

Virginia Advisory Committee for the Education of the Gifted
Maggie L. Walker Governor's School, Richmond, Virginia
February 20, 2009
Minutes

Members present:

Beverly Catlin
Elyse Devereux
Ellen Fithian
Judi Greathouse
Carol Horn - (representing VAG – Pam Flaherty)
Richard Layman
Mary Jane Mutispaugh
Diana Naff
Donna Poland
Downey Roberts-Gabay
Diane Sterbutzel, secretary
Philip Tharp
Gerry Tylavsky
Suzanne Vaughan (representing Sheila Roalf)
Pamela Ward

The meeting was called to order by Donna Poland at 10:07 am, and introductions made. The agenda was approved unanimously. The minutes of the previous meeting were read, and changes were made to the final page (Mountain Vista's enrollment is 115) before approval was moved and seconded.

Dr. Donna Poland, Specialist for Governor's Schools and Gifted Education, updated the group on the revision process for the Virginia Regulations Governing Educational Services for Gifted Students. These are slated to be presented to the Virginia Department of Education on March 26, 2009. Prior to that date, anyone who made comments during public review will receive a summary of comments, but will not receive the department's responses. Changes in the proposed regulations have been made due to public responses and represent compromises. The revisions to the regulations will be an action item. If the document is approved, then it has to go through several departments before reaching the final decision of the governor. There are many opportunities for changes to be made throughout the process.

In the budget of the General Assembly, there are no cuts shown for the Academic Year Governor's schools this year or next. Local budgets are an area of significant concern, however. Withdrawals of participation or cut-backs in student numbers could impact state and local funding to the individual schools. Dr. Poland has asked the Governor's Schools to look at possible adjustments in programs and funding. The group discussed alternative ways to create funds for the continuation of programs valuable to students, including the formation of foundations and organizations to assist with transportation and supplies, etc. By law, parents cannot pay tuition to the Governor's schools, but they may pay activity fees. Richard Layman reported that the school superintendents have been asked to wait for news of the President's economic stimulus package before making drastic cuts to budgets. Everything is currently on the chopping block, but education is currently in a holding pattern.

The directors of the Governor's Schools are meeting in the first part of April. They will assess the issues facing the schools and the resources they have to resolve them. In January, the directors, students, and parents of the Academic Governor's schools met and informed legislators at the Capitol of the value of the Governor's School programs.

At this time, there are no cuts to the Summer Residential Governor's Schools, but they are subject to cuts. February 18 was the deadline for applications and 72% of school systems submitted data. Local budget concerns seem to have influenced this year's response. Questions were asked by VACEG members regarding school divisions' responsibility for summer residential programs in special cases. Dr. Poland's responses pointed out that school divisions are not required to support Summer Residential Governor's school for tuition-paid students. Private schools are held responsible for the tuition for their students; however, how the private school handles payment with the parent is strictly up to the private school. Home-schooled students submit applications through their school division. Students in **out-of-**state schools may apply if they are Virginia residents. Phil Tharp reported that the Maggie L. Walker Governor's school pays for the summer residential programs of its full year students. Students may attend the summer programs only once.

Secretary Diane Sterbutzel referred to the minutes to read aloud the summaries of the October committee work. The VACEG split into two groups to further discuss revisions to the Virginia Plan and the Reference Guide for the Development and Evaluation of Local Plans for the Education of the Gifted, with the objective of marking areas which may change with the regulations and with the transition to an electronic format. Recommended changes and suggestions were recorded on an electronic copy of the document. Each group reported their recommendations to the entire VACEG group at two o'clock.

Virginia Plan:

The plan should be user friendly with links connecting information and documents that can be found on line. The Plan should be focused to a larger audience, and understandable to a larger public audience. This document should be connected to the regulations and the reference guide. Some areas have been revised and merged; Phil Tharp advised Donna Poland to look for areas of blue in the emailed version.

Committee Members included: Elyse Devereux, Ellen Fithian, Richard Layman, Downey Roberts- Gabay, Beverly Catlin, Pamela Ward, and Phil Tharp.

Reference Guide:

The committee reviewed the organization of the guide and found it logical and appropriate for use. Hot links in the electronic version should be added to the main section of the charts, allowing research references to be accessed as needed, but simplifying the information columns on the page. Each glossary section should be added to specifically addressed areas of the document by links, and all acronyms can be linked to the webpage of the organization referenced. A recommendation was made by Coordinators on the committee to separate information about the Annual Plan to a separate section of the Guide.

Committee Members included: Carol Horn, Judi Greathouse, Diane Naff, Diane Sterbutzel, Gerry Tylavsky, Suzanne Vaughan, and Mary Jane Mutispaugh. Subcommittees for future work will be headed by Carol Horn (Identification and Delivery of Services), Diane Naff and Judi Greathouse (Curriculum), and Gerry Tylavsky (Parent Relationships and Professional Development.)

Following questions and discussions about the timeline for approval and implementation of the revised *Regulations Governing Educational Services for Gifted Students*, each committee member shared news about gifted education in their part of the state:

Richard Layman reported a school board visit to Maggie L. Walker Governor's school, which promoted support and communication.

Phil Tharp mentioned that many divisions may be cutting the number of slots available for placement at Maggie Walker Governor's School as a result of budget.

Beverly Caitlin mentioned that Charlottesville schools have implemented a Talent Development (thinking skills) program in Kindergarten classrooms, which has been well received. Curriculum and Instruction recognition has also been given for rising AP testing results.

Chesterfield County has budget worries, but has not announced cuts.

The Richmond City Parent Advisory Committee remains active and committed to gifted services, and the school system has a new superintendent coming in.

Elyse Devereux of Newport News reported a 15% cut to funding for gifted programs, and the observation that services are changing from an acceleration model to enrichment in nature.

Ellen Fithian has provided workshops to New Horizons parents and students on college admissions and financial aid. Her newsletter, geared to high achieving students, is available as a pdf file by request to Ellen@hredconsulting.com.

Gerry Tylavsky described Magnet Schools for the sixth and seventh graders of York County, as well as the building of an addition to Dare Elementary to house the elementary gifted program. In March, the regional competitions of Odyssey of the Mind will be held there.

Tentatively, Frederick County is planning on cutting 134 (14 administrative) positions. The system may lose 2 gifted resource teachers and perhaps the Coordinator's position. All personnel may experience a 4% pay cut.

Positions may also be cut in Montgomery County, including 3 resource teachers and perhaps the gifted coordinator. Summer school may be cut. Diane Naff reported that the six year plan includes provisions for early scholars, dual enrollment, and a new option - credit programs - at no cost to students in Engineering (in cooperation with Virginia Tech), Air Conditioning and Refrigeration and the College Zone (funded by the Community College). The operating costs are low because the school system provides the faculty.

The meeting quickly adjourned to allow members to exit the parking lots before the buses arrived to pick up the departing students. The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for May 29, 2009 at the Maggie L. Walker Governor's School in Richmond.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:

Diane Sterbutzel and Suzanne Vaughan