

Minutes
York County School Division
Gifted Education Advisory Committee
Thursday, June 3, 2021

I. Welcome and Call to Order

The meeting began at 6:30pm in a combination in person and virtual format.

Committee and Consulting Members in Attendance:

Kim Beauchan – Bethel Manor Elementary School
Aubrie Caskey – Dare Elementary
Francis Erebholo – Grafton Bethel 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

Guests and/or Future Committee Members in Attendance:

Janine Felsman
Monica Hyjek
Lin Chen

II. Secretary's Report

The meeting minutes from the March 23, 2021 meeting were approved electronically and distributed on April 22, 2021.

III. Gifted Education Update

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

Two final eligibility cycles were completed at the end of May. Over 150 students were tested and considered for possible placement during beginning of the next school year, which included first graders put forward for referral after the screening test and the regularly-scheduled spring cycle. There were 32 students placed, with eligibility meetings wrapping up last week, and a few more placements taking place this week. Data reports related to student referrals and placements will be shared with the GEAC letter-writing team in the next few days as soon as they are finished.

The New Horizons Governor's School recently sent acceptance letters to rising 11th graders. The director reports that this spring provided a very well-qualified applicant pool, and there were 42 students accepted into the program.

There are 8 YCSD students who were accepted and are attending the Summer Residential Governor's School program. It is a very competitive selection process for this 4-week program that is held at Radford University (for VPA, and humanities) and Lynchburg College (for MST). The engineering program will be held virtually. In addition, 4 students were selected for the Governor's World Language Academies that will be held online this summer. Students will be participating in French, Spanish, Latin, and Japanese academies.

YCSD had several students accepted for Camp Launch, which is a two-week summer camp for high-ability middle school students from underserved populations. It is hosted by The Center for Gifted Education at the College of William and Mary, and it will be held virtually again this year.

Mrs. Seiders, the director of our middle and high schools, has shared information about the upcoming summer AP Boot Camps. This is a series of 5 90-minute sessions that will help support students who are preparing to take AP courses next year. There is a registration form online, available through the high school guidance offices that needs to be completed prior to June 11 in order to participate.

We will continue to conduct our annual summer testing sessions at the EXTEND Center in August. This cycle is typically reserved for students of families that have recently moved into the school division. The timing still allows students to be placed in the program at the start of the school year. Like last year, Sarah Haywood will share a "tip sheet" and touch base directly with clerical staff members to help ensure that when they register, families are provided with consistent information that is accurate as it relates to gifted referrals and testing.

Update from the IB Programme: The coordinator, Dr. Valliant, reports that there will be 21 IB graduates this year, and there are currently 39 IB students (juniors and seniors). There are 29 rising freshmen who were recently accepted into the program, which is lower than usual. In addition, the IB Programme recently underwent a review from the IB Board. Information will be shared after the final report has been received.

Update from Odyssey of the Mind: Both Tabb Middle School and Yorktown Middle School had teams that competed in the Virtual World Finals for Odyssey of the Mind. They didn't place in the tournament, but they certainly rose to the challenge of participating in a different format and represented YCSD well.

Update regarding Virginia Gifted Regulations: On April 24th, the VDOE BOE unexpectedly pulled the proposed gifted regulations out of the legislative process. There was a house bill (#2305, if you're into details!) related to Governor's Schools that did not move forward, and so the Board received concerned feedback related to equity and Governor's Schools (in the absence of that bill moving forward). It was determined that the proposed regulations should be reviewed/edited or information related to this topic be added to the draft of the regulations. So, the document hasn't stopped...but it's been delayed. There has not been a timeframe shared as to when the draft will return to the legislative review process.

Sarah is rotating off of the Virginia Advisory Committee for the Education of the Gifted (VACEG) after 2 three-year terms, which included one year as secretary and three years as vice chair, as nominated by her peers. The group is moving forward with changes and updates to the annual gifted report that each school division submits in the summer, and Sarah is one of the departing members who has been asked to remain available to come back as a "consultant" to the group in the future- which is new. Sarah remains active on the Virginia Consortium of Gifted Education Administrators (VCGEA) and has served as treasurer since 2015. She is also a part of the Virginia Association for the Gifted's board, and she is a part of the conference committee. There is a free (for members) parent workshop being held next week on June 7 with Dr. Ashley Carpenter, which will provide suggestions and ideas about working with gifted children over the summer. The summer conference will be held August 3. The keynote speaker is Dr. Michele Borba, who is the author of Unselfie and her latest book, Thrivers. Registration information for both of these events can be found at www.vagifted.org.

There are several current GEAC members stepping down from their positions at the end of the year. In particular, Mrs. Lohr, Mrs. Way, and Mrs. Brauner have served on this committee for a grand total of 22 years, and they've all held leadership positions. Their advocacy for gifted students and families here in YCSD are definitely appreciated, and they have made a positive difference that will be missed.

Lindsey Cook asked how the talent development initiative timeline would be affected with the gifted education bill being pulled from the state legislative process. Sarah Haywood said initiatives are still moving forward.

Aubrey Caskey asked how the underserved population was defined. Sarah Haywood stated that it was students who may have not had advocacy or opportunity to test/enroll in gifted programs. She stated it covered all racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups.

V. Gifted Steering Committee and Local Plan Update

Christina Head provided an update on the progress of the Gifted Education Steering Committee and its 3 sub committees – Identification, Gifted Services, and 5 Year Local Plan. The group has met every month this spring and has worked on a variety of areas related to K-12 gifted education.

The Identification Group recommended working toward a talent development program that aligns with guidelines from the state. In addition, they discussed identifying underserved students by considering norming procedures for testing with a look at national, state and local/building levels and adjusting screening assessments by improving the assessments. This includes increasing the frequency of testing as we have a transient population. The group also discussed subject specific eligibility without relying just on test scores. Vanna Upchurch stated that the next steps were to prioritize the initiatives within the framework of the 5 Year Plan for Gifted Education and legal requirements.

The Gifted Services Group looked at services provided by other school divisions as well as student referrals through talent development. In addition, they considered subject specific services, secondary education seminars such as 8th grade information session held this year, course scheduling, expansion of clubs and extra-curricular options, differentiated offerings for non-advanced middle school courses (History and Science), and elective courses such as a capstone study. In addition, they identified the need for professional development for counselors and staff.

The 5 Year Plan Group looked at our plan and compared it to the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) guidelines. They determined there is a professional development need for collaboration on teaching as well as identification and referrals. They also recognized the need for a gifted education "fact sheet" with information in multiple languages that could be distributed throughout the community. Lindsey Cook added that the group discussed professional development of a cohort of teachers who might be interested in earning a gifted education endorsement. She also mentioned that it has been brought up multiple times the need for additional staff. The current program is understaffed and with additional state requirements on the horizon (i.e. Talent Development), more people will be needed to perform that work.

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. Sarah Haywood thanked the Bylaws Subcommittee for their work. The group consists of Louise Casini Hollis, Stacie Lohr, Vanna Upchurch, and Danielle Way. The bylaws were provided to all GEAC members and a discussion of items in the bylaws occurred before a vote to approve was held. Member questions and comments include the following:

Liz Hass asked about the application process and how rising 6th and 9th grade parents would be impacted. Along those lines, Aubrie Caskey asked how a representative might move with his/her student to the next school (for example,

from 5th to 6th, if the term has not expired.) The consensus was a parent can apply for the next level of school and would just resign from the current term for the lower level of school.

Liz Hass also asked the difference between members choosing not to renew their terms shall notify the chair in writing (Section II, Item F, Number 5) and resignations shall be made in writing to the chair and the School Board Representative (Section II, Item H.) The difference is the first is at the end of the term of service, the second is mid-term.

A comment was raised about parent representative substitutes (Section II, Item G, Number 3) and how more specific information explaining how that worked would be useful. It was decided that details would be placed in the welcome letter so new representatives were clear on the policy.

Janine Felsman asked about the end date of the term. The new bylaws state July 30, but the school board letter to new representatives of GEAC states June 30. Mr. Higginbotham said an amended letter would be needed but not a new application process to remedy the discrepancy. In addition, we will change the bylaws date to be July 31, not July 30.

Kelly Tabor questioned the Terms of Membership item where it states that is preferred that parent representatives not be employees of the school division (Section II, Item F, Number 3.) This does not actually prohibit a parent who is a staff member from serving, but it does encourage the applicant to consider if he or she can effectively serve the parent role as an advocate for gifted education and resource for other families of gifted students.

Lindsey Cook asked for a motion to approve the bylaws. Aubrie Caskey motioned and Margaret Harned seconded the motion. The bylaws passed with 16 yes votes.

VII. New Business

Lindsey Cook asked for nominations for GEAC 2021-2022 school year officers. A slate of Chairperson - Vanna Upchurch, Vice Chair – Peter Spaeth, and Secretary – Louise Casini Hollis was presented. Lindsey Cook asked for a motion to approve. Liz Hass gave the motion and Kelly Tabor seconded the motion. The officer slate was approved with 16 yes votes.

Lindsey Cook reported that the Annual Letter is progressing. Vanna Upchurch, Aubrie Caskey and Janine Felsman will become involved in the process along with the rest of the writers.

GEAC meetings for the 2021-2022 school year will be held at 6:30 pm on the following dates:

October 19, 2021

January 18, 2022

March 15, 2022

May 17, 2022

Locations are TBD, but 3 of the meetings will be held at the YCSD School Board Office. One meeting will be held at a school in the northern part of the county.

VIII. Parent Comments

Mr. Higginbotham stated his thanks and acknowledged the work being done by GEAC. Mrs. Haywood reiterated his thanks.

Vanna Upchurch thanked Mrs. Spires for the work she did with first graders this year. Louise Cassini-Hollis also thanked the EXTEND staff for their efforts in an all virtual format.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:22 pm. Submitted by Danielle Way

