnet Programs and Middle School Enriched and* Accelerated Courses (published Nov. 2020, released to public January 2021).

https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/sharedaccountability/reports/detail.aspx?id=1529

***Some concerns about the reports:***

* 50th percentile as metric for highly able students is NOT meaningful
* PARCC 3 as a measurement of highly able students is not appropriate or meaningful. If you're going to use PARCC at all, shouldn't 4 and 5 be used? And since PARCC only measures on grade level performance, it cannot truly capture the difference in attainment in an above-level course, which AIM/IM is considered for grade 6.
* Comparison of Mean MAP-R scores might be more useful, but OSA has not provided analysis of that. They did not analyze whether there was a statistically significant difference:
  + Between the enrichment class students and the Eastern/Clemente students
  + Between the enrichment class students and GT identified students at homeschools who had access no access to enrichment
  + Between the enrichment class students and the performance of students at Parkland/Argyle/Argyle/Takoma Park that did NOT have the enrichment course but would have been eligible if their school offered it.
  + Between the enrichment class cohort and prior year GT cohorts in how their scores increased/progressed (this is harder since there was no universal assessment in the prior year)
* A breakdown of demographic data is needed.  One goal of the pilots and changes to magnet selection process was to advance equity, but how do we measure that without data?

***DCC magnet expansion course***

We assisted Loiederman MS' advocacy for the magnet expansion course *Inquiries into Global Humanities*. DCC parents at Loiederman (performing arts), Parkland (aerospace) and Argyle (digital) had been told in 2018, and in subsequent years, that the course was not offered to DCC middle school students because the DCC programs already contained enrichment opportunities. Though we all appreciate the fabulous programs at these three schools, the enrichment they offer in their respective fields should not prohibit access to the countywide middle school expansion courses (AIM and Inquiries into Global Humanities). The Global Humanities course will now be offered to centrally identified 6th graders in the 2021-2022 school year.

1. **Continued Rollout of the new curriculum and Enrichment**

Some of the parents who reported to us in November that their schools were not offering small group reading instruction or enrichment have since reported their students are now receiving SGI once/week. Community feedback leads us to believe that the Benchmark Advance Enrichment Guide is not being used broadly and as intended. Enrichment at the elementary level is spotty. Unless a student is enrolled in Compacted Math, has access to the Enriched Literacy Curriculum or is enrolled in a CES (all of which are 4th and 5th grade only), s/he is not likely receiving any enrichment at all. In fact, community feedback suggests many schools are not providing small group instruction to their high flyers specifically. Some are not providing small group reading instruction at all.

Despite the creation and distribution of the Benchmark Advance Enrichment Guidebook, a December GCC survey shows that few are using the Guidebook. GCC has brought this up to AEI and to the PreK-12 Curriculum Director, Brenda Lewis. Both said they would reach out to schools again. We have not heard back that this was done.

Eureka Math enrichment is expected to be released some time 2nd semester.

The elementary math team is working collaboratively with Eureka Math and AEI to design a structured, comprehensive approach to enriching the mathematics experience as appropriate. Simultaneously teachers are being trained to hone lessons based on individual student needs that will be met via differentiated problem sets and collaborative workgroups. There will be a multi-tiered approach to ensure students receive appropriate complexity and rigor:

1. **Universal screening and subsequent magnet program testing 3rd, 5th and 8th graders**

***3rd Graders***

No CogAT testing this year due to test security concerns in a remote testing environment. All students will be universally screened via MAP, previous PARCC data and grade data. Those who meet MCPS' threshold (whatever that is) will be placed in a lottery and randomly selected for a seat in a CES program. There will be NO selection committee review as in years past. Students who are not randomly selected for a CES seat will remain in their home school where they may or may not have access to enriched and accelerated instruction that meets their needs.

Our major concerns:

--MCPS identifies thousands of 3rd grade students through its universal screening process. The process was never intended to be used as a selection tool but rather as an initial screening tool to capture a broader number of students who show potential and could be invited to take the CogAT test.

--Due to the random nature of the selection, there will undoubtedly be students in the 99th percentile who are not granted access to a CES. Unless their home school offers ELC (less than 45 elementary schools out of 130+), these students will only receive compacted math as their GT programming.

--AEI's assumption is that the Benchmark Advanced Enrichment Guide is being used in K-5 classrooms for GT students. That would be terrific however, it currently has no way to tell whether teachers are using it.

-- We believe that the highly gifted students left in their home schools (without ELC) will not receive the acceleration and enrichment they need. We do NOT believe the Benchmark Advanced Enrichment Guidebook will be used by most teachers and we know that most elementary schools do not have the Enriched Literacy Curriculum (which is akin to the CES language arts curriculum).

***5th Graders***

No CogAT testing this year due to test security concerns. All students identified via MAP, previous PARCC data and grade data will be placed into a lottery.

MCPS distributed information to all 3rd and 5th grade parents regarding its COVID plan for identifying students for the regional middle magnet programs and local magnet expansion courses (Historical Inquiries into Global Humanities and AIM6) respectively. From the lottery, students will be randomly selected for regional programs. All 5th graders within the lottery who are not selected for regional middle school programs will be placed in local magnet expansion courses at their home school.

Though we understand the need to have such a lottery given the absence of CogAT and other data, our concern is that there will be highly gifted students from around the county whose needs cannot be met within their home school magnet expansion courses and who would have otherwise been selected for a regional magnet program had the selection committee convened this year. The Inquiries into Global Humanities expansion course continues to receive strong reviews and is structured to mirror the Humanities social studies courses. These Global Humanities courses will be able to partially meet the needs of students who might otherwise have been selected for a regional Humanities program. Though this course contains many writing and research elements, it cannot take the place of a Humanities English course.

We do not believe many needs will be met for those students who would have otherwise been selected for a regional MathSci program. Why? Because at many schools, AIM (the math expansion course for 6th grade) is offered to all or most students who completed compacted math 5/6. The highly gifted math/sci students will not be with their same level peers nor will they have access to any type of "magnetized" math, science or computer science in 7th or 8th grade. They will be placed in Algebra 1 (not the same as the Algebra 1 taught at the regional programs) and Honors Geometry (not the same as Magnet Honors Geometry). These math courses are the same courses almost every compacted math 5/6 student will take. Though still accelerated beyond the on grade level math path, neither AIM, nor Algebra nor Honors Geometry contain the same level of rigor, acceleration and enrichment that their MathSci magnet program counterparts do.

***8th Graders***

No new updates. See December report for information about application programs and selection process.

1. **Expanding communication with MCPS GT community and cross pollination with other advocacy groups**

***GCC and Special Ed***

GCC and Special Ed committees continue to work together regularly. In early December we solicited high school parent feedback regarding advanced secondary students and their experiences with workload during distance learning.

***GCC Community Zoom***

GCC held its first community zoom on 1/6/21 entitled "The What, When, Where and How of GT Students in MCPS". Connected to the RSVP invitation was an optional survey we asked parents to fill out. We received over 150 responses to the survey from a variety of elementary, middle and high school parents. Approximately 130 parents attended the zoom!!

We presented a series of slides that overviewed the GT identification process, MCPS' GT enrichment resources and curriculum, programs, application opportunities and highlighted updates on distance learning expectations and revised policy within primary and secondary schools. We also presented updates about AP and IB. Lastly we walked parents through an advocacy ladder and provided advocacy points. We are currently updating and refining the presentation so that we can share it with attendees and with a broader audience.

**5) Revised Secondary Grading and Reporting policy**

We had a meeting with AEI's Supervisor and the AP/IB Coordinator in December regarding the revised Secondary Grading and Reporting policy and feedback from our outreach to parents via FB, GTALetters and school listservs. The feedback we received in early December highlighted these main areas of concern:

1) Limited live instruction time for AP and IB students creates tremendous stress due to their doubts that they will be prepared for spring exams. Libby Rogovoy (AP/IB Coordinator) said MCPS has a tracking system that AP teachers use to ensure they are on pace. MCPS is able to tell (based on the resources accessed) which schools might need support to stay on pace. AP teachers have been given guidance to stick to College Board's scope, sequence and pacing documents and to remove any content that will not be on the test. MCPS hopes to offer free AP prep to all students.

2) A greater expectation of self-teaching but not enough real-time access to teachers to have questions answered in order to complete the work.

3) Continued penalties for late assignments despite revisions to the grading and reporting policy in late November which states ALL students must be given more flexibility. As of early January, more teachers seem to have adjusted their policies accordingly but not all.

4) Many reports of withdrawal from work due to overwhelm

5) Not enough class time to do work to ensure understanding

6) Excessive workload--same level of work (or more) that would be given in a non-Pandemic school year.

In our meeting, we were told that the revised graded assignment range outlined in the Grading and Reporting policy is applicable to magnet level courses but not necessarily AP and IB courses, which may or may not be a part of a magnet course of study. However, we were later told that magnet level courses are NOT held to the same graded assignment range as on grade level courses. While we realize that a subset of magnet and AP and IB students are doing well in this distance learning environment, we also recognize that a subset of these students are suffering silently under the immense workload pressures of AP, IB and/or magnet level courses. Though AP and IB courses must adhere to pace, scope and sequence from outside organizations, magnet level courses that are specific to magnet programs do not. Since MCPS will not provide a cap on the number of graded assignments a secondary magnet teacher can assign, parents and students must advocate for themselves to school administrators and counselors if they feel the workload is too much. We were told that teachers/planning teams must first get approval from their respective magnet coordinators before going above the revised graded assignment cap that is laid out in the revised Grading and Reporting document. All students across all course levels should be seeing greater flexibility in assignment due dates and deadlines.

Some secondary magnet programs (predominantly the middle school magnets) appear to be lightening the workload in magnet level courses as well as on grade level courses.

We will continue to collect feedback and advocate to ensure those who need adjustments are afforded relief.

One of GCC's mantras (it's a long mantra) continues to be, "OTLS needs to set expectations and hold schools accountable for implementing the curriculum and enrichment guidance and using the resources in a consistent, uniform and measurable way." There is too much variability from school to school.