

Minutes

York County School Division

Gifted Education Advisory Committee

Tuesday, January 26, 2021 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 indicated their attendance. Kristin Spires recorded the meeting.

Committee and Consulting Members in Attendance:

Kim Beauchan – Bethel Manor Elementary School
Francis Erebholo – 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
Angie Sieders, Director of Secondary Instruction, School Board Office
Brett Higginbotham – YCSD School Board Liaison

II. YCSD Counselor Guest Speakers

Three members of the YCSD Counseling team made a presentation on the topic of the social and emotional needs of gifted students, particularly stress and anxiety during the current climate. Katie Gaylord, Andrea Ross and Carie Collazo-Gonzalez defined anxiety and spoke about the characteristics of anxiety and/or social struggles in gifted children. They followed it up with information about ways parents can support their children and coping skills for children. Examples included mindfulness and sensory check in. Finally, the team provided information on when to seek treatment as well as a list of school resources and links for resources at home. The presentation will be posted to the YCSD website.

Several parents asked questions and raised discussion points. These included ideas for how to foster resilience when our students do encounter failure, identifying parents' roles and expectations that may lead to anxiety, defining fortune telling, and how to recognize anxiety. Stacie Lohr remarked how helpful the mindfulness techniques are for all grade levels, not just younger students.

III. Secretary's Report

The meeting minutes from the Dec 8, 2020 meeting were approved and distributed on January 12, 2021. Mrs. Haywood also sent the meeting minutes to principals and school distribution lists for schools who do not have a GEAC member representative at this time. Our meeting minutes and video recording are on the YCSD website.

IV. Gifted Education Update

Sarah Haywood provided an update on gifted education since our last meeting. There were 14 new students identified at the end of December, and they began participating in EXTEND classes at the beginning of January. Another cycle of referrals is in progress, and approximately 50 students have been referred.

A parent/student information session for New Horizons Governor's School for Science and Technology will be held next week. This will be led by its director, Vikki Wismer, and Kristin Spires, our secondary gifted resource teacher. The deadline for applications for academic year New Horizons Governor's School is approaching on February 28. If you know a 10th grade gifted student who would be a good candidate for Governor's School, please encourage him/her to contact his/her school counselor immediately and to visit <http://nhrec.org/gsst/admissions/how-to-apply/>! The PAS (Pre-Admissions Series) for 8th and 9th graders is also accepting applications during this same time frame.

The selection committee for Governor's school summer residential programs will soon meet to review applications and select nominees for these summer opportunities. Kristin Spires, our secondary gifted resource teacher, worked with high school counselors to identify around 15 high school students from 4 schools who wanted assistance with their applications for these summer programs. Staff also proctored world language testing for students applying to the Language Academies as well as provided testing for any who needed updated standardized test scores.

The whole-grade NNAT screening for first graders will be conducted mid-February, and all students who score around the 95th percentile and higher will then be referred for full evaluation. This will be done in person (paper/pencil) and Virtual Academy (VA) first graders are included. Flexible framework students may opt out and VA students may opt in.

The deadline for kindergarten referrals is also in February. Identified students will participate in online seminars throughout the fourth quarter. A parent orientation for parents of new kindergarten students will be provided.

There is still time to register for The William and Mary's Center for Gifted Education annual "Focusing on the Future" event that will be held on Saturday, January 30, online, for students in grades 6-12 and their parents. Here's more information: <https://education.wm.edu/centers/cfge/precollegiate/future/2021-fof-brochure-final1.pdf>.

The W&M Center for Gifted Ed. is also sponsoring a Twice Exceptional Conference on February 12 and 13. There is a separate parent registration and fee. More information is available here: <https://education.wm.edu/centers/cfge/profdev/conferences/2e/index.php>

During the last meeting, Sarah referenced updates being made to the state regulations that govern gifted services. The Virginia Advisory Committee for the Education of the Gifted (of which Sarah is vice president) was pleased to learn last week that the legislative process is moving forward. The Secretary of Education completed his review, and the document will move forward to the Governor's office. Then it will be "open for public comment". We've been encouraged to submit feedback as groups, because organizational representation in a comment can have more impact. So GEAC, as a group, can respond to the suggested changes when the time comes, and Sarah is happy to work with members to help develop a response. A copy of the document and presentation to the VDOE 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.

V. Gifted Steering Committee and Local Plan Update

Christina Head stated the Gifted Education Steering Committee will meet next month. The three subgroups - Gifted Services, Identification and 5 Year Plan – will each have a GEAC member on them. We will have an update on the committee's progress at our next GEAC meeting.

Review of the 5 Year Local Plan for Gifted Education will be done throughout the year. Christina Head shared a document with each of the goals and objectives and the progress made to them each quarter. By updating this document each quarter, our annual letter writing committee will have a solid starting point and it should take less time to compile.

VI. Old Business

The secretary position for GEAC will be open for the 2021-22 school year. Lindsey Cook asked for a volunteer to “shadow” the current secretary. Danielle Way described the role and said she would answer any questions current members have about the position and its responsibilities. Mrs. Hollis agreed to contact Mrs. Way about potentially taking over the secretary position in the future.

VII. New Business

Sarah Haywood stated that our current GEAC bylaws have been shared with other school districts’ gifted parent advisory committees. Our bylaws are in need of an update. Stacie Lohr, Vanna Upchurch and Danielle Way offered to work on the revision to the bylaws.

Lindsey Cook asked for volunteers to write the Annual Letter. Discussion ensued regarding the end of members’ terms and the feasibility of completing the letter prior to the end of those terms on June 30. Lindsey Cook asked Mr. Higginbotham if the end of term could be extended 30 days to get the letter written as our data is not available until after Memorial Day. He said it was possible. He also asked if a working draft of the letter would help complete the letter in time. Concern with a working draft is the possible extra time needed to rework some areas of the letter as the year goes on. GEAC also discussed the possibility of changing the member term from Aug 1 – July 31. Liz Hass questioned the shift as it would not line up with the YCSD administrative calendar. This may be reason to keep the term from July 1 – June 30.

VIII. Parent Comments

Beth Brauner passed on a written note from an 8th grade parent. The parent was interested in finding a social connection for gifted students. Mrs. Haywood asked about extracurricular clubs. Lindsey Cook mentioned that Grafton MS is just now getting many of their clubs going. Christina Head suggested a social media site for parents of gifted students (not a GEAC group) to connect with each other.

Mrs. Haywood thanked GEAC for their time and advocacy.

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

March 23, 2021

May 25, 2020

The meeting was adjourned at 8:09 pm.

Submitted by Danielle Way