

## **APS Parent Academy Video Blurb:**

**This video was created by the Office of Gifted Services in Arlington Public Schools. It provides a brief overview of how services are delivered through a collaborative cluster approach in kindergarten through 12th grade. A panel of resource teachers for the gifted (RTGs), representing elementary, middle and high school, share their perspectives on how services need not change in a distance learning model even though the primary mode for how teachers deliver gifted services has changed.**

Office of Gifted Services: Update on Distance Learning

“Overview of Gifted Services: A K-12 Perspective”

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This video will provide an overview of gifted services in

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Arlington Public Schools during this time of remote

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learning. On the panel we have Cheryl McCullough, the

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Supervisor of Gifted Services, and four resource teachers for

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gifted services, representing elementary, middle and high

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school. Liz Burgos at Washington-Liberty High School, Kat

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Partington at Dorothy Ham Middle School, Maria deOlazo at

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Abingdon Elementary, and Kevin Trainor at McKinley Elementary

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School. We will be organizing the discussion around three main

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topics “Gifted services at each level and what it might look like.”

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“How curricular resources, written for gifted learners, and

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critical and creative thinking strategies

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are infused in lessons.” and “Talent

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development with the young scholars model: How we focus on

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equity and giving all learners opportunities for frequent and

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ongoing rigorous learning with

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support.” Let's begin with Cheryl to provide an overview

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of how gifted services are delivered in Arlington Public

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Schools.

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Thank you, Jackie. Our model for delivering gifted services

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is a K-12 collaborative cluster model. This model is outlined in

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our 2017 to 2022 local plan for the gifted and it adheres to the

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Virginia Department of Education guidelines and also meets the

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National Association for the Gifted K-12 Program Standards.

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What a clustering model is means that students are

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clustered within heterogeneous classrooms.

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The cluster needs to be large enough. Our models

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suggest that a minimum of five gifted learners per cluster. So

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the cluster teacher, or the Intensified teacher, or the

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AP or IB teacher can purposely plan for the daily

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differentiation that we know gifted learners need. We know

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the research supports gifted learners having intellectual

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peers with a teacher who understands the diverse needs of

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gifted learners. We ask principals to assign clusters to

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teachers who have this

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expertise or those who are working with our resource teachers to

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develop this expertise. Cluster teachers are provided with the ongoing

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support of the resource teacher in their school.

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Each elementary school, middle school, and high school has one

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resource teacher for the gifted and we call them RTGs.

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Their role is to be an instructional coach for teachers

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to support implementation of resources written for gifted

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learners, and model critical and creative thinking lessons to

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give all learners opportunities to think and problem solve in

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multiple ways. As we move forward with virtual learning

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and teaching, our services should not change. What is

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changing is the medium or the vehicle of delivering the

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service that is evolving beyond our brick and mortar realities.

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So now that you have an overview of the services, would the

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resource teachers like to explain how gifted services will

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work in the virtual environment?

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So I'll begin I guess. Cheryl alluded to this just a moment ago,

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services aren't really changing all that much. I think that the

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day in and day out responsibilities of the RTG

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hasn't really changed all that much. I focus on delivering

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curricular resources for our high ability kids, critical and

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creative thinking skills across the board for all of our

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learners, and really support the classroom teachers and their

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ability to feel comfortable implementing this instruction. Especially

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as we move into an environment where the schedules are a little

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bit less certain than they have in the past. The

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ability for us to support the classroom teachers so they feel

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comfortable implementing these resources and it is very much

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sort of the priority at McKinley. We rely a lot on the

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coaching models and are really kind of taking teachers from where they

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currently are feeling like they are to maybe a more

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desired state in terms of using these resources and they can

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look a lot of different ways. It can be conversations within

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their collaborative learning teams. It could be one-to-one

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conversations. It can be supporting lessons

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where there's a couple teachers and

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some students working together. It's a

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newer, more digital version of the job that we've had for

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however many years so...

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It feels a little different to do it from your your kitchen in

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some cases, but the work itself is essentially the

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same.

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And I'd like to piggyback on what Kevin was saying. I

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think that as RTG'S, our role is really to support the

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differentiation within the classroom, which is what we

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naturally do, and everybody needs different things, so

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sometimes it might be an opportunity in the digital world

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to model lessons or model a strategy like some of the higher

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order thinking skills for students and then we can see

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If we will be able to break out and synchronously work with

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different groups of students based on need. It's important to

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note to that a lot of times when we're working with, teams

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were actually looking at data and trying to figure out who

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needs some of the differentiated support, who needs more rigor

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and then working with teachers to develop sort of a multi

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tiered plan for all the students in the classroom? Not just some,

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but all of them and that planning and those

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groupings are differentiated

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based on need and academic achievement. And, in the

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background, as Kevin was saying, it's really important too,

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we have a lot of new teachers at Abingdon and

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that part of it. Helping bring teachers on board with what

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gifted characteristics are. A part of the job is just being in

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the background to support them, know what to look for in terms

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of gifted students, what to look for in terms of materials that

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might really supplement the core curriculum, so that we know the

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extensions are tied to the Standards of Learning. And the goals of the classroom teachers.

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I feel really fortunate that in the

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spring time that I was able to work with teams as a seamless

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fabric of the team as opposed to feeling like I was

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separate. And so that's ideal.

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Yeah, and on the middle school level, it's very similar. You know, there is no typical day for an RTG. I think we would all

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say that, but there is a typical week, in that I am meeting with

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the Collaboration Learning Teams constantly. I'm meeting with the

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team, meeting the teams as well the grade level teams. And then I'm

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learning, you know, I'll ask them "OK, what is an area you're about to start

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working on? How can I help you with this?" "There are some

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curricular resources that I think would be really good" and

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also "Echo what you're working on." And elevate it for those

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students that you know need the extension, and so it's a really

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a seamless transition for myself to work virtually

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because when I was in the brick and mortar system I was going to

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all these meetings and attending in person and then I would go

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into the classroom and collaborate with the teachers

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over the plans we had developed together. Then when we went

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to the virtual world in March, the same thing was happening

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just via computer. So we were now working together in our CLT

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meetings and our grade level team meetings.

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We were still developing plans together. We were figuring out

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you know...choice menus for projects, different ways we can

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do it and then how to facilitate it. I would come

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into the class team meetings when they had check-ins. We'd

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have breakout rooms. That group of Teachers...I'd bring some

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teachers together so we could facilitate that. So it's really

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working with the teachers to help facilitate best practices

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for all learners and then make sure that we are providing the

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differentiation to and the extensions needed for our

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gifted learners.

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Liz your muted at the moment.

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Thanks.

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I knew I would do that, but I like what you said Kat about.

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no one day being the same and that's really true. And in

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this job my role as a cognitive coach is advocating for

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gifted and advanced students. So that means I do work with

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teachers to build their capacity to meet the needs of

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their gifted and advanced learners, and to use those

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instructional strategies that are grounded in developing

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students inquiries and their inquiry abilities so that these

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students can be moved toward independent and interdependent

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learning. And one example of what happened this spring

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that I want to share was, I worked with a group of IB

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English teachers that wanted to create a problem based unit and

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incorporate service learning and

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then I was able to work with them, develop this unit to be

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delivered online.

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And then also we met to talk and debrief and find out how we

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could have made this unit even better based on student

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responses as well as their, engagement with the lesson. And

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then we were able to create a workshop that we shared with all

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of Arlington Public Schools teachers about problem based

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learning and it was a fantastic

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collaboration. That got a lot of people involved and really

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created a community of collaborators. So that is

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just one example, but being an RTG is a job of meeting with a lot

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of people and supporting them and doing that cheerleading work of

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getting people to recognize how we can grow

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equity for all learners. So I just got a text from a

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teacher who wrote a science grant and she's hoping to get money so that she can create kits

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where students will be able to do some of their science

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projects and continue doing that work while we're in this

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virtual environment.

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So I think I'm done there.

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OK, that sounds great. Thank you so much for sharing those

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examples and all that information. I didn't know if

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Cheryl had anything to recap?

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Or add? Actually, I was just sitting here thinking about

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how glad I am that I invited a panel of my resource teachers

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to do this with me because you are actually taking the ideas and

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hopefully showing all of our stakeholders the diverse

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roles of the resource teacher, and how pivotal they are in

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leading instruction in the school. So I really appreciate

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that you were here with us to do that. To do a much

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better job than me, saying this on my own.

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OK, so one major focus of Arlington Public Schools is

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equity, so we would like to spend a little bit of time

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talking about what that looks like in gifted services

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Would any of you like to address this issue?

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Sure, I'd be happy to start, one of the things

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at Abingdon that we've really focused on this year, is this

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idea of studying our demographics, and how do we take

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our gifted population of students and have that

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population match the demographics of our school? So

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one of things we noticed this year as we did different

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projects... I borrowed one of Jackie's Rube

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Goldberg Projects and did it with all of our third grade

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students. And in doing so, with

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the 3rd grade team of teachers, we just discovered so many

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students that were in many different subgroups who

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demonstrated engineering prowess, who demonstrated the

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ability to build and think very creatively, who might not have

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been spotted in the past. And so one of the things we really want

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to look at is how do we...

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You know? Artfully do talent development in our schools. How

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do we look at our students? Recognize their strength and I

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think we're accustomed to looking at the data and looking

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at things from a bit of a deficit point of view...Like what kids

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can't do. And I'd really love for us to look at what are the

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things they can do and how do we elevate as all of you

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were saying that putting that into practice through problem based learning,

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through critical and creative thinking skills for all

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students, and then how do we

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ramp up the rigor for those that are really ready for

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it? I know that's a goal that we have is to really look at all

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of our population of students. One thing we did in the fall

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that I applaud my principal for was...we did a PD for teacher specialists



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about what the gifted characteristics are? How do

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we look at them from the perspective of

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art music, PE, and then we had a lively conversation about

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what those characteristics look like and

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how we support all learners in that way. So that equity piece

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is really important for us?

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Maria, I like what you said

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there. Go ahead, Kevin. I was going to piggyback on that.

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Like from the elementary world, I think along those lines

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of the characteristics...we spend a little bit of time focusing on

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the myths right? And looking through the National Association

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for Gifted Children posts on the

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development that we can help our teachers really understand not

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only gifted characteristics, but also how these characteristics

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can manifest themselves differently across cultures. And

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that's culturally responsive teaching. Then you'll see there

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are different ways that

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kids can show their abilities and we need to make sure that

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we're recognizing that and we're aware of it. And so that

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is really important for an RTG to provide that.

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professional development for teachers so that they can

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really understand student

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thinking. And then I'm also asking some questions

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Our school is sort

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of organized in small learning teams, small learning communities

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and I go into those meetings and I asked the teachers if they

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know of any students.

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that are not identified and students of color, particularly

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when I talk about what those characteristics look

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like? You know, maybe these are not the kids that are the

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teacher pleasers necessarily, but these are the kids that are

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asking a lot of great questions and making some real intentional

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decisions about where they are going to work hard. And it's

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teacher meetings to look at our data. Much like Maria said,

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looking at our data and looking at our data by school and the

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goal is to match our gifted

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population with the diverse population of each school. That

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has been an ongoing goal and that will still be a goal in our

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meetings. We do these frequent data dives so that each resource

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teacher can look at the specific data for their school and then

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target interventions. We think of interventions or professional

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learning opportunities that they think their teachers might need

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best to really talk about the diverse learners or the

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characteristics or anything, or

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the cultural responsive teaching. All the things that you

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all mentioned. It comes back to our work.

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It's very important to all of us to find the diverse learners and

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that is children that are English learners, and twice

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exceptional learners. Children from poverty and also

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underachieving children. So it's a very

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complex problem/complex issue and I just appreciate that.

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You all just gave great examples of how we're

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working towards that goal and doing it in collaboration,

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Especially with our Equity and Excellence Coordinators because

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I work very closely with Carolyn Jackson as well. She is

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the Supervisor of our Equity and Excellence Program, so that is an

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overall goal for Arlington and I just I appreciate the time to

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be able to talk about it.

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Thanks.

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Well, I would like to thank all of you for sharing that very

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important information with

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Arlington families. We hope that we've answered some of your

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questions about gifted services, but if you have any further

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questions, please feel free to visit the APS engage website at

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[apsva.us/engage](https://apsva.us/engage).