



DATE: December 18, 2009

TO: Board of Education

FROM: Daniel Nerad, Superintendent of Schools
Lisa Wachtel, Executive Director, Teaching and Learning
Barbie Klawikowski, Interim Talented and Gifted Coordinator

RE: Talented and Gifted Education Plan Update

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide the Board of Education with an update on the Talented and Gifted Education Plan which was approved by the Board of Education on August 17, 2009. This report serves as a mid-year status report to the Board of Education in alignment with the action step contained within Goal 8 of the Plan. A year-end report is due to the Board of Education and will be forthcoming in June 2010.

Summary of Current Progress to Date

Comprehensive Identification Process (Plan: Goal 1)

- **Identification Criteria** – Several action steps within Goal 1 are based on the need for a clearly defined criteria and process to identify students as talented and gifted. The Talented and Gifted (TAG) Division staff has established and confirmed identification criteria including: 1) consideration of students' levels of academic performance; 2) grade level performance data employing the historical two-year above grade level as a marker; and 3) consideration of several student data sources, including input and information from teachers and family. Work will continue into the spring semester to incorporate these data sources to create a student profile and, pending individual student performance level indicators, a Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) for students.
- **Monitoring Model** – TAG staff continues work with the Research and Evaluation Department to create a model for student data analysis to aid in identification. These models will be research-based and provide the information needed to make identification, programming, and additional diagnostic decisions pertaining to individual students. It has been determined that the Student Intervention Monitoring System (SIMS) can be used as the tracking and reporting system. It currently containing much of the student information needed, including assessment and other data from Infinite Campus, that will make up the student profile component of a TAG student report. TAG staff will use SIMS in the current form to develop student profiles and Differentiated Education Plans (DEPs). Next steps include customizing reports in SIMS to meet future documentation/Plan development needs.
- **Commercial Assessment Tools** – In alignment with the District Strategic Plan (Assessment, Action Steps 1-3) to develop a district-wide assessment plan, research continues regarding the possible adoption and use of assessment tools for screening and identification purposes. Current considerations include the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) and the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAt). TAG staff has enlisted the input from non-MMSD experts, has considered and will continue to review current research, and has acquired information from assessment tool publishers to inform decision-making regarding assessment tools. Teaching and Learning staff is arranging site visits to school districts currently using MAP in preparation for the development of pilots later in spring 2010.

- **Local Assessment Tools** – Additional internal math assessment tools have been developed to aid in identification of students in the math content area. The Language Arts coordinator has attended TAG staff meetings to discuss the instructional needs of students. TAG staff will continue to collaborate with the Language Arts and Math Divisions into the spring semester to further refine the identification and programming of students.
- **District-Wide Collaboration** – Relationships and collaborative efforts with many district departments (Educational Services and Race and Equity) and resources, that historically have not been approached, continue to be formed in the effort to especially support the goal of increasing the identification of underrepresented students.
- **Staffing** – All TAG Instructional Resource Teacher (IRT) positions have been filled. The additional 1 FTE has been filled. The secondary position vacancies have also been filled.

Programming Options for Identified Students (Plan: Goal 2)

- **Cluster Grouping** – Dr. Sue Abplanalp, Assistant Superintendent, shared *The Cluster Grouping Handbook* by Susan Winebrenner, M.S. and Dina Brulles, Ph.D., with principals to support the goal of consistent cluster grouping practices in the 2010-2011 school year. Conversations have begun at the middle school level around the practice of cluster grouping, specifically at Hamilton Middle School. TAG staff has current information regarding cluster grouping practices at the elementary schools and will work with principals in the spring to aid in grouping students when actual class placements are determined.
- **Advanced Courses** – In alignment with the Strategic Plan, several action steps in the TAG Plan center around, in collaboration with high school leadership teams and district administration, researching and reviewing advanced course offerings to determine if the number of courses is sufficient to meet student need and to work toward greater consistency among the offerings (see Curriculum, Accelerated Learning, Action Steps 1-6 and 11). District staff members, including building administrators, district administrators, and coordinators, are working on several initiatives, all of which align to the work of the above stated action steps. The initiatives include: the development of a matrix allowing for the review of current course offerings; reviewing obstacles to course access such as pre-requisites; reviewing Madison Virtual Campus offerings and registration processes; connections of advanced course offerings with REaL grant and AVID work; participation in the Advanced Placement Incentive grant; and consideration of alignment of course offerings to ACT College and Career Readiness Standards. TAG staff continues to work collaboratively with district staff to support these efforts. Next steps include analyzing the current course matrix with high school principals in order to develop school-specific action plans to address identified areas in need of improvement.
- **Advanced Placement Grant** – The Advanced Placement Incentive (API) grant targets strategies to develop an articulated, rigorous curriculum, bridging middle school with high school curriculum (e.g. vertical teaming) in order to increase access and equity for students who have not traditionally enrolled in Advanced Placement courses. Middle school, high school, and district staff and administration continue participation in API grant through DPI. MMSD is in the second year of this three-year grant. Approximately forty staff members attended a conference in October that provided staff an opportunity to continue work on vertical teaming efforts and attend topic-specific presentations. The next conference is in February 2010. TAG staff continues to work with DPI staff to plan opportunities for advancement of the goals of the grant, including planning for the February conference, consideration of student survey, and grant funded work with a facilitator to support related district initiatives. Meetings were held with the superintendent and principals to share updates. The goals of the grant have been aligned to the Strategic Plan in an effort to strengthen understanding and commitment of those participating from MMSD.

- **4-School Partnership Grant** – In an effort to provide advanced learning opportunities to students from underrepresented populations, eighteen middle school students will participate in online courses during the third and fourth quarters of this school year, funded through the 4-School Partnership Grant through the Wisconsin Center for Academically Talented Youth (WCATY).
- **Online Curricula and Programming** – To date, the TAG Division has offered programming options that have included online courses through the Wisconsin Center for Academically Talented Youth (WCATY). TAG staff will continue exploring the courses as possible curricular replacement options and defining the criteria that would allow students access to the courses, as well as continue the review of additional possible advanced replacement curricular options and present recommendations for the curriculum review process. With the completion of TAG staff hires, staff support for middle school online curricula is now available and will enable increased student access in the spring semester and future years.
- **Embedded Honors** – TAG staff is reviewing the information from the previous analyses of embedded honors survey data through collaboration with the Research and Evaluation Department. A new survey will be administered in spring 2010 to students, teachers, and families to determine effectiveness of and interest in embedded honors options. The resulting survey data will be used to inform decisions regarding the future direction of embedded honors options. The data will also be incorporated with the high school principal work to increase advanced courses.
- **UW Partnerships** – The TAG Division continues to explore partnerships with University of Wisconsin outreach programs. Currently, TAG staff is working with UW staff to support mentor options for identified MMSD students.

Individualized Student Planning (Plan: Goal 3)

- **Progress Monitoring** – The Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) will be coupled with the student profile and will document programming and instructional needs of identified students. SIMS will be used to develop DEPs. A timeline has been established to support the consistency of student progress monitoring. Student follow-up will occur minimally three times during the school year (start of school year, semester, and spring), or as individual student cases dictate.
- **Program Response Timeline** – A timeline for student programming has been established. Within a six-week timeframe upon receiving a student referral, TAG staff will: notify building principal; contact classroom teacher and/or parent(s)/guardian; review existing student data (create profile); conduct additional testing if needed; make determination if student is in need of TAG programming; share information with school staff; and make recommendations. If the student is found to be in need of TAG programming, available options will be considered with school staff. Available options will then be offered to the student/parent(s)/guardian. A DEP will be developed to document and support the programming option chosen. Our ability to maintain the six-week timeframe will be monitored to determine if the window adequately meets needs.
- **Transition Improvements** – Current transition practices information has been gathered from the middle school Learning Coordinators. TAG staff will use this information and continue to work collaboratively with middle school staff to develop a transition protocol for TAG students from elementary school to middle school and from middle school to high school.

Socio-Emotional Student Support (Plan: Goal 4)

- **Pilot Development** – TAG staff and Student Services staff are considering the district work and support of the socio-emotional learning standards and examining how they support the socio-emotional needs of students, including those with talents and gifts. TAG staff is researching socio-emotional support models and will continue collaboration with Student Services staff as well as continue to get student input as models to pilot are finalized. Pilots at elementary, middle and high school level are currently in development and plans are to conduct pilots in the second semester.

- **Support for Underrepresented Populations** – Research and review of support models for students from underrepresented populations is on-going. District staff (high school teachers and resource teachers) are conducting a book study of *Removing the Mask* by Ruby Payne.

Professional Development (Plan: Goal 5)

- **Principal Professional Development** – TAG staff presented the Plan to all principals at the principal meeting on October 14, 2009. TAG staff is attending staff meetings and additional meetings with principals in their respective buildings, as requests for more information and dialogue continues.
- **District-Wide TAG Representation** – TAG staff is represented on committees and initiatives such as the New Educators Support Course, Instructional Resource Teacher (IRT) Committee, REaL grant initiatives, and district-wide assessment planning (consideration of ACT College and Career Readiness standards). Collaboration continues with district administration including high school and middle school leadership teams.
- **District-Wide Professional Development**
 - TAG staff continues to receive many requests for professional development, K-12. Several middle schools have requested support with differentiation professional development.
 - A series of three professional development sessions have been arranged with experts in the field of gifted education. Session topics will provide support for classroom teachers in the areas of talented and gifted identification and how to use specific assessment tools. Spring session dates will be held January through March 2010.
 - The TAG Division has offered an online differentiation course in the spring and summer for MMSD staff for the past several years, with TAG staff facilitating the course. The course will be offered again in February 2010.
 - In collaboration with the Literacy Division, and planning for a district-wide middle school professional development day on January 11, 2010, TAG staff has secured a presenter with expertise in the field of gifted education. TAG staff will also be directly involved in the planning and presenting of the professional development sessions.
 - Discussion continues with experts in the field to explore possible professional development opportunities that may be offered to MMSD staff in the future. The next steps include a course developed specifically for MMSD staff through UW-Whitewater with the possibility that Whitewater would offer MMSD staff a reduced rate for university credit.
- **TAG Staff Development**
 - TAG staff has attended state and national conferences including the Fall 2009 Wisconsin Association for Talented and Gifted Conference “GPS – Gifted Positioning System: Where Do We Go From Here?” in October, 2009 in Wisconsin Dells, and the 57th Annual Convention “Great Minds Leading the Way” National Association of Gifted Children in November, 2009 in Atlanta, Georgia. Future staff development includes TAG staff attending the DPI Wisconsin Promise Conference in January 2010 and the Illinois Association for Gifted Children in February 2010.
 - TAG staff continues to participate in face-to-face and online professional development opportunities.
 - TAG staff includes discussion of research and best practices at weekly staff meetings.

Use of Available Technology (Plan: Goal 6)

- ***Use of Technology*** – Meetings with Research and Evaluation to discuss the needs of the TAG Division and the available technology have occurred since the beginning of the school year. TAG staff continues work with the Research and Evaluation Department to create a model for student data analysis to aid in identification (see Goal 1). These models will be researched-based and provide the information needed to make identification, programming, and additional diagnostic decisions pertaining to individual students. It has been determined that the Student Intervention Monitoring System (SIMS) can be used as the tracking and reporting system, currently containing much of the student information, including assessment and other data from Infinite Campus, that will make up the student profile component of a TAG student report. TAG staff will use SIMS in the current form to develop student profiles and Differentiated Education Plans (DEPs); reports will be customized in SIMS to meet future documentation/Plan development needs.

Consistent and Effective Communication (Plan: Goal 7)

- ***Resource Guide Development*** – A Resource Guide has been developed and is currently in draft form. New DPI guidelines for talented and gifted are due to be available in January 2010. The DPI guidelines will be considered and incorporated into the final version of the MMSD Resource Guide in early spring.
- ***Website*** – The TAG website is being used to post updates to the Plan and current events, including the Community Forum and the TAG Advisory Committee. TAG staff continues to explore possible changes to improve the website as a communication tool.
- ***School-Based Communication*** – Information from the TAG Division will be included in monthly school newsletters. There was consideration of a newsletter solely from the TAG Division that would be sent to the community. It has been decided that the school newsletter option meets the same communication goals and needs.

Ongoing Program Evaluation (Plan: Goal 8)

- ***Plan Evaluation*** – Several experts in the field of gifted education have reviewed the TAG Plan, including a consultant from DPI, the Director of WCATY, and UW-Whitewater faculty. The TAG Division will continue to work with outside agencies and experts in the field to get input as the Plan unfolds.
- ***TAG Advisory Committee*** – The formation of a TAG Advisory Committee was finalized in October. TAG staff enlisted the support of building principals in recruiting participants for the 2009-2010 Committee. TAG Advisory Committee members are posted on the TAG website at <http://tagweb.madison.k12.wi.us/node/55>. Meetings have been held on October 27, 2009 and December 15, 2009. Subcommittees will be formed as the work unfolds and the need for subcommittee work is identified. Future dates for the TAG Advisory Committee meetings are: February 23, 2010; April 27, 2010; and June 1, 2010.

TAG Connections to District-Wide Improvement Efforts

- The TAG Plan is an improvement effort that aims to form connections with many systems within MMSD with the ultimate goal of improving educational opportunities and service to TAG students. Efforts by the TAG Division are on-going to re-establish connections and partnerships with district resources at every level to help provide the appropriate instruction for students with talents and gifts as well as support each other, as staff members, in the endeavor. The relationships that are being built by TAG staff with other divisions and departments support the overall mission and vision of the district.
- The goals of the TAG Plan align with the District Strategic Plan as the district strives to improve student access to rigorous and essential courses and provide student socio-emotional support. The Strategic Plan commits to analyzing existing systems and changing those systems as is determined necessary and appropriate to best meet all students' needs.

