

THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNOR'S SCHOOL

12301 Spotswood Furnace Road

Fredericksburg, VA 22407

Governing Board Meeting

September 18, 2014

MINUTES

Members Present: Mr. Duane McOsker (Stafford); Mr. Ray Lora (Spotsylvania); Dr. Mary Anderson, Vice Chair (Caroline); Mr. Ken Novell, Chair (King George)

Also attending: Mrs. Merri Kae VanderPloeg (The Commonwealth Governor's School Director); Dr. Greg Killough (Superintendent of Caroline County Schools); Dr. Bruce Benson (Superintendent of Stafford County Schools); Dr. Scott Baker (Superintendent of Spotsylvania County Schools); and Mr. Keith Wolfe (Executive Director of Secondary Schools of Spotsylvania County Schools).

Mr. Robert Benson (Superintendent of King George County Schools) was absent.

Citizens Present: Spotsylvania County School Board member, Mr. Bill Blaine and CGS teacher, Mr. James Conlee.

Mr. Novell determined that a quorum was present and called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER 18, 2014 AGENDA

Mr. Novell asked that an addition to the agenda be made. He requested that the board discuss the direction of CGS in terms of instructional processes, technological advancements, and how it is preparing students for the future. Moreover, Mr. Novell requested the board discuss how the school divisions could make CGS more available to students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Mr. Lora asked the discussion to be under an action item. Mr. Novell made a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Lora seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0

CITIZEN COMMENTS

No comments at this time.

BOARD MEMBERS COMMENTS

Mr. McOsker appreciates the change in meeting time from 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Mr. Lora welcomed Dr. Benson to the CGS Program. Mr. Novell announced that King George was beginning its first year of having all four grade levels at the King George site and the class of 2015 will be the first graduating class of CGS from the King George/Caroline site. He thanked Stafford for supporting the King George students for many years while they attended the Stafford High site.

SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS

Dr. Killough thanked the King George CGS site for hosting the Caroline students. The Caroline students thoroughly enjoy learning in CGS. Dr. Benson commented that he was happy to be involved on the board and looked forward to future partnerships with the other participating divisions.

DIRECTOR COMMENTS

Mrs. VanderPloeg passed out a list of CGS news and events that could be shared with fellow board members at the respective school divisions.

One hundred and sixty new students participated in the new student orientation of August 19 and 20. Parents had an opportunity to learn how to use the technology software their students would be using in the CGS Program. Parents of upper classmen also participated in the technology workshop. In addition to participating in the technology workshop, families had a chance to meet with their site teachers on August 20.

This year, CGS implemented new Blackboard features to the Blackboard system. One of the features included a robo-call/text message communication device which could be used to communicate information to families. The robo-call/text alert will be implemented second quarter. A second feature that is new to the Blackboard system is a unified calendar which illustrates deadlines, assignments, and class activities to users. Finally, online video features have been added to Blackboard so students can watch videos. Teachers were trained in August and will have future trainings during the first semester. Mr. Kevin Ramsey, Technology Engineer, upgraded laptop, HD television screens, and broadcasting tools at all of the sites over the summer.

On September 15, Mrs. VanderPloeg attended a Director's meeting in Warrenton. The Virginia Department of Education will not make any funding cuts to the Governor's School programs for FY2015.

Finally, Mrs. VanderPloeg initiated a CGS Facebook page, CGS Community blog, and an electronic newsletter for the new school year. There will be many events highlighted on social media during the course of the year such as:

- PTO Fall Social, September 20th at Belvedere Plantation.
- VCU Admissions Presentation, September 24
- 'Toolkit for Success', October 1, Salem Church Public Library
- CGS Advisory Committee Meeting, October 9, Fredericksburg Downtown Library

Mrs. VanderPloeg informed the board of the VDOE Governor's School Evaluation which will be held on March 24-26. The board will be invited on March 25 for a dinner with the evaluation team.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES & FINANCIAL REPORT

Mr. Novell made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Dr. Anderson seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0. Dr. Anderson made a motion to approve the financial report. Mr. McOsker seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0.

Mrs. VanderPloeg noted that a lot of transportation related purchases were made during the months of September and part of October because of the multiple trips that were scheduled in the Fall. It is required by the state that Governors' Schools expose students to many different learning environments and to apply content to real-world experiences. The field experiences are a valuable component to the CGS Program and address the state requirements.

INFORMATION ITEMS

SOL/AP Data

Mr. James Conlee presented the SOL and Advanced Placement (AP) data for 2014. It is the expectation that CGS students pass the SOLs and should be able reach the pass advanced categories. Over the years, the number of CGS students receiving a pass advance has decreased slightly but the SOL assessments have increased in rigor and the cut scores for a pass advance score has raised. Mr. Novell asked if there were any trends of scores increasing or decreasing by sites or if there were variables which influenced the scores. Mrs. VanderPloeg analyzed the numbers and gave the board some possible reasons for lower pass advance scores than in past years. Mr. Conlee emphasized that the content teachers work collaboratively on curriculum and the instructional pace of curriculum objectives. Dr. Killough interjected that changes of assessment measurements and the limited time divisions had to prepare for the new exams were significant. Mr. Conlee and Mrs. VanderPloeg attributed the differences in SOL scores by sites to experience of teachers, foundational background of content by the students, middle school preparation, and consistency across the curriculum prior to attending CGS.

Mr. Conlee reviewed the regional AP results and the longitudinal data with the board. The CGS faculty are very transparent when looking at data and work over the summer to analyze the data and to make modifications to curriculum and instruction based on the assessment outcomes.

The Governing Board members received a SOL/AP Powerpoint and an Excel spreadsheet illustrating the AP scores.

Mr. Conlee shared the AP score highlights by school division and by sites. Mr. Novell asked about the differences in scores from one site to the next. 2014 had the highest participation rate of AP testing. Over half of the students taking AP exams scored above a three. This was the first year that AP Environmental Science was offered in the program and seventy-six percent received a passing score. The AP Biology pass rate was ninety-five percent which exceeds the program's expectations. The senior level courses have less participation because of the cost of the tests and many colleges have limitations on the number of AP credits for admission.

Mr. Novell asked why some sites have more stability than other sites. Mr. Conlee said that resignations or transfers can be attributed to moving out of the region, family reasons, mobility for professional advancement, and retirements. Mrs. VanderPloeg added that there are a lot of challenges and stressors CGS teachers face daily in the program. Some individuals do not want to work in that environment because of the added duties in the main school environment and in CGS.

Mr. Lora disagreed with some of Mrs. VanderPloeg's remarks and commented that some teachers outside of CGS believe that teaching in CGS is the easiest job in the world and the student body consists of some of the top students in the division; therefore, it should be rewarding. He recognized that teaching is a stressful job but the CGS families are supportive the students are great. Mr. Lora wanted to continue the conversation of faculty retention at a later time because it is worth looking into.

Mr. Novell wanted to know how Riverbend has kept its faculty for a long time. Mr. Conlee said that many of its faculty members started in CGS over fifteen years ago and that they have remained strong. Dr. Benson mentioned that the Stafford school division is exploring the different programs and the challenges of sustaining staffing needs in the various programs. Furthermore, the exit data of teacher resignations is valuable to look at as a school division and a program.

Mr. Lora asked the superintendents of the participating divisions to review CGS and create an in-depth report/presentation on the state of CGS and its future. Mr. Lora made a motion for the Superintendents to review the program and present the information to the board. Dr. Anderson seconded the motion. Mr. Novell said the request was very broad and suggested the board should narrow the scope. Mr. Novell suggested looking at instructional processes, technology uses, and expectations that are required after graduation. He would like more of an understanding of CGS is adopting certain processes. Mr. McOske agrees with some of the

remarks but he suggested that board look at comparisons of Governor's Schools in Virginia and then move forward. Mrs. VanderPloeg suggested the board spend the entire day in a CGS classroom, learn the technology tools, and program operations before a program evaluation is made.

Mr. Lora wants to take a critical look at what CGS is doing. He questions if CGS has reached a plateau or does it need to raise the bar. Moreover, Mr. Lora is concerned about rural children and minority groups graduating and if they are properly represented in the program. Mr. McOsker made a motion to compare and contrast Governor's Schools across the state. Dr. Baker interjected that a year ago the programs across the state were reviewed and there are no clear comparisons or structures that are the same as The Commonwealth Governor's School. CGS is different from other Governor's Schools because they have different objectives and infrastructures. Furthermore, Dr. Baker reminded the board that the VDOE will be evaluating the program in March and perhaps the board needs to see the feedback from the state before they make a determination on the viability of the program.

Mrs. VanderPloeg invited the board to look at the evaluation objectives which will be used during the state visit. The board will see that many of the areas they are concerned or are inquiring about will be addressed during the evaluation. Moreover, members of the board can come to the CGS office and review past evaluation documents and feedback.

Mr. McOsker made a motion to review the student and faculty demographics (all minority groups, low socioeconomic, and rural students) who attend the CGS Program at the next meeting. Mr. Lora seconded the motion. Mrs. VanderPloeg will provide suggestions on how to narrow the gap in program attendance and she will invite the gifted coordinators to the meeting. Dr. Anderson seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0.

Mr. Lora made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Mr. McOsker seconded the motion. The Governing Board adjourned at 5:25 p.m.