

# Q&A Shakerag School Governance Council

## 2013-14 Requests for Flexibility (RFF)

As a Cohort 1 school, Shakerag's School Governance Council (SGC) has been integral in creating our 5-year strategic plan and is able to request waivers from state law or school system policy to help achieve our long term objectives (*Improve Student Achievement, Develop Student Communication Skills, Foster Student Leadership*). Our SGC is making two flexibility requests this year: one for flexibility with Fulton County's TAG Resource Model coupled with TAG Endorsement training for all classroom teachers (RFF 1) and one for flexibility with student attendance requirements to provide either 6 Early Release Days (RFF 2) or 5 Full Release Days for teacher training (RFF 3).

*The Comment Period for RFF's 1 and 2 has closed. The Comment Period for our RFF for Full Release Days is currently underway (see website for full RFF and Comment options).*

We compiled this Q&A to help explain what implications these RFF's have for our school.

**What are we asking for?** We are requesting a waiver from Fulton County's Talented and Gifted (TAG) Resource Model (RFF 1). All students currently spend approximately 60 minutes in math each day. In order to meet the new, rigorous math standards the State of Georgia requires of all students, we want to increase the amount of math time each day to 75-90 total minutes (depending on each grade level). To continue to meet our mandatory TAG time requirements while increasing math time for all students, we need flexibility with how we deliver TAG instruction during math time.

In order to account for these extra 15-30 minutes of math each day, we will provide TAG training and certification for all our classroom teachers. To accomplish this rigorous certification, we need time to properly train teachers and are requesting either Early Release Days (RFF 2) or Full Release Days (RFF 3) to provide some of the 200-hours this endorsement requires.

**What does this mean for TAG students?** Current TAG students will still be pulled out from their regular classroom once a week for the majority of the day. They currently do return for math for approximately 60 minutes each day. In order to increase the amount of math instruction school-wide, TAG students will "miss" about 15 minutes of TAG to remain in their math class and subsequently not meet the required number of minutes in the TAG resource classroom. However, by having TAG certified classroom teachers providing math instruction on a daily basis, we will meet the TAG requirements while also exposing TAG students to additional TAG strategies and activities every day instead of only once per week when pulled out for TAG.

**What does this mean for non-TAG students?** Once all classroom teachers are TAG certified, all non-TAG students will be exposed to more TAG instructional strategies and activities on a daily basis. These strategies are specifically designed to engage students in critical and creative thinking through project-based learning, one of our strategic focus areas (*Focus Area #1: To engage students in higher order thinking and increase real-world application of knowledge*). This RFF will not affect the quantity of non-TAG students math instruction, only increase the capacity and instructional effectiveness of their teacher.

**What does this mean for Shakerag teachers?** All Shakerag teachers would work towards receiving their TAG Endorsement over the next several years. This is a rigorous, 200 hour, Public Service Commission accredited college-level certification program. This endorsement is an investment in our teaching staff, adding to their instructional effectiveness. Future teachers would be required to have a TAG certification or agree to work towards certification within a specified timeline.

**What does this mean for Shakerag parents?** This RFF will increase the capacity of our teaching staff and expose students to more critical thinking strategies and activities on a daily basis. To provide teachers time for this extensive training, we will incorporate either 6 Early Release Days (RFF 2) or 5 Full Release Days each year (RFF 3). Specific dates/times will be advertised once the option is approved at to ensure parents have ample opportunity to make appropriate arrangements for their children.

**What is a TAG Endorsement?** A TAG Endorsement is required for all TAG teachers and is considered an add-on to their teaching certificate. Only TAG Endorsed teachers are certified and eligible to teach TAG classes. The curriculum for the TAG Endorsement is approved by the Professional Standards Commission (PSC) and aligned to Georgia 2000 Standards for Professional Learning and the Council for Exceptional Children Standards (CEC-Gifts and Talents).

The course schedule to obtain the TAG Endorsement includes the following classes and the required amount of instructional hours associated:

Foundations of Gifted Education	10 hours
Characteristics of the Gifted Learner	40 hours
Identification and Assessment	40 hours
Curriculum and Strategies	50 hours
Program Development	40 hours
Internship in Gifted Education	20 hours

Some of the resources utilized include *Growing Up Gifted, 7th Edition*, by Barbara Clark, *The Strategic Teacher; Selecting the Right Research-Based Strategy for Every Lesson*, by H.F. Silver, *Teaching with the Brain in Mind, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* by Eric Jensen, *The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners* by C. Tomlinson, *Systems and Models for Developing Programs for the Gifted and Talented, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, by Joseph Renzulli, *Differentiated Instructional Strategies: One Size Doesn't Fit All* by Gregory and Chapman .

**How will this Endorsement be paid for?** As a Cohort 1 School, we have access to Fulton County's **Seed Fund** which we will be applying for to pay for this request. The **Seed Fund** (<http://portal.fultonschools.org/CharterSystem/Pages/SeedFund.aspx>) was created specifically to help schools move forward with ideas that will improve school performance and positively impact students. As a Cohort 1 school we have priority access to these funds; they are available now for only Cohort schools. Next year all Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 schools will be eligible to apply. As a Cohort 1 school, we believe that now is the best time to make this request for funding and that it will be approved based on the limited number of schools applying.

**What is the timeline for approval?** All Requests for Flexibility are required to have a 30-day Public Comment Period that must be complete on or before January 17, 2014. After that our SGC will vote on approving and sending the RFF forward to our Area Superintendent by January 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Final decisions on approval will be made by Superintendent by January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2014.