

THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNOR'S SCHOOL

12301 Spotswood Furnace Road

Fredericksburg, VA 22407

Governing Board Meeting

October 16, 2014

MINUTES

Members Present: Mr. Duane McOsker (Stafford); 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); Mr. Robert Benson (Superintendent of King George County Schools).

Mr. Ray Lora (Spotsylvania County School Board), Dr. Scott Baker (Spotsylvania County Superintendent), Mr. Keith Wolfe (Executive Director of Secondary Education in Spotsylvania County) absent.

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 16, 2014 AGENDA

Mr. McOsker made a motion to approve the agenda. Dr. Anderson seconded the motion. The motion passed 3-0

CITIZEN COMMENTS

No comments at this time.

BOARD MEMBERS COMMENTS

No comments at this time.

SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS

No comments at this time.

DIRECTOR COMMENTS

Mrs. VanderPloeg welcomed everyone to the King George School Board office for the meeting. Mrs. VanderPloeg visited all of the middle schools in the region to talk about CGS and its benefits. All of the middle schools will tour the CGS sites in November and December. Parent Information Nights will occur in the school divisions in November and December.

Each month, CGS will highlight a Virginia university or a career field via a broadcast presentation after school. Students will have an opportunity to meet with a college admissions representative or learn about a particular career field on the CGS broadcast system. In September, Virginia Commonwealth University visited CGS. Later in October, a CGS alum who is employed as an FBI analyst, will speak to students about criminal forensics. The "Toolbox for Success" presentation was held in October. Over forty CGS families and their students attended the event and learned about studying strategies, improving organizational skills, and how to prepare for life after high school.

Mrs. VanderPloeg reviewed the CGS newsletter with the board and highlighted upcoming events that will take place in November and December. Mrs. VanderPloeg informed the board of the death of a former CGS student who graduated from Stafford High School and CGS in 2011. Finally, she reminded the members of the board and the superintendents of the January 15th meeting which will be held in Stafford.

The Commonwealth Governor's School Governing Board watched a student video that was written and directed by Anna Rinko, a senior at the King George CGS site. The video described the learning and school life opportunities CGS students' experience. The video will be presented at the parent information nights. Mr. McOsker commented that his daughter looks forward to her time in CGS even though she is very busy with her extra-curricular activities. He added that there are incredible academic expectations in CGS and he continues to be amazed by the level of motivation the CGS students bring to school as well as how prepared they are when they leave the CGS classrooms. Mr. Novell reiterated that motivation is important but curiosity is key to learning. He said that schools need to push curiosity because this will motivate students to seek information. Dr. Benson added that students are naturally curious but schools sometimes crush the curiosity out of them. Mrs. VanderPloeg agreed. Mr. McOsker interjected that Dr. Benson has impressed upon the Stafford School Board that professional development should not, by default, be a top budget cutting priority because teachers need the professional development tools to better prepare students in the classroom. He further added that students won't be curious if the teachers do not have the tools or knowledge to be able to "stoke" student curiosity. Mr. Novell said that teachers need to be curious and when school divisions' interview teacher candidates, the teacher candidates they hire need to like learning and not just want to teach kids.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES & FINANCIAL REPORT

Dr. Anderson made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Mr. McOsker seconded the motion. Mrs. VanderPloeg clarified a question Mr. Novell had about payment for a caving expert. CGS has a contract with a certified caving expert who leads the caving expeditions with the students. Jim McCloud, a former CGS science teacher, is a certified spelunker who is the contracted expert. CGS teachers, Mr. Linton and Mr. Morris, are also certified cavers. CGS had a 1:7 student/adult ratio during the caving trip with teachers and parents chaperoning the trip. The motion to approve the financial report and consent agenda passed 3-0.

INFORMATION ITEMS

March DOE Evaluation Visit

The Virginia Department of Education Governor's School Evaluation Committee will be conducting an evaluation of CGS on March 24-26. Mrs. VanderPloeg asked the board if they had any questions about the visit. She offered to facilitate a Governing Board professional development work session prior to the March visit. All the board members in attendance were in favor of holding the work session. Mrs. VanderPloeg said that it would probably be in February and that she would invite the school division gifted coordinators to the session so they could review the application process with the board members. She would send possible dates to the superintendents and board members soon so they could refer to their calendars.

CGS Regional Demographics Report

Each year, CGS provides a demographic breakdown of student enrollment after the official enrollment count is conducted in each division. The low socioeconomic (SES) numbers of students are difficult to obtain because of privacy issues. Moreover, providing specific data reports such as finding the number of rural students in the program is also difficult. The school division would have to look at each student's physical address and determine if they lived in a rural area. Mr. McOsker did not think it was necessary to disaggregate the data by the number of students who lived in rural areas. Furthermore, he believed the superintendents could access the free and reduced lunch numbers at the local level. Mrs. VanderPloeg stated that it was difficult to gather a small population group of students such as CGS. Mr. Novell inquired why it would be a problem. Dr. Killough explained that the inquiry would pinpoint specific students in a school and Mr. Benson added that it would probably be a low number anyway. Mr. Novell believed the issue of knowing the number of low SES students in CGS could raise the awareness of increasing opportunities for children who come from economically disadvantaged households. He believed the potential gap in academic opportunities may demonstrate a larger problem such as providing more PreKdg opportunities for low SES students. Dr. Killough believed the achievement gaps are not just occurring in low SES home environments but in other

demographics. He believed a truly gifted student will be identified in the classroom as being high ability and will catch on rapidly to content. Many school divisions are addressing the high ability learner in the classroom with differentiated instruction and enrichment programs. Mrs. VanderPloeg shared that all of the school divisions are working hard to find gifted students in rural and low SES areas. For example, Spotsylvania County Public Schools is providing extra enrichment resources to targeted demographics such as students who attend Livingston Elementary School. As Director of CGS, Mrs. VanderPloeg cannot control how programming is done in grades PK-8 across the region; however, CGS is providing outreach opportunities to middle schools that historically have low applicant pools. This school year, she sent program outreach invitations to the gifted resource teachers and the building principals. CGS is willing and excited to partner with targeted middle schools on different enrichment projects. A few of the middle schools in Stafford immediately responded. Shirley Heim asked CGS to help assist in their school debate tournament on October 31. At the site level, the teachers know which CGS students will need financial resources or supplies for class projects or field trips. The sites use some of their funds to off-set expenses for students who cannot afford to pay for a five dollar theater ticket or a poster board. The CGS/PTO also provides funds to students in need. Last year, a few low income students could not pay for college application fees and they were not identified by the college(s) as low income. The PTO assisted with the application fees for the students in need.

After the discussion with the superintendents, Mr. Novell understood the disadvantages of highlighting low SES data and potential misconceptions. Mrs. VanderPloeg said that if the board wanted specific demographic information about their K-12 programs, the divisions could provide it to them. Dr. Benson also understood the issue of having small numbers of low SES in particular programs. The CGS program targets gifted students but the metric could be more useful when school divisions are comparing programs such as CGS with other division programs. Presently Stafford County Public Schools is reviewing SAT scores of SCPS with other school divisions as well as analyzing the SAT scores of certain demographics compared to other school divisions' demographics. Dr. Benson would like to know what the average SAT score of CGS. Mrs. VanderPloeg said that information such as the AP averages are found in the profiles of performance but she would have to inquire about the SAT averages. If recent averages are not available, she would retrieve it from the gifted coordinators. Dr. Benson wondered how successful programs such as CGS are compared to other Governor's Schools. Dr. Killough said that every Governor's School in Virginia is different so it is difficult to compare but comparing SAT or AP scores with other programs can be a real clear and fair analysis. Dr. Benson believed it is important to have independent measures to review. Mrs. VanderPloeg said that she would have to get the SAT data from the school divisions' Directors of Guidance because College Board provides the information directly to them and not CGS.

Mrs. VanderPloeg shared the IEP/Section 504 data for CGS and provided demographic information that was found on the VDOE website. Mr. Benson and Dr. Benson believed the data

representing their divisions was incorrect when identifying students who were categorized as low SES. Mrs. VanderPloeg apologized for this but stated the information came from the state website. Dr. Benson added that he has seen errors and inconsistencies before on the state website. The divisions could provide the data to CGS if it were needed. Under the race category, Dr. Anderson asked why "other" was listed. Mrs. VanderPloeg said that students can self-identify their race. Finally, Mrs. VanderPloeg provided the percentages of gender and race of teachers who are working in CGS. There was an even split between male and female teachers but diversity was not broad in the staff pool. She reminded the board that staff is selected by the school divisions. If they were concerned by the homogeneous demographics, they should refer their questions to their division Human Resources Department.

In final remarks about the matter, Mr. McOsker said school divisions needed to improve academic gains in the low SES demographic. He believed that education should be more rigorous and the identification of gifted needed to happen primarily in 3rd and 4th grade. Mr. McOsker believed one of the problems with programs such as CGS is whether or not parents can provide the support to be successful in CGS. Some students come to school hungry and that could be a bigger priority.

Mrs. VanderPloeg's biggest concern is awareness of CGS in the region. Every year, she goes to all of the middle schools to talk about the CGS program and how it can be a rewarding high school learning option. This year, Mrs. VanderPloeg is meeting with high school students during FLEX time and study halls to talk about applying to the program as 10th and 11th graders. In September, she contacted agencies such as the Spotsylvania Sunday School Union, the Spotsylvania and Stafford NAACP, Stafford Junction (non-profit that works with immigrant and low SES families), Caroline and Spotsylvania James Farmer Scholarship Program, De Lucia (Hispanic ministries non-profit in Fredericksburg), Jackie Bass Fortune (founding member of a local African American sorority), and the gifted coordinators to offer a CGS presentation to their organizations. Last year, CGS hosted a community outreach discussion about preparing low SES and minority children to be successful in accelerated programs.

Mr. McOsker believed the VAST program that Stafford County has been a part of for the last three years has helped with the academic gap but by the time a student is in 9th grade, it can be too late. He believed outreach and academic preparation needed to happen at an earlier age. Mr. Novell pointed out that in order to apply to CGS, students must take Algebra I before 9th grade. He believed higher level mathematics required an extensive understanding of language. Students would have to be in advanced math and have mastered the concepts prior to eighth grade. He, too, agreed that outreach needed to occur at an earlier age. One area that Mr. Novell wanted to point out was the comparison of the African American population to the Caucasian students enrolled in CGS. He believed, based on the data, the two racial groups were even. Mr. Novell surmised that the academic gap problem lies with the low SES group. Furthermore, he believed it would be difficult to compare different gifted programs because it is like comparing apples to oranges. Mr. Novell believed that looking at the academic growth of students during the

progression of attending a program could be powerful data. The SAT or ACT measurements could be a good success predictor to analyze. Mrs. VanderPloeg reminded the board that analyzing a program needs to entail more than looking at test scores. Dr. Killough agreed there are other characteristics and circumstances that need to be considered. Mr. Benson interjected that it would be interesting to define and determine what growth looks like in CGS. Mrs. VanderPloeg wished the VDOE compiled a Profiles of Performance among the nineteen Governor's School but that has not been done.

Dr. Benson wanted to know what VDOE was looking for when they visit the program in March. Mrs. VanderPloeg reviewed the assessment criterion again with the board and asked them to review the rubric they received in September. Mr. Novell raised the point that SAT scores cannot be the only measurement of success. He would like to know what qualities or concepts are taught in CGS. Mr. McOsker said school divisions such as SCPS is reviewing the many aspects of programs because they are in a budgetary crunch. This analysis that Mr. Novell described could be very productive and helpful to the board. It is the board's responsibility to make sure programs are progressing and "shored up".

ACTION ITEMS

FY 2015 Amended Budget

Mr. Novell made a motion to approve the amended budget. Mr. McOsker seconded the motion. During the discussion, Mrs. VanderPloeg explained that two weeks after the June Governing Board meeting, the state increased the Governor's School budget by \$28,000. The additional funds would be allocated to purchase additional equipment and for the maintenance of existing technology equipment. Dr. Anderson asked why this was the case and Mrs. VanderPloeg responded that the purchasing and maintenance of technology in CGS was costly. It was probable the funds would be used for these areas in the future. Mr. Benson asked if the state allowed for carry over funds. Mrs. VanderPloeg said the state directs Governor's Schools to not carry over funds from one year to the next. He asked if funds could be reallocated if needed and Mrs. VanderPloeg said that it can occur. Motion passed 3-0.

Dr. Anderson made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Mr. McOsker seconded the motion. Motion passed 3-0. The Governing Board adjourned at 5:16 p.m.