Improving Advanced Learning

Our District has been planning a new research effort to better understand how well it is serving students identified as “Advanced Learners” (eligible for Spectrum and Advanced Learning Opportunities – ALO) and “Highly Capable” (eligible for HCC). The intent is to ensure greater continuity and equity in services across the District. So far, work involves two phases.

Phase 1: Create a Descriptive Report that helps everyone understand what is currently happening, with a focus on students being served by Spectrum and ALO. (As an example: At Thurgood Marshall, some General Education students are provided ALO in Math, meaning they are working one grade level ahead.)

This phase began last month and will continue through the end of the school year. The District’s Research and Evaluation Department will be analyzing:

- **Demographics** – What are the characteristics of Advanced Learners?
- **Distribution** – How are these students distributed across schools?
- **Grouping** – What is the composition of classrooms with Spectrum-eligible students? To what extent are Advanced Learners taught alongside their academic peers? (The District formerly operated separate classrooms for Spectrum, providing Math and English Language Arts curriculum about one grade level ahead. With a few exceptions, Spectrum-eligible students are now served in General Education classrooms.)
- **Achievement** – What are the academic outcomes of Advanced Learners?

In addition, all school Principals are being surveyed about their approach to Advanced Learners. And, the Advanced Learning Department’s team will work with Research and Evaluation staff to understand how parents and other community members feel about the Advanced Learning Department’s programs, services and operations, now and in the past. This review of “Perception Data” will look at formal as well as informal ways in which people have raised concerns and questions.

Phase 2: Study Best Practices for High-Growth Advanced Learners. This phase has begun and will last through September, with a final report to the School Board expected in November 2017. Staff will investigate promising practices and policies (in our District and others) that can be meaningfully replicated in Seattle schools.

**Advanced Learning Referrals for ’18-19 to Start next Month; Earlier Tests Planned**

The District is intensifying efforts to identify students who would benefit from an Advanced Learning program, by expanding testing, increasing outreach, and inviting referrals for 2018-19 starting next month (instead of the fall).

In recent years, it became increasingly clear that the District’s process for determining eligibility created barriers for some families and their students. So, for the third straight year, a short version of one of the primary eligibility tests will be offered to all 2nd-grade students in Title 1 schools (where at least half the children are part of lower-income families, as defined by the federal government). For the second year in a row, all TM 2nd-graders not already qualified will take this 1-hour screening, next week. (We are not a Title 1 School, but our non-HCC students as a group would meet the same income qualification.)

In past years, the nomination forms for AL testing became available about 6 weeks before the October deadline, not enough time for teachers to fully get to know their students. That is changing. For 2018-19 entry, the process will open *this* school year, on May 15. Referrals will be accepted on paper (in eight languages) and online through the Source. Testing will be scheduled for September, October and November. Teachers will use a less cumbersome rating scale, which should better recognize the unique attributes of English Language Learners.

These exciting changes will be better for all students. Please ask your child’s classroom teacher whether AL programs might be a good choice. I hope our families will take advantage of the spring referral window.

– Principal Katie May
Morning Choir Canceled Temporarily; Instrumental Concert Date Changed

Music Teacher Kelsey French is recovering after a leg injury, but has had to cancel the morning meetings of Choir until further notice. As of now, the Choir Concert is still scheduled for Thursday, June 8 at 7 p.m. It will be slightly shorter than usual, but still be exciting.

Meanwhile, Music Teacher Dan Yarr has announced that the Spring Instrumental Concert will be held at 7 p.m. May 25, not May 11 (as originally planned).

Switch: TM Is to Start at 8 a.m. in ’17-18

Here is an edited excerpt from a message Principal Katie May sent via email on Wednesday:

The School Board has passed the two-tier start time for the 2017-18 school year, and the Mayor has announced that the city will subsidize this cost. This plan has almost all elementary schools placed in Tier 1.

What does this mean for Thurgood Marshall? Including the 20 minutes added to the school day in 2017-18, we would have a 7:45 a.m. arrival for students (playground and breakfast open), classes beginning at 8 a.m., dismissal at 2:30 p.m. and buses leaving at 2:40 p.m. The new weekly early dismissals on Wednesdays would be 1:30 p.m.

The majority of our parent and community survey respondents opted for a Tier 2 start time. This was the most popular time slot across the District.

I have heard from many of you about how this change will impact you and your children, and I have shared these concerns at the Central Office level and advocated to be moved to Tier 2 (9 a.m.). Our request is being considered and I believe that we can expect to hear the outcome next week.

I know that these decisions impact work schedules, day care options, after school activities and bedtimes. I know that some of you were unhappy to have the late dismissal time we currently have. I am also aware that with the large District we reside in, when large-scale decisions are made with the needs of the entire community in mind, it is difficult to please everyone. You may contact Ms. May at kimay1@seattleschools.org.

Remind Students to Eat Breakfast at 9:15

If your child eats breakfast at school, please remind him or her to go straight to the lunchroom after arriving at school at 9:15. When students go to recess first, they are not getting to the lunchroom until breakfast has been closed down. We do not want any of our students to miss out!

Last Chance to Buy TM Yearbook. Really!

It’s true: One more day to order the TM Yearbook. Form is at the office, or go to http://bit.ly/TMyearbook17. Just $16.

Food, Flowers, Thank-You Notes

Help Show our Staff some Appreciation!

Staff Appreciation Week (next Monday through Friday) allows us to show how much we value the dedicated people who work at TM. Sign up at http://tinyurl.com/TMappreciation17 to volunteer. And have your child fill out the thank-you notes on the attached flier.

Let’s Bike 8205 Mins. in May; Prizes Await

Bike to School Month starts next week. Our school has a goal of averaging 15 minutes per student, for a total of 8205 minutes.

We know that not every student will turn in the tracking calendar attached to today’s Pup Press, so can you be the one to bike a few minutes … or hours … more than that average? Prizes for every rider on Bike to School Day, May 10.

District’s ’17-18 Calendar Partially Set

The District has announced that it may not publish a final approved calendar until June. However, these dates are set:

- Mon.-Fri., Aug. 21-25: Kindergarten Jump Start
- Wed., Sept. 6: First day of school
- Mon., Sept. 11: Kindergarten first full day of school
- Dec. 18-Jan. 1: Winter break (no school)
- Feb. 19-23: Mid-winter break (no school)
- April 9-13: Spring break (no school)
- Fri., June 22: Last day of school

Annual Fund Goal Is Just $10,000 Away

Thanks to you, our generous Thurgood Marshall families, we met the $25,000 “March Match-ness” challenge, and have raised more than $150,000 for the to support our school! The PTA Annual Giving Fund goal is $160,000. You will hear from us once more, on May 10, the annual GiveBig day. When you give, you impact every child at our school!
**Bike to School**

**Are you a new Bike to School Month rider?**

- **YES**
- **NO**

**My Total Minutes in May**

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**How It Works**

1. **Keep track of the total number of minutes you ride each day.**
2. **Total your minutes and earn a prize!**
3. **Give this calendar to your Bike to School coordinator at the end of the month.**

**School:**

- Thurgood Marshall Elementary School

**Teacher:**

- 

**Grade:**

- 

**Name:**

- 

**Sponsors:**

- Cascade Bicycle Club
- Bike to School
- Seattle Children’s
- New York

**AAA Reminds You**

- To wear your helmets.
Dear Thurgood Marshall Families,

Staff Appreciation Week is May 1-5. This is a time when children, parents and families say THANK YOU! You can help make this week special for or teachers and staff.

Help at an appreciation event at school or in other ways. Sign up for volunteer shifts if indicated!

- **Friday (April 28, all day)**, you will have the chance to add your name or special decoration to a thank-you banner!
- **Monday**, sign up to come to school to help prepare flowers for all staff.
- **Wednesday**, sign up to prepare food or help with the Staff Lunch.
- **Thursday**, send in hand-written cards or notes. (Three are below, if you’d like to have your child use them!)
- **Friday**, sign up to prepare food or help with the Staff Breakfast.

All volunteer opportunities explained on the sign-up page at [http://tinyurl.com/TMappreciation17](http://tinyurl.com/TMappreciation17)

Thank you for taking time to salute our staff! Questions? Contact Kat Barr, katherine.barr@gmail.com