

Minutes

York County School Division

Gifted Education Advisory Committee

Tuesday, December 8, 2020 Online via Teams

I. Welcome and Call to Order

The meeting began with Christina Head reading a statement that the meeting had approval to be held electronically. GEAC members and visitors introduced. Kristin Spires recorded the meeting.

Committee and Consulting Members in Attendance:

Kim Beauchan – Bethel Manor Elementary School
Tina Thomas – Coventry Elementary School
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
David Reitz, Director of Elementary Instruction, School Board Office
Brett Higginbotham – YCSD School Board Liaison

2 Additional Parent Visitors

II. Nomination and Election of Officers

After the introductions by each member, Sarah Haywood described the three GEAC positions – Chair Person, Vice Chairperson and Secretary. Christina Head proposed filling the positions at this meeting. The term currently runs until June 30, 2021. The following positions were decided: Chairperson – Lindsey Cook, Vice Chairperson – Vanna Upchurch, Secretary – Danielle Way.

III. Gifted Education Update

Christina Head and Sarah Haywood provided an update on what Gifted Education Services look like this school year.

During the summer, the gifted resource team met with YCSD leaders to provide input to develop a plan for gifted services in the fall, and held an informal virtual GEAC meeting at the end of July to share the plan and obtain feedback. After that, in August, the gifted staff worked with Mrs. Barbara Kennedy, retired gifted coordinator from Virginia Beach City Public Schools, and planned curricula to prepare for the September shift in services. The gifted resource team worked throughout the month of August to plan a sequence of math and reading lessons that build on each other over the course of nine weeks, integrate Kaplan's Depth and Complexity prompts during the lessons,

and incorporate Sternberg's Triarchic Theory in the response activities. The reading lessons focus on building Socratic dialogue and analyzing texts, while the math lessons focus on developing problem-solving skills and articulating multiple ways to approach problems. The lessons correspond with grade level SOL strands although they don't align with each classroom teacher's specific lessons.

Slight shifts in schedules continue as students return to school and as they shift between remote and hybrid formats. EXTEND classes are planned for days when students are not in school, so that their class time is not impacted (or impacted minimally, particularly for middle school- as live sessions are held at the end of their class blocks). In addition, third and fifth grade students who are a part of the Virtual Academy had specific adjustments to their EXTEND class times, and even new EXTEND classes were created, in order to work with their classroom schedules. Gifted services currently being provided are similar to other Virginia school divisions, both large and small in that we are providing weekly "live" instruction and follow-up activities online. In a recent meeting of Virginia gifted coordinators, it was emphasized that due to school closures, most of the school divisions are providing services that don't align with their gifted plans, and it is "okay" for now; updates are not needed as everyone makes instructional adjustments this year.

The change in services this fall allowed the gifted coordinator, Sarah Haywood, to step back from teaching duties and focus on coordinator responsibilities full-time. This has resulted in her being available and more included in meetings with School Board staff and school administrators, and she is supporting schools with testing students. She is also focusing on providing more frequent communication with administrators and gifted contacts through weekly emails. Gifted resource teachers continue to email parents weekly and also email gifted cluster teachers at the schools each week.

At the end of August, Sarah met with all of the elementary and middle school gifted contacts for an annual update related to testing, paperwork, and calendars/schedules. She has provided individual follow-up with new contacts at DES and WMES.

A new gifted resource teacher, Caroline Striepe, was hired in August after one of the teachers resigned. She has come to us from Bethel Manor Elementary. The gifted resource team is comprised of a coordinator, 4 teachers for students in grades 1-7, and a part-time secretary.

Also at the end of August, our staff processed about 50 referrals and tested those students before the start of school. There were many health and safety procedures in place, and families were complimentary about how testing appointments were conducted. Testing included some students from the past spring (who were "held over" due to the school closure) as well as students who were new to YCSD. There were several families that opted to wait and defer testing until after the school year was underway, and many of those students were tested during the October cycle. This involved about 60 students, and eligibility meetings were held at the end of October to determine student placement for the 2nd quarter. Another referral cycle is currently in progress, with another 50 students being considered for placement. This additional December cycle is new to our testing calendar this year.

Sarah was involved in several September/October planning sessions with School Board Office administrators. She provided an update for them on identification practices, and she proposed future committee work that will soon be shared. This initiative was prioritized in part as a result of input from the recent summer's GEAC review letter.

At the beginning of October, a comprehensive "ready to share" presentation was provided for all elementary schools to share with teachers. It explained basics about the gifted services being provided, referral procedures, and identification practices. This was complete with note pages and wording ready to deliver.

Also in October, the Virginia Association for the Gifted held a Saturday seminar. Sarah Haywood is a VA Gifted Board member, and so she participated in the planning and helped facilitate a session for other coordinators. It was a great day of learning. Also in November, Sarah participated in the online National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) conference. This took place over several days and offered a wide variety of sessions.

The gifted resource staff has begun scheduled collaboration sessions for cluster teachers. Elementary cluster teachers were surveyed and their feedback indicated sessions should begin after the year was underway/during the 2nd quarter. Sessions provide time to discuss ideas and touch base (virtually, for now), and meetings are geared toward different grade levels. One was already held for 1st and 2nd grade teachers and another for 3rd-5th grade teachers will be held this week.

Other upcoming events:

For the past few years, the NNAT, a test for ability, has been given to all first graders as a gifted screening assessment in November. We are still hopeful that this might happen later in the winter or spring for our current first graders. This timeframe will still allow students who do well on this first assessment to be referred for full gifted evaluation during the spring testing cycle. Keep in mind that this plan is tentative.

Typically there is a parent/student informational presentation about the New Horizons Governor's School for Science and Technology (GSST) by its director and Kristin Spires, the secondary gifted resource teacher, held in late November or December at our high schools. This year it will take place after winter break (and likely online), as the Governor's School Pre-Admissions Series Program (PAS) is shifting to an online application system. This informational meeting is geared for 8-9th graders, new to YCSD 10th grade students, and their parents. In the past, New Horizons staff sent information about this directly to eligible students based on their math and science coursework, although the session is open to all interested parents and students. As soon as a date is confirmed, it will be shared, and counselors/math teachers of potentially eligible students will also be notified. More information about those programs can be found here: <https://nhrec.org/gsst/>.

This is also the time of year when 10th and 11th grade students should consider applying for Summer Residential Governor's School or a summer Governor's World Language Academy. Information about these opportunities is now available from the school counselors and it is posted on the VDOE website, and one of the programs has created a new marketing video designed for interested students: <https://www.radford.edu/content/gov-school/home.html>. Sarah Haywood and Kristin Spires met with high school counseling directors to discuss local deadlines and plan ways to publicize these events. Kristin held virtual meetings to assist interested students with their planning and application process. Applications and information about each program can be found here: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/governors_school_programs/summer_residential/ and here http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/foreign_language/language_academies/. Last year, these were not held due to the pandemic, and as a result, there are 3 juniors (who applied as sophomores) who will join this year as "auto-selects".

Odyssey of the Mind (OM) Update: There are 3 schools participating in OM this year: Yorktown MS, Tabb MS and Queens Lake MS. The Regional and State Directors haven't yet determined if there will be virtual regional tournaments or just a single state tournament.

The Focusing on the Future annual event for secondary students and their families will be held on Saturday, January 30, at William and Mary, for students in grades 6-12 and their parents. If you are interested, it will be held virtually this year. Here's more information: <https://education.wm.edu/centers/cfge/precollegiate/future/2021-fof-brochure-final1.pdf>. While this program is not affiliated with YCSD, several of our parents/students have attended in the past and found it very beneficial.

There is preliminary planning occurring now for several spring events: Kristin Spires is planning a session for gifted 8th graders at each middle school that will allow high school students to talk with 8th graders about advanced coursework expectations and summer experience possibilities. The gifted resource team is also working on a plan for kindergarten seminars and establishing what this might “look like.” Stay tuned as more details are worked out regarding these events.

Sarah Haywood continues participating in several state and national groups related to gifted education. Like everything else, these groups have shifted to online formats. Recently she chaired a technical review committee as they reviewed another school division’s 5-year gifted plan. She also serves on the executive board of the Virginia Council of Gifted Education Administrators (VCGEA), a group of gifted coordinators from around the state. Sarah also participated in a planning session for the development of a gifted coordinator Special Interest Group (SIG) for National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC.)

One of the groups is the Virginia Advisory Committee for the Education of the Gifted (VACEG), of which Sarah Haywood is Vice Chairperson. This committee’s focus is to work on a “charge” from the Virginia Board of Education. Over the past two years, the charge has been to develop revisions to state regulations and policies related to gifted education. On October 15, 2020 a second and final reading of the draft was approved by the Virginia Department of Education’s Board of Education, and the next part of the regulatory process involves the document being presented in the state Register which requires several governmental “sign-offs.” There is then a 60-day public comment period. Public hearings are also held in multiple places around Virginia during this time (the format may be adjusted due to COVID-19). After that, if/and changes are incorporated, a final copy goes through another series of “sign-offs” and time is provided for school divisions to implement any necessary changes. So to recap: Hopefully later this spring/summer, GEAC will be notified about the opportunity to provide public comment on these proposed revisions. It is suggested that groups make comments as a whole, although individuals can certainly contribute. A copy of the document and presentation can be found online at <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/meetings/2020/10-oct/agenda-101520.shtml> , listed as item J on the agenda.

Some highlighted changes in the proposed draft include:

- Having a talent development program for grades K-2, to include documentation of progress to show need for differentiation and/or future referral; this will support early identification and equitable access
- Providing options to serve gifted middle school and high school students
- Establishing policies and procedures for early entrance to K and/or first grade to include assessments/comprehensive evaluation, and a supervised transition period; this will support early identification and equitable access
- Establishing policies and procedures for whole grade and single-subject acceleration
- Providing clarity regarding criteria that can be included in an annual review of the program (This refers to the report that school divisions submit to the VDOE), including incorporating documentation that might demonstrate academic growth of students
- Sharing information from the VDOE annual report with division leadership and School Board members/community, and the format of the annual report will be enhanced/data and information required will likely be more substantial
- Having a local advisory committee will no longer be optional

-Ensuring that gifted education supervisors will have a gifted endorsement or similar credential as part of their professional licensure

And, it's important to share that school divisions will be provided with time to make these shifts and incorporate changes once the regulations are approved and take effect. Current work for the VACEG has shifted for the remainder of the year to examining the annual report that school divisions complete and submit to the VDOE. The idea is that this report provides more substantial information that will show both progress and areas for improvement for each school division's gifted program. There is also an effort to ensure that the information compiled is "user-friendly" and not just a chart of raw numbers, for example, but listing percentages in a variety of categories that will help highlight trends over time.

Kristin Spires made a comment about students reaching out with questions or to continue the classroom conversations outside of the dedicated gifted learning time. Vanna Upchurch followed with her observation that it was a joy to see the EXTEND teachers work with the gifted learners and that she appreciated the level of engagement. Liz Hass asked for clarification on the Gifted Contacts at the schools. Mrs. Haywood explained that it is usually the counselor or sometimes the ACC at each school that works on the referrals and paperwork for that schools' students.

IV. Elementary Gifted Services Delivery Model Committee Update

Christina Head provided the background and update on the activity and progress of the Gifted Service Delivery Model Committee. The committee formed last year to look for ways to maximize services for gifted students. The process was interrupted as COVID shutdowns began. Since then the committee has been reorganized into a Gifted Education Steering Committee with three subgroups: Gifted Services, Identification and 5 Year Plan. The Gifted Services subgroup will look at K-2 Talent Development as well as Elementary, MS and HS services. The ID subgroup will look at screening, eligibility, criteria and underrepresented student groups. The 5 Year Plan subgroup will look at the new NAGC guidelines and consider revisions to the current plan and prepare for the technical review next year.

Questions from GEAC members clarified that the Steering Committee members would each pick a subgroup to work on and therefore it is all one group. Each subgroup would have at least one GEAC member on it. The size of the group has not been fully determined. Lindsey Cook asked what happens to the composition of the committee when the current term for GEAC representatives end (June 30, 2021). The committee would stay intact even if the work went past June 30.

VII. Old Business

The Annual Review Letter was submitted to the YCSD school board. Sarah Haywood and Christina Head thanked the letter writing committee for their work on it.

VIII. New Business

Sarah Haywood presented the Responsibilities of GEAC members Responsibilities are outlined in the handout provided to the GEAC members. In addition, she emphasized communication with parents. In the past this has been done via emails containing GEAC meeting minutes and/or relevant information sessions/speakers programs. The parents opt in to receiving the emails. Christina Head mentioned the newsletter the YCSD has been emailing to parents of gifted education students. Stacie Lohr recommended to be very specific in the email subject line that the email is in regard to Gifted Education.

We also reviewed the process for approving meeting minutes.

Sarah Haywood also requested topics for future meetings. Suggestions were social and emotional needs for students, identification and talent development, and time management strategies. Dr. Reitz suggested Katie Gaylord for the social and emotional needs topic. GEAC members are encouraged to forward any other topics to Mrs. Haywood.

Sarah Haywood described the Annual Parent information letter. Mrs. Cook and Mrs. Upchurch will work on this school years' letter. She also requested a group to volunteer to update our bylaws. One area in need of review is the application process, approval and term for GEAC members. A discussion ensued about the extent and it was agreed the committee members would review current by-laws for familiarity and then approach this at the next meeting.

Stacie Lohr offered to assist/answer questions for any new GEAC members about the history or roles within GEAC since she has previously held many of the positions.

Lindsey Cook wanted clarification on the purpose of restructuring GEAC along the lines of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC.) Christina Head stated the need to give all interested parents the opportunity to apply for a position on GEAC as well as increase transparency. Lindsey Cook was concerned the process delayed the work of GEAC. Mr. Higginbotham rearticulated the need for transparency, opportunity and awareness and that the timing was not to take focus away from the children. Stacie Lohr asked if the community member of GEAC should be an invited position rather than an applied for position to ensure we have people who are interested in serving. In addition the question was raised whether SEAC had an application process for its community member.

VII. Parent Comments

Stacie Lohr complimented the SOA Literary Arts teachers for providing an open Teams Meeting time for students to interact socially.

Lindsey Cook read a quote from the VDOE regarding the role of advisory committees and commented how we have a great opportunity to come together to help all the Gifted Education children in York County.

Vanna Upchurch shared a positive review from a family who moved to York County from a nearby locality simply for the quality of our Gifted Education Program.

We still have some schools who do not have representatives on GEAC. Parents may still apply at this time if they are interested in representing their child's school. The schools in need of a representative are Dare Elementary, Seaford Elementary, Tabb Middle School, and York High School.

Beth Brauner offered to send the meeting notes out to York High School as well as York Middle School. Christina Head mentioned distributing them via Blackboard as well.

The future meeting dates will begin (virtually, as of now) at 6:30 pm. The dates are as follows:

January 26, 2021

March 23, 2021

May 25, 2020

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Submitted by Danielle Way