

**Describe the proposed concept. What makes the concept unique and different from business as usual?**

Shakerag Elementary's concept focuses on developing the capacity of our instructional staff by providing the time and resources necessary for all classroom teachers to receive a TAG Endorsement over the next 18 months. We are requesting funds to pay for the instructors, resources and teachers for attending training on off-contract days.

This concept is unique and different in the following ways:

- 1) Having TAG Endorsed teachers will allow for flexibility in our instructional schedule and gifted delivery model. For now, our gifted learners will still receive instruction weekly in a resource setting (one day per week). However, with our approved Request For Flexibility we now have the flexibility to be able to increase the time and rigor of math and other subject instruction school-wide to better meet the needs of all our students. (Reference *What is the need that this concept addresses?* for more details.) While increasing math instructional time provides an immediate positive change for our students, having all teachers receive their TAG Endorsement will have a profound and long-term impact on all instructional subject matter for all students.
- 2) Shakerag's teaching staff will be better equipped to challenge all students (*gifted and non-gifted*) at the appropriate levels in math and other subjects, and ultimately meet our long-term objectives to increase the rigor of instruction and improve student achievement. The TAG Endorsement training focuses on implementing strategies to meet the needs of all our diverse learners and engaging and appropriately challenging students through hands-on, project-based learning.
- 3) Currently, Shakerag employs three certified TAG teachers that serve about **60 students each day**. Funding this initiative will increase the number of certified TAG teachers to at least 37, serving **all 838 of our students every day**.
- 4) No other Fulton County elementary school has a staff comprised of all TAG Endorsed teachers. This initiative will build our instructional capacity and provide us with increased options for scheduling and serving our students.

**Describe the target population (grade, subgroup, etc.)**

This Seed Fund request targets two Shakerag populations. We are asking for *all classroom teachers* to obtain a TAG Endorsement. This will then increase the instructional effectiveness delivered to *our entire student body*. This initiative directly and positively impacts **all** teachers and **all** students at Shakerag, each and every year.

**What is the need that this concept addresses? Describe how your concept meets this need.**

Fulton County's current policy requires us to serve our TAG students one day a week by a TAG certified teacher through the TAG Resource Model. This means that our TAG students currently leave their homeroom classroom one day per week to receive TAG services for the whole day with a TAG certified teacher, with the exception of 60 minutes of math, 45 minutes of specials and 30 minutes for lunch (they attend these with their homeroom teacher).

One of the concerns for Fulton County, our Northeast Learning Community and Shakerag centers on the increased rigor of the changing math standards. The quality and quantity of what we are teaching our students in math is not sufficient for the expectations that are now required. To meet this challenge of added rigor and to ensure that our students continue to be successful, we need to increase the amount of time students are in math throughout the year to provide more in-depth, critical thinking and problem-solving instruction. Therefore, our School Governance Council submitted and received approval for a Request For Flexibility (RFF) with our current TAG Model. We now have permission to modify our schedule, provided our teachers are in a TAG Endorsement program. Our request to the Seed Fund will allow us to fully implement this RFF and be successful in meeting the needs of our students.

Further, having students taught by TAG certified classroom teachers will allow Shakerag to maintain the current TAG funding for Fulton County, and could potentially bring additional revenue to our district and school, as we will be serving TAG students more than one day per week and all our TAG students on FTE days.

**Explain how this concept will positively affect student achievement. Articulate the rationale for the likelihood of success of the concept, and describe your plans for risk mitigation. State your definition of success and how you will measure it.**

Our goal is to have all our students succeed in mastering the curriculum standards while being engaged and challenged. By funding this initiative we are able to modify our TAG model as approved in our RFF, allowing us to modify the amount of time for math instruction. This addresses our concerns about preparing students for the new math curriculum, while cultivating students' critical thinking skills and providing each with a strong educational foundation. Completing the TAG Endorsement with all our teachers will positively impact student achievement throughout all grade levels. The strategies teachers will learn are specifically designed to engage and challenge students every day of the week in all subjects – regardless of their academic level. Two of the ten standards all teachers are responsible for with our state TKES

evaluation system include *Instructional Strategies* (TKES #3) and *Academically Challenging Environment* (TKES #8). The TAG Endorsement addresses both of these standards, ensuring all Shakerag teachers are appropriately engaging and challenging all students to be successful.

This initiative is an investment in the Shakerag teaching staff that will positively affect all students. The TAG Endorsement will help improve our teaching practices – it will help make good teachers better – resulting in increased overall school instructional effectiveness, a more rigorous learning environment and more engaged students. There is no risk in this proposal, as it is an investment in our teachers’ instructional effectiveness.

Success will be measured in terms of achieving TAG Endorsement for all classroom teachers and maintaining this over time. Our goal is to have all classroom teachers certified in 18 months. Further, with this investment we expect to see increased proficiency over time in TKES evaluation ratings (TKES #3 and #8) for all classroom teachers.

***Explain how this concept aligns with your strategic plan. Please attach the relevant Initiative Action Plan(s).***

Shakerag’s Strategic Plan identifies two Focus Areas and two Objectives that will be met with a school-wide classroom teacher TAG Endorsement:

Focus Area #1: Instructional Rigor and Relevance: To engage students in higher order thinking and increase real-world application of knowledge.

Focus Area #2: Student Engagement: To provide an engaging instructional environment that appropriately challenges all students.

Objective #2 (FA #1): Increase effectiveness of instructional strategies.

Objective #3 (FA #1): Increase academically challenging environment.

The TAG Endorsement coursework (*Curriculum and Strategies for the Gifted Learner, Program Development for the Gifted Learner, Foundations of Gifted Education, Characteristics of the Gifted Learner* and *Identification and Assessment of the Gifted Learner*) will help teachers better engage and challenge all students, as well as develop more effective instructional strategies and academically challenging environments. The 20+ field/internship hours will give teachers insight into what other successful schools are doing to effectively engage and challenge students – allowing all Shakerag staff the opportunity to redefine our schedules and processes.

In addition, this training emphasizes instructing students through project-based and authentic learning, which correlates with another strategic plan focus (Balanced Literacy).

***Describe how you will implement the concept, including the numbers of individuals to be served, the array of programs, activities, services that comprise the implementation strategy, and the anticipated length of the project.***

We will implement a sustained, continuous professional learning model for our teachers over the course of the school year. The TAG Endorsement is rigorous – 200 hours of instruction, study, practice and reflection. As a school we will benefit by completing this training together. To allow for this additional staff training and collaborative team planning, Shakerag will incorporate five student release days into the school-year calendar.

We anticipate the training to take 18 months to complete, with instructional staff reporting to work on the five student release days, as well as for two weeks during summer break (off-contract time), for which they will be paid.

Shakerag will utilize the Fulton County TAG Department to create a flexible TAG Endorsement program that meets all required state coursework. The Course Schedule and approximate dates are attached – see *Shakerag Elementary TAG Endorsement Proposal*.

***Explain your vision for how the concept will evolve in future years and how it will be funded.***

This investment in our teaching staff will improve our instruction and allow for flexibility with how we serve our students by providing more opportunities to positively change our structures and processes in the future. One of the classes in the training, “*Program Development for the Gifted Learner*,” involves looking at how to structure gifted services for our students in the future. In conjunction, we will visit other schools that are creative in how they service students and collectively develop a plan that best meets the needs of all our children.

By doing this training as a staff, we will incur all expenses now. Any new teachers coming in to Shakerag will be required to have or receive a TAG Endorsement within 3 years of employment. These teachers will receive priority training opportunities with our Fulton County TAG Department at no additional cost to our school.