

## Minutes

### York County School Division

#### Gifted Education Advisory Committee

Tuesday, March 23, 2021 Online via Teams

#### I. Welcome and Call to Order

The meeting began at 6:34pm. Kristin Spires recorded the meeting. Mrs. Haywood recognized our two new representatives from Dare Elementary and Tabb Middle School.

Committee and Consulting Members in Attendance:

Kim Beauchan – Bethel Manor Elementary School

Aubrie Caskey – Dare Elementary

Francis Ereholo – Grafton Bethel Elementary School

Nikki Koszewski – Magruder Elementary School

Vanna Upchurch – Mt. Vernon Elementary School

Peter Spaeth – Tabb Elementary School

Kelly Tabor – Waller Mill Elementary School

Lindsey Cook – Grafton Middle School

Margaret Harned – Queens Lake Middle School

Beth Brauner – Yorktown Middle School

Stacie Lohr – Bruton High School

Liz Hass – Grafton High School

Danielle Way – Tabb High School

Louise Casini Hollis – Community Member

Sarah Haywood – Gifted Education Coordinator, EXTEND

Kristin Spires, EXTEND

Christina Head, Associate Director K-12 Academic Services, School Board Office

Brett Higginbotham – YCSD School Board Liaison

Dr. Kevin Valliant – IB Programme Coordinator

#### II. YCSD IB Programme Update and Overview

Dr. Kevin Valliant provided an update and overview of the York County International Baccalaureate (IB) Programme. He stated that the IB Programme is a rigorous academic program/experience and is suited for gifted students who have their own way of learning. It is not specifically a gifted program but many students who participate in IB are identified as gifted. IB focuses on the whole student experience and incorporates a CAS balanced curriculum. CAS represents Creativity, Activity and Service. The students' exams last year were disrupted due to COVID but this year the exams will again be administered.

The IB Programme is an international organization (home office in Wales.) Every 5 years they perform a review of schools' IB programs and our review is coming soon. YCSD has 12 teachers and can accommodate 50 students annually. This year Dr. Valliant hosted a virtual meeting to introduce prospective students and their parents to the program. Applications for the coming school year are currently under review.

Dr. Valliant explained that 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade is the best time for students to think about applying for the program. Middle School students interested in IB need to take at a minimum Algebra 1 and the first year of a language while in middle school. In addition, IB supports the Spanish, French and Latin language options.

Several parents had comments and questions about IB. Liz Hass mentioned that IB is only offered at York High School. For that reason, students who elect to participate in the IB Programme must switch from their home school to York High School. Lindsey Cook asked about participating in both band and IB. Dr. Valliant said yes, many students participate in band as well as a variety of other after school activities and volunteer work. Francis Ereholo asked how

IB is different than AP. Dr. Valliant explained how IB has fewer topics and goes more in depth for a particular subject. His example compared IB History and AP History. In addition, teachers work together for cross subject connections.

Margaret Harned asked about the retention rate from freshman to senior year. Dr. Valliant stated that students need to decide in 10<sup>th</sup> grade whether to continue on. About 40-50% decide not to complete it. The reasons vary but include decisions to switch to programs such as School of the Arts (SOA) or Governor's School for Science and Technology (GSST), or take an AP schedule of courses. Some decide the work load is more than they want to tackle. Lindsey Cook asked if more rigor in middle school courses such as history and science might help with the retention rate. Dr. Valliant acknowledged that AP World History as well as Algebra 2 can be eye opening to new high school students. A parent asked for clarification if IB has STEM classes, and Dr. Valliant replied that it is more a humanities program. If anyone has questions, please contact him at: [kvalliant@ycsd.york.va.us](mailto:kvalliant@ycsd.york.va.us) or call 890-5014. In closing, Finally, we thanked Dr. Valliant for presenting the IB Programme at our meeting.

### **III. Secretary's Report**

The meeting minutes from the January 28, 2021 meeting were approved and distributed on February 7, 2021. Danielle Way thanked Louise Casini Hollis for transitioning to the secretary role.

### **IV. Gifted Education Update**

Sarah Haywood provided an update on gifted education since our last meeting.

The Gifted Education Steering Committee and its three subcommittees have been very busy since the "kickoff" meeting on Feb. 11. Christina Head will share more about the groups' activities and discussions right after this update.

The YCSD Selection Committee (composed of high school teachers and counselors) met to determine nominees for Summer Residential Governor's School programs. There were 13 applications forwarded to VDOE for the second round of reviews. All applicants and their parents (both those selected and those who were not) received an email notification from Sarah Haywood regarding their status. Final decisions will be announced by mid-April.

In February, Sarah presented information about the gifted program during the first Administrators' Forum for MVES. She discussed the referral process, identification, services provided, and shared enrichment suggestions for parents.

Also in February, Caroline Striepe, a gifted resource teacher, attended the William and Mary Center for Gifted Education's conference related to serving twice-exceptional students. These students have two identifications, for example: a gifted and an English learner student.

Eligibility meetings were held recently for spring placement, and 21 new students started the first week of March.

Eight grade seminars were held earlier in the month for gifted 8th graders and their parents. These sessions were led by panels of gifted juniors and seniors and were facilitated by Kristin Spires. They were designed to help 8th graders learn strategies for staying on top of advanced coursework, balancing extracurricular activities and school work, and planning summer activities that may help strengthen future applications for clubs/jobs/college. These were well done, and they were recorded for any students/families who missed the live sessions.

Kristin and Sarah met with middle school counselors to collect student schedule information related to exploring the idea of clustering gifted students in science and social studies at the middle school levels. This activity is listed in our current gifted plan, and information is being analyzed to make a recommendation if this is possible to pursue.

Monthly collaboration meetings continue to be provided as a time for gifted resource and elementary cluster teachers to talk about instruction, share resources, and work with each other to better meet the needs of students.

New Horizons GSST students moved to the hybrid model during the week of March 15. The counseling directors worked with transportation to make this a seamless transition. Online applications have been submitted for both GSST (juniors and seniors) and PAS (8th-10th grade). The counselors have done a great job managing parts of the applications and are definitely appreciated for their work to help make these opportunities possible.

The kindergarten referral cycle is in progress, and their seminars will start right after spring break. These will be done virtually, on Wednesdays. A parent orientation meeting will be held next week.

This year's final referral cycle is in progress. Referrals have been submitted and testing will take place right after spring break. We will also add in any first graders who are referred as a result of the screening testing that was completed in February. All teachers in grades 2-5 completed a screening chart for their classes and viewed a PD recording during PLC meetings to help guide their referrals made during this cycle.

All of these placement cycles have taken advantage of the "hold" determination. This is helpful when the evidence gathered is not consistent, and the committee wants more information before making a placement decision.

After spring break, the format for gifted instruction for 1-7th grade students will change. Gifted resource teachers will travel to schools and provide "pull-out" lessons. Elementary students will continue to receive 1 hour of services (language arts and math enrichment) each week and middle school students will attend EXTEND class for one 90-minute block each week.

Statewide, advocacy work for gifted education is going strong. There was a free parent session provided online by VaGifted last week, and it was well-attended. Planning is in progress for an August 3rd conference. No further information has been shared regarding the progress of the draft of the VA Regulations that govern gifted services as it moves through the legislative process. As soon as an update is received, Sarah Haywood will contact the GEAC, because it's important to provide feedback during the electronic Town Hall, when the document is open for public comment.

Update from the Odyssey of the Mind Coordinator: OM teams from QLMS, TMS, and YMS will be participating in a virtual awards ceremony during spring break. Information about the teams' performances will be shared after that.

## **V. Gifted Steering Committee and Local Plan Update**

Christina Head provided an update on the progress of the Gifted Education Steering Committee. The group met in February to start work. They made introductions, got the background information and completed a common belief activity as well as worked out common terminology and document storage logistics so they could work in tandem.

Christina Head also provided a brief update on the work of each of the three subgroups. Each group reviewed the 5 Year Plan for Gifted Education, the Annual Letter as well as proposed regulations and standards. The 5 Year Plan Group looked at two sections of the plan in February and three more in March. The group did not want to remove any of the line items listed in these sections. Lindsey Cook commented how the availability of both Sarah Haywood and Christina Head helped the group run smoothly. The Gifted Services Group looked at current practices, areas of strength, improvements and talent development. They will look at other state divisions programs at the next meeting. In addition, they are considering the question, "What we need to do to provide a continuum for K-12 services?" Stacie Lohr commented that having a variety of members on the team was helpful. The Identification Group looked at diversity data and evaluated screening, referral, eligibility and increasing equity. The group also discussed subject specific eligibility. Vanna Upchurch stated that there were a lot of questions about definitions and practicalities. Lindsey Cook asked if Mr. Higginbotham has access to the documents for the Steering Committee meetings. He does have access.

Christina Head shared an update to the 5 Year Local Plan Quarterly Review document. We will provide this document with our meeting minutes. It states each of the goals and objectives and the progress made toward them each quarter.

## **VI. Old Business**

Vanna Upchurch provided an update on the GEAC Bylaws revision. The Bylaws Subcommittee consists of Louise Casini Hollis, Stacie Lohr, Vanna Upchurch, and Danielle Way. They have met bi-weekly since our last GEAC meeting and are doing a full review. The committee has looked at the proposed updated Virginia regulations pertaining to the Education of the Gifted to prevent the need for additional revisions and is working to align our processes with the state annual report timeframe.

With the help of Mrs. Haywood, the group has completed a survey of more than a dozen bylaws from a variety of Gifted Advisory Committees serving divisions across the state. This information has been used to create benchmarks and help determine where we might adopt best practices that other divisions already have in place. The group has also been in contact with Mr. Higginbotham for clarification on items in our bylaws that pertain directly to the school board to ensure alignment with its processes.

The subcommittee is performing a comprehensive assessment; no section is being left untouched. The committee has done additional research and benchmarking in the following areas in particular: the addition of student representatives, revising term lengths, the staggering of terms, application process, and presentation of the annual letter. If anyone has any questions, please consider reaching out to one of the committee members for further information.

Lindsey Cook asked about the application process and terms for members. We are expecting applications to be accepted after spring break and close out in May. This allows us to have new members in place by May 25. Vanna Upchurch stated the member term is 1-2 years. Stacie Lohr asked if we can go ahead and make it a two year term requirement for this coming cycle as this gives members enough time to understand the committee and its duties. She also asked for clarification of the application process. Christina Head explained the process in the fall went as such: applications were collected by Sarah Haywood, the principals reviewed them and then they went to the school board for approval.

## **VII. New Business**

Lindsey Cook reported that we have volunteers to write the Annual Letter. The group consists of Louise Casini Hollis, Margaret Harned, and Peter Spaeth and Lindsey Cook. They will begin working on the letter in April.

Sarah Haywood asked for suggestions for a May speaker. The topic of 2E gifted students was suggested. EXTEND teacher, Mrs. Striepe recently attended a William & Mary conference on 2E and could possibly share her information with the group. This idea will be tabled for now, as the consensus was to hold off on a speaker for the May meeting because it would be our year-end “wrap up” and we have a full agenda already.

Lindsey Cook noted that GEAC applications will be completed and GEAC officer elections for the 2021-2022 school year will be held in May. Danielle Way asked if the gifted data will be available in May. It should be.

## **VIII. Parent Comments**

Stacie Lohr asked about elementary student gifted instruction after spring break when students in the flexible framework are back in the building 4 days a week. Specifically, why it was only one hour a week and not the closer to 5 hours they would get at the EXTEND center. Christina Head stated the goal to maximize students times in school and the importance of having the students in the classroom with their home teachers and classmates as well as transportation issues. Vanna Upchurch asked if there was a possibility of increasing the amount of time for gifted instruction with the schedule changes. Christina Head stated they are open to making gifted services longer than an hour, but they need to get comfortable in the new model first. Lindsey Cook asked if next years’ plan was to go back to the EXTEND center. Christina Head said yes. Teachers are currently using the EXTEND space to teach virtually as well as Wednesdays for work.

Mr. Higginbotham stated his thanks and mentioned he has stated at the past school board meeting how he was honored to help and was impressed with the work and dedication of the group.

Lindsey Cook asked if we would be able to hold our May meeting in person. Mrs. Haywood thanked GEAC for their time and advocacy. The future meeting dates will begin (virtually, as of now) at 6:30 pm. The date is as follows: May 25, 2021

The meeting was adjourned at 7:54 pm. Submitted by Danielle Way

