

Talented and Gifted (TAG)

June 2021

Background

The Fulton County Schools gifted program considers the “unique learning characteristics, interests, personal needs, and capabilities of gifted children” to address their additional learning needs. This program provides specialized educational experiences that accelerate and enrich the traditional school curriculum.

The district screens all students for eligibility for gifted services twice per year. Students are screened and referred for gifted eligibility testing through one of the three methods below, combined with additional supporting data from testing, classroom work, and advanced content levels.

1. *Automatic screening* (performance on a norm-referenced test)
2. *Classroom screening* (2-week review period in Spring semester of all students using the Characteristics Instrument for Screening Students)
3. *Reported referrals* from a parent, teacher, or administrator.

Upon referral for gifted testing, assessment of student mental ability, creativity, achievement, and motivation are conducted with various instruments. Selected instruments and eligibility criteria for gifted services are determined by State Board of Education Rule 160-4-2-.38 guidance.

When students are eligible and placed in the gifted program, they are taught the traditional school curriculum with their peers at an adjusted rate and depth, depending on their needs. In high schools, gifted students receive further differentiation and can enrich their learning through seminars, advanced placement courses, direct studies, internships, and dual enrollment.

In elementary schools, gifted students receive instruction four days per week from a general education teacher and one day from a TAG instructor. Middle schools utilize the Advanced Content Model, where every TAG student will take one advanced content TAG course (e.g., AP, IB, Gifted Honors, IBMYP) each year. This model may include students who are not identified as gifted but show an exceptional ability to succeed in these courses. High schools employ a variety of TAG models. Each student receives at least one delivery model each year (e.g., Directed Study, Internship, IB, AP, Gifted Honors, Seminar).

The Department of Program Evaluation (DPE) evaluated TAG to gather actionable insights for the continuous improvement of this program.

Evaluation Questions

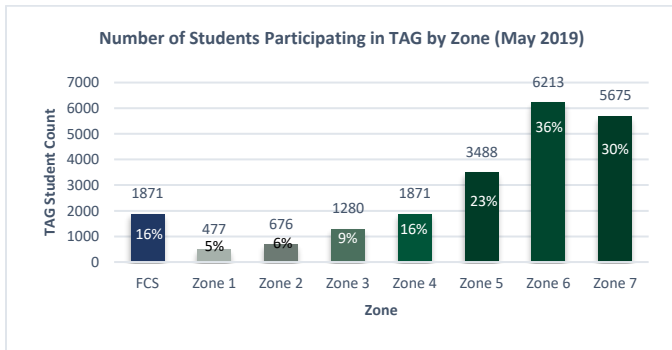
The TAG program evaluation addressed the following questions:

- 1) What does TAG placement look like throughout the district?
- 2) How reliable and consistent is the process for identifying, placing, and supporting students in the TAG program?
- 3) How are TAG students performing as compared to their non-TAG peers?

Methodology and Data

Methodology and Data

The data for this evaluation were collected through the district’s data warehouse. The analysis focused on the 2018-2019 school year to provide a more accurate depiction of the TAG program before the COVID-19 pandemic. During the 2019 academic year, 19,680 students were identified and placed in the TAG program. The graph below shows the number and percentage of TAG students by zone.



To address the first evaluation question, DPE examined the demographic make-up of the TAG program by race, free-reduced lunch status, English language learner status, disability status, and gender.

For the second evaluation question, DPE measured the relationship between a student's gifted status and the available screening instrument using a Spearman Correlation. For this analysis, DPE did not have standardized achievement test results, classroom screening measures, or information on reported referrals since this data is not centrally housed at the district level. Placement in the TAG program is considered reliable when there is a strong correlation ($r = > 0.7$) between test scores and placement. Placement is consistent when the correlation is similar across demographic groups. Lower correlation means that students in those groups aren't placed as reliably.

Lastly, to assess the performance of TAG students as compared to their peers, DPE conducted a regression analysis to examine the impact of the TAG program on student outcomes in the Georgia Milestones exams, Advanced Placement exams, SATs, and graduation.

Results

Question 1 – Participants

Students in Zones 5-7 are 2-7 times more likely to be identified as TAG than students in Zones 1-4. Moreover, Black, and Hispanic students are underrepresented while White, Asian, and Pacific

Islander students are represented in TAG in greater proportions than in the student body. Students with disabilities and students who qualify for free-reduced lunch are underrepresented in the TAG program.

Table 1 below shows the demographic make-up of each student population in the district compared to the make-up of the TAG program. Areas shaded in red denote underrepresentation, while areas shaded in green indicate an overrepresentation.

Table 1: Demographic Composition of District and TAG Program

Demographic Indicator	District Make-up	TAG Make-up
Black	43%	10%
White	29%	40%
Hispanic	15%	10%
Asian	12%	50%
Pacific Islander	<1%	25%
ELL Status	7%	<2%
SWD Status	10%	<2%
FRL Status	44%	<10%

Question 2 – Reliable and Consistent Placement

Overall, TAG criteria for the screening are reliable measures for gifted referral but not consistent across demographic groups.

iReady. iReady and Gifted status has a positive, moderate relationship ($r = .50$). However, it is not a consistent measure for gifted screening for the following groups

- Black ($r = 0.32$)
- Hispanic ($r = 0.36$)
- Native Indian ($r = 0.30$)
- Free/Reduced Lunch, ($r = 0.31/0.39$)
- ELL ($r = 0.12$)
- Students with disabilities ($r = 0.25$)
- Students in zones 1-3 ($r = 0.28, 0.31, 0.35$)

Milestones. The Georgia Milestones and Gifted status have a positive, moderate relationship ($r = .55$). However, it is not a consistent measure for gifted screening for the following groups

- Black ($r = 0.37$)
- Hispanic ($r = 0.40$)
- Native Indian ($r = 0.38$)
- Free/Reduced Lunch, ($r = 0.34/0.42$)
- ELL ($r = 0.32$)
- Students with disabilities ($r = 0.26$)
- Students in zones 1-3 ($r = 0.33, 0.34, 0.38$)

GPA. A student's GPA and Gifted status have a positive, moderate relationship ($r = .58$). However, it is not a consistent measure for gifted screening for the following groups

- Black ($r = 0.36$)
- Hispanic ($r = 0.40$)
- Native Indian ($r = 0.38$)
- Free/Reduced Lunch, ($r = 0.31/0.39$)
- ELL ($r = 0.09$)
- Students with disabilities ($r = 0.16$)
- Students in zones 1-3 ($r = 0.26, 0.25, 0.36$)

Question 3 – Student Outcomes

Gifted students outperform non- gifted students.

- 94% of gifted students score in the proficient or distinguished categories on Milestones.
- Roughly 80% of gifted students score a 3,4,5 as compared to 75% of non-gifted students scoring 1,2,3 on AP exams.
- Gifted students had higher SAT percentile ranks regardless of the student group.

Among gifted students, Black and Hispanic students perform significantly worse on Milestones, SAT, and AP exams. 80 to 90% of White and Asian students score a 3 or higher as compared about 45% of Black students. The percentage of Black students that made up each score category decreased as scores increased (i.e., a higher percentage of Black students had lower scores), while the percentage of gifted Asian students increased as scores increased (i.e., a higher percentage of Asian students had higher scores).

In SAT Math, Asian, White, Multiracial, Pacific Islander gifted students scored at or above the 82nd percentile. Black and Hispanic gifted students performed in the 62nd and 77th percentile, respectively. In SAT Verbal, Asian, White, Multiracial, Pacific Islander gifted students scored at or above the 85th percentile, while Black, Native Indian, and Hispanic gifted students performed in the 70th, 73rd, and 80th percentile, respectively.

Regardless of race, TAG placement was a statistically significant predictor of graduation.

Limitations and Considerations

Limitations should be considered when unpacking the results. For this evaluation, we had limited screening data. The Georgia Milestones, iReady scores, and GPA explain about 20% of the screening data for students tested in 2018-2019. This indicates that 80% of the data used to screen and refer students for gifted eligibility testing is not centrally stored in the district. Additionally, at the time of this evaluation, the supporting data requirement was not being centrally stored. Collecting and storing this data will be necessary to conduct a complete analysis that will help the district understand implementation fidelity, proportionate student representation, and reliability of the screening and referral process.

Conclusion

Once students are identified and placed in the TAG program, they outperform their peers. Overall, the percentage of students who participate in TAG in the district is more than twice the national average and slightly higher than the state average. Program participation is well below the national average in zones 1-3 and substantially exceeds the national average in zones 4-6.

The data suggests that while screening measures are reliable, discrepancies exist within the screening and referral process for different student populations. More data is needed to confirm these preliminary findings.