

Board-Approved Draft 6 August 2015

**Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations
Resolution on the Advanced Academic Program**

WHEREAS, many studies have shown that advanced learners are best served when grouped together in academic classrooms; and

WHEREAS, FCPS provides services to advanced learners along a continuum of Advanced Academic services, ranking students according to their needs from Level I to Level IV, where Level IV represents students who require placement in a full-time Advanced Academic Program (AAP); and

WHEREAS, FCPS established “Centers” in which to gather Level IV AAP students from various base schools in order to ensure that these students would have an academic and socio-emotional cohort not typically available in their base schools; and

WHEREAS, the increase in the percentage of Level IV-identified AAP students has led to concerns that, as former FCPS teacher of the year Vern Williams has commented, “kids aren’t grouped as rigorously [and therefore top students do not have] more than just four or five peers close enough in ability to choose from to create a peer group;”¹ and

WHEREAS, the special needs of the top students within the AAP may significantly differ from the needs of other students within the program; and

WHEREAS, the 2013 George Mason University review of FCPS’ AAP stressed the importance of “critical mass” for gifted students, defined in part by the presence of at least two classes per grade level or subject area; and

WHEREAS, no single elementary school consistently identifies 50 or more students per grade level as Level IV-eligible; and

WHEREAS, FCPS’ most recent Capital Improvement Program (CIP) suggests establishing AAP Centers at Franklin Sherman and Chesterbrook Elementary Schools which would not admit AAP-eligible students from outside their base school populations, and thus do not meet the traditional meaning of a Center within FCPS; and

WHEREAS, some elementary schools provide Level IV AAP services to their base school students through a Local Level IV program; and

¹ Davis, Noah. “What Makes You So Smart, Middle School Math Teacher?” *Pacific Standard Magazine*, 24 Oct. 2014.

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WHEREAS, parents of students at elementary schools that have a Local Level IV program have a choice of whether or not to send their AAP-eligible students to a Center; and

WHEREAS, one of the strengths of FCPS as a school system is that it provides essential services to families through a variety of programs, based on which program is right for each individual child, rather than a “one size fits all” approach to education,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Federation:

1. We recommend that FCPS reject the suggestion within the CIP to establish “One School Centers,” such as those proposed at Franklin Sherman and Chesterbrook Elementary Schools; and
2. We recommend that FCPS direct the Department of Facilities and Transportation that in future planning, the CIP must take into consideration that the maintenance of a high-quality AAP requires FCPS to offer the option of a strong Center-based education to all Level IV-identified students in elementary school.