

# **THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNOR'S SCHOOL**

**via Zoom Online Meeting**

## **Governing Board Meeting Minutes**

October 15, 2020

### **ATTENDANCE**

Members Present: Mr. John Copeland, (Caroline); Dr. Lorita Copeland Daniels, (Spotsylvania); Dr. Sarah Chase, Vice-Chair (Stafford); Mr. T.C. Collins (King George)

Also attending: Dr. Sarah Calveric (Superintendent of Caroline County Public Schools); Dr. Scott Baker (Superintendent of Spotsylvania County Public Schools); Dr. Tom Nichols (Chief Officer of High Schools and School Safety for Stafford County Public Schools); Mr. Keith Wolfe (Executive Director of Secondary Education and Leadership for Spotsylvania County Public Schools); Ms. Kristine Lentz-Johnston (Director of Professional Learning and Instructional Programs for Spotsylvania County Public Schools); Mrs. Amanda Higgins (Coordinator of Gifted Instruction for King George County Public Schools); Mrs. Jennifer Grigsby (The Commonwealth Governor's School Director); Michelle Chaudoir (Parent)

Absent: Dr. Robert Benson (Superintendent of King George County Public Schools); Dr. Scott Kizner (Superintendent of Stafford County Public Schools)

### **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Mr. John Copeland at 4:00pm on October 15, 2020. A quorum was determined by Mr. Copeland at 4:00pm via the Zoom participant screen.

### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

### **APPROVAL OF MEETING AGENDA**

Dr. Chase made a motion to approve the meeting agenda, and this was seconded by Mr. Collins. The motion passed 4-0.

## **CITIZEN COMMENTS**

CGS Parent, Michelle Chaudoir, shared the remarks below:

I am a CGS parent of a Stafford HS 9th grader. While the circumstances around missed social opportunities for our students are a true loss, I am among several CGS parents who do not feel comfortable moving forward with an in-person social event for our children at this time given the ongoing need for safety precautions.

The value of supporting our students' social-emotional needs during this unprecedented time of isolation is an increasingly important issue. I am thankful for CGS and other SHS teachers who have built small group projects and other relationship-building strategies into their "new normal" of virtual learning.

Indeed, students and families who are interested in connecting socially should be encouraged to gather (safely) independent of a school or CGS program endorsed function. An in-person event that is run by the CGS program or uses CGS PTO funds would likely result in alienating students who themselves or whose families continue adhering to strict distancing. The unintended consequence of such an event would be to create a greater sense of loss and isolation among those students who are unable to participate.

I thank CGS and the PTO for being open to varied points of view and discussion from families and all that they are doing to safely support students while maintaining academic rigor in the program. This is an exercise in patience, respect, and focusing on what is most important. For now, the name of the game is online and virtual.

## **BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

Dr. Chase asked a clarifying question regarding the event the citizen comment was referencing above. Mrs. Grigsby will answer that question during her Director's Report at the recommendation of Dr. Chase.

Mr. Copeland briefly discussed the proposed plan by Thomas Jefferson Governor's School to eliminate admissions testing for their program for the 2021-2022 school year. He asked if anyone else had thoughts or felt that their proposed plan might set a precedent for other AYGS programs.

Mr. Collins stated that he does not agree with removing the testing requirement for admission into AYGS programs and feels that component of the application process should continue. Mr. Copeland agreed that requirements should be included to ensure students are adequately prepared for the rigor of AYGS programs.

Dr. Chase mentioned a proposed idea from Maggie Walker Governor's School to admit the top candidates from each school based on other metrics without testing being required. She was open to that idea if the CGS leadership felt that was appropriate.

Dr. Daniels feels assessment is appropriate to keep included in the process as long as there are other areas that are included in the application process which allow the selection committee to see the well-roundedness of applicants across various criteria.

### **SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS**

There were no superintendent comments.

### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

#### **CGS Events**

- Upcoming Events
  - Senior Symposium
    - April 21, 2021 at 6pm
    - Tentatively scheduled at UMW – Stafford campus at University Hall
  - Fall Social
    - The CGS PTO is looking at options for this event. They are thinking of trying a virtual talent show and/or having a comedian present to the students virtually. Additionally, some parents would like to potentially host an event at each site in-person. This would put approximately 120 students together. I will need each central office liaison to let me know if this will be permitted for your school division before planning can proceed.
  - Senior Recognition Ceremony
    - May 23, 2021 at 3pm
    - Fredericksburg Expo Center

#### **2020-2021 School Year**

CGS transitioned to the hybrid model in Spotsylvania County on October 12. Our technology has worked well and three classrooms per site are setup for virtual/hybrid simultaneous teaching. This was done to ensure the teachers will be able to teach the students physically present in concert with those who are logging in from home via Zoom.

King George is our next site tentatively scheduled to transition to in-person learning. We have not received a date yet for that transition, and they are reassessing often to make a determination. Caroline County is staying with 100% virtual instruction through the end of 1<sup>st</sup> semester and will make a decision at a later date as to when the transition will occur. Stafford County is also following that same plan.

Teachers are working in content professional learning communities (PLCs) across all sites to adjust the CGS curriculum to cover the scope of the standards in all of our classes without overloading students with assignments. Our expectation is that students work for 30 minutes per night per subject, and we are adjusting assignments to ensure that timeframe is being met. Each PLC will communicate their adjustments to me by the end of this month, including our Culminating course curriculum.

With those adjustments being made, students who are planning to take AP examinations this year will need to work in concert with their teachers after school hours to ensure appropriate preparation. In a typical school year, students receive enough practice and preparation during classes to be prepared for the AP exams. However, with the reduction in classes and time in class, students will need to prepare outside of class to be well-prepared for exams. Teachers will offer test preparation tutoring in the months leading up to the exam after school hours to help those interested students maximize their success.

The College Board did announce that students should sign up and pay for their exams by the regular deadline. However, if students choose to not test, the College Board will not be assessing the typical \$40 penalty, and all fees may be reimbursed if canceled before invoices are generated.

**Unused/Canceled Exam Fee Waived:** We encourage students to register for their exams in the fall. Given this year's unusual circumstances, **the unused/canceled exam fee won't be applied** (in 2020-21 only). To ensure your school isn't billed an exam fee for unused/canceled exams, submit known exam cancellations by March 12, 2021 (11:59 p.m. ET), or indicate as unused any exams that are ordered but not taken in AP Registration and Ordering before the school's invoice is generated.

New! The cost per AP Exam is increasing by \$1 in 2020-21. The amount of the College Board fee reduction is also increasing by \$1 per exam for eligible students. Schools still retain a \$9 rebate per exam.

Payment is **not** due to College Board at the time of ordering. The postmark deadline for invoices and payment to College Board is **June 15**. Schools determine when and how to collect and track exam payment. Students' checks or money orders should be made payable to the school administering the exam, **not** to College Board.

## **CGS VDOE Evaluation**

CGS is due to be evaluated during the 2020-2021 school year. During my October 1<sup>st</sup> meeting with Dr. Poland and the other two directors whose programs will be evaluated, we created a list of reasons as to why we were requesting a delay until the 2021-2022 school year for the evaluation to occur. The greatest concerns were finding teachers and administrators to serve on the evaluation committees, ensuring state funding was available for the evaluations, and wanting those committees to get a true reflection of each program as it is designed. An evaluation during this school year will be an assessment of how we are handling a community health crisis and not what we actually provide to students as designed by our program charters. Dr. Poland emailed Michael Bolling and submitted the request on our behalf for a waiver for this year, requesting to resume the cycle in 2021-2022. We are awaiting a response. If the evaluation moves forward, it will be scheduled for the spring (March/April) and the format (virtual/in-person) will depend upon COVID-19 restrictions at the time.

## **AYGS Director's Meeting**

As a group, the AYGS directors are compiling a formal statement indicating that each Governor School would like the region it serves and those boards to have decision-making authority regarding the application process for their individual programs. This process of creating a formal statement as an AYGS unit stems from the Governor's office and the VA Secretary of Education wanting to mandate application procedures for all AYGS programs, starting with pilot programs for Thomas Jefferson Governor's School and Maggie Walker Governor's School.

## **APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDAS**

Dr. Chase made a motion to approve the consent agenda, which includes the meeting minutes from September 2020 and financial report for October 2020. Dr. Daniels seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0.

## **INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

### **CGS Return to Learn Plan - Updated**

The CGS Return to Learn Plan was updated to reflect the start of hybrid instruction in Spotsylvania County Public Schools, and the calendars for SCPS CGS students were adjusted to reflect the hybrid schedule change. Additionally, the tentative dates for resuming hybrid or in-person learning were adjusted for King George County Public Schools, Stafford County Public Schools, and Caroline County Public Schools.

### **2019-2020 SOL & AP Data Review**

There were no End-of-Course SOL examinations for the 2019-2020 school year due to COVID-19 school closures and testing waivers from the state and federal levels. AP exams were given at home for the 2019-2020 school year, and the multiple choice section of the exams was completely removed. Students were given an allotted amount of time for each short answer, free-response, or document-based question, and answers had to be uploaded before time elapsed.

Due to COVID-19 closures, restrictions, and less instructional time, the College Board allowed students to withdraw from the exam and not test. There was no financial penalty for electing to not test last year. Students were reimbursed their fees by their comprehensive high school. Thus, the overall number of tests administered to CGS students was lower compared to previous years (1053 in 2020 versus 1226 in 2019).

In terms of AP scores, CGS students scored higher than the global average released by the College Board in 9 out of the 12 exams taken.

In AP Calculus BC and AB, over half of the CGS students earned credit by scoring a 3 or higher. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, students were not able to take the BC exam and receive an AB subscore (as occurs most years). Students had to choose between the two tests. Most students elected to try for the 6-8 credit hours (BC Calculus) instead of 3-4 credit hours (AB Calculus). This resulted in an overall lower pass rate for the subject than in previous years.

In AP European History, CGS students take this course as a ninth grader instead of as a sophomore or junior (as is common practice in most comprehensive high schools). The course and exam are written at a higher level, and over half of our students earned a passing score. We were within 5% of the global average with our younger students.

### **2020-2021 CGS Application Update**

On October 13, 2020, representatives from each school division (Nikki Kiger – Caroline; Amanda Higgins – King George; Kristine Lentz-Johnston & Silvia Mabie – Spotsylvania; Dr. Stephenie Fellingner – Stafford) met virtually via Zoom to review the current CGS application process. The goal of this meeting was to ensure consistency across all four divisions in order to ascertain that the most qualified students were being selected into the program. Additionally, changes were made to improve the access of underserved populations to the CGS program.

For the 2020-2021 school year, the following changes were made to the application process:

- Achievement Testing
  - Due to COVID-19, students in grade 8 will not be taking the PSAT 8. Thus, CGS will not be able to use those scores as part of the application process. Instead,

each division will utilize alternate testing, such as MAP or STAR testing, to denote student achievement in the areas of mathematics and reading.

- Teacher Recommendations
  - Students will obtain four teacher recommendations (one from a math teacher, one from an English teacher, and two others from a non-related adult). The scores from the top three recommendations will be used. Previously, students obtained three recommendations and all were used in their score. This change will be used to eliminate any potential teacher bias and an outlying low score.
- Honors/ Awards
  - This category will be removed, and those 15 points will be pushed into the interview/portfolio area. This will eliminate an advantage for students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds due to the financial means to be able to participate in more activities and thus earn more awards or honors. The interview/portfolio area is traditionally high scoring for underserved populations of students.

All of these changes were noted in our Diversity Report to the VDOE and Governor Northam's office.

Dr. Daniels commented that she is excited about the changes and is looking forward to the data after the 2020-2021 application cycle.

Dr. Chase questioned if the division liaisons and the director had looked at the program's specific data to determine if the areas removed were in fact holding students from underrepresented groups from gaining admittance into the program. Dr. Calveric did indicate in her former roles as an assistant principal and principal that there were instances of bias and lack of understanding in the recommendation process that these changes would address more universally. Ms. Higgins shared her process of data disaggregation for King George County which allows her to eliminate a category of the application and see how the list of students admitted (and thus demographics) would change. Mrs. Grigsby commented that the category that changes the admission roster the most is the academic section with includes ability and achievement testing. This area may improve this year, however, since students will not be taking the PSAT exam (which is their first time taking this type of test) and will instead be taking achievement exams with which they are more familiar. Mrs. Lentz-Johnston agreed with the statement regarding testing for Spotsylvania County.

Dr. Daniels asked about the teacher recommendation process and what that looks like. Mrs. Grigsby explained that teachers fill out a recommendation form that ranks students against their peers on a scale from 4 (being the highest) to 1 (being the lowest) in various categories, specifically those from gifted and high achieving students.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

### **2021 FY Budget Approval**

Due to an adjustment in student enrollment from the estimated 620 students to the actual 624 students as of September 30, 2020, there was an increase in funding equaling \$6933.00 for the 2020-2021 budget. Thus, the attached amended budget accounts for this change in funding and distributes the additional funding of \$6933.00 into the Program Technology Maintenance/Upgrades/New Equipment line item of the budget.

Dr. Chase made a motion to approve the 2021 FY Budget adjustment. Mr. Collins seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0.

## **FINAL COMMENTS**

Next meeting is on January 21, 2021 in-person at King George School Board Office.

### **Adjournment**

Dr. Chase motioned to adjourn the meeting at 5:06pm. Dr. Daniels seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0.