

# **THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNOR'S SCHOOL**

**via Zoom Online Meeting**

## **Governing Board Meeting Minutes**

September 17, 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. Robert Benson (Superintendent of King George County Public Schools); Mrs. Karen Foster (Director of Secondary Education for Caroline County Public Schools); Dr. Tom Nichols (Chief Officer of High Schools and School Safety for Stafford County Public Schools); Dr. Stephenie Fellingner (Teaching & Learning Facilitator for K-12 Gifted Education and Secondary Programs for Stafford County); Ms. Kristine Lentz-Johnston (Director of Professional Learning and Instructional Programs for Spotsylvania County Public Schools); Mrs. Jennifer Grigsby (The Commonwealth Governor's School Director)

Absent: Dr. Scott Baker (Superintendent of Spotsylvania County Public Schools); Dr. Scott Kizner (Superintendent of Stafford County Public Schools); Dr. Sarah Calveric (Superintendent of Caroline County Public Schools)

### **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Mr. John Copeland at 4:03pm on September 17, 2020. A quorum was determined by Mr. Copeland at 4:03pm 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**

There were no citizen comments.

## **BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

Mr. Copeland thanked the board for their patience and shared that he suffered a heart attack on May 20, 2020 and Mr. Shawn Kelley filled in for him at the May 21, 2020 CGS Governing Board meeting. He is doing well, and he was able to meet with Mrs. Grigsby in August to approve the bill listing. Funding is being spent to upgrade technology for the new virtual landscape, but that is to be expected considering the nature of virtual learning.

## **SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS**

There were no superintendent comments.

## **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

### **CGS Events**

- Class of 2020 Senior Recognition Ceremony
  - This event was held on July 19, 2020 at the Fredericksburg Expo Center. Attendance was less than in previous years, and we ranged between 50-100% attendance per site. The clustering of sites worked perfectly to keep our numbers below 250 in the space that was completely social distanced using the 6 foot requirement. There were no issues with individuals wearing a mask, and we did have masks available for anyone who forgot. The catering was fantastic, and the boxed cupcakes were a huge hit.
  - We have already scheduled next year's event at the same venue, and we are planning to continue with the clustered approach in the future. The scheduled date is Sunday, May 23, 2021 starting at 3pm.
- CGS New Student Orientation
  - We altered our CGS New Student Orientation this year to accommodate COVID-19 restrictions, but we wanted to make sure our students still had that experience. We had students report directly to their site on July 30 instead of all 190 new students reporting to one site. The event went well, and the students provided feedback that they enjoyed the day and were grateful to see each other in person. They would've liked more interactive and hands-on activities, but we were

limited due to COVID-19 restrictions. We had 86% of the incoming students in attendance.

- We also had two parent Q & A sessions to review the program, curriculum, and to answer any questions they may have. We had current students, teachers, and me available to answer questions. Those sessions were on July 30 and August 3, and 145 individuals participated.
- CGS Summer Booster Course for Honors Algebra II
  - We offered a four-day virtual summer booster course for our rising freshmen to ensure they had the requisite Algebra I skills after the COVID-19 closure and that they felt confident going into CGS Honors Algebra II. We had 75% of the rising freshmen participate in this coursework, and those who were unable to attend had access to the recordings and materials via Blackboard.
- Virtual Social Sessions
  - We have started offering virtual social sessions for the freshmen students via Zoom during their lunch to allow the students time and an opportunity to talk with one another about non-academic topics. The teachers are present in the room to supervise, but they keep their cameras and microphones off so the students are more willing to freely talk with each other. If these go well, we may try to offer them to other grade levels or between sites.
- 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. If this event occurs, it will be scheduled for late October/early November. They have also considered returning to Belvedere since it is an outdoor facility, but no definitive plans have been finalized yet.

### 2020-2021 School Year

The new school year has started well for our students and teachers. There have been few concerns with technology, and we are working with the school divisions to try and help students who have limited or no connectivity. I requested feedback from the parents at Monday's PTO meeting, and they have shared their accolades and concerns. We are problem-solving the concerns and surveying the students to see how they are feeling regarding the virtual learning and workload.



We are preparing for the transition to the hybrid model in Spotsylvania County starting on October 12. We are working on our technology 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 the hybrid model at the end of October. The last division to transition will be Stafford County upon their board's decision.

### Culminating Success Story Email

Charlotte Manwell was a 2018 graduate of Riverbend HS and the CGS Riverbend site.

Hi Mrs. Oesterheld,

I hope you're doing well, it has certainly been an odd year. I just wanted to email you with a little culminating success story.

In my Junior and Senior year, I completed my culminating on equine parasites and eventually attended the American Association of Veterinary Parasitologists conference in the summer of 2018 for a poster presentation of my culminating product.

In fall of 2018, I started college at NC State. Not long after, I started working in a lab with fleas and *Bartonella* spp. with a focus in veterinary parasitology after enjoying my culminating project so much. Thanks to all the CGS AP and DE classes, I am going to finish my BS in only 5 semesters and this past summer I applied to start my PhD in the lab I have been working in since my first semester (with my culminating project on my application!), and I just got an acceptance letter to start my PhD in January!

College has made me so thankful for my CGS experience and all of my CGS teachers!

Many thanks,  
Charlotte

### CGS VDOE Evaluation

CGS is due to be evaluated during the 2020-2021 school year. It was determined in August that this evaluation process will still occur at some point this school year. We are meeting on October 1 virtually with Dr. Donna Poland from the VDOE to discuss when this will occur and what it will look like. I will be trying to schedule a spring date to ensure we have time to prepare for the evaluation on top of the current changes due to COVID-19 restrictions.

### APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDAS

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

## **INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

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

All school divisions had to submit a Return to Learn instructional plan and health plan for the 2020-2021 school year following the COVID-19 school closures in March 2020. Included with the school divisions were all regional programs across the Commonwealth. CGS posted their Return to Learn plan on the CGS website and submitted it to the VDOE via the approved Google Form on August 11, 2020. It was officially approved with no questions by the VDOE on August 12, 2020 in email form from Michael Bolling, Assistant Superintendent for Learning and Innovation. Please see the attached plan for more details.

The only changes to the plan included updating the tentative dates for transitioning to hybrid learning for all school divisions and adding homework as a component of student formative assessment.

Dr. Chase asked how many classes students in Stafford County would have with their CGS schedule and SCPS courses. Since most courses in SCPS went to a 4x4 model, students would have four CGS classes for the entirety of the year and two semester long classes. Most students end up having six classes at one time (unless they elected to take an AP or DE course through SCPS that was not offered in a 4x4 format). Those students would end up with eight courses at one time for the duration of the year.

### **2020-2021 CGS SOL Testing Plan**

The updated SOL testing plan for CGS is outlined in the packet. The plan is the same as the 2019-2020 school year plan with a slight amendment for the alternate writing exams in two counties. In Stafford County and King George County, students will take the WorkKeys Business Writing exam instead of the End-of-Course SOL examination. Spotsylvania County and Caroline County will continue with the EOC exam in the spring (approximately March). Communication with division liaisons occurred to ensure students take the appropriate exam during the correct testing window.

Dr. Chase asked how the WorkKeys test differs from the EOC exam. Mrs. Grigsby explained that the WorkKeys exam answers a business task prompt (such as writing an email to a supervisor) and traditionally is used as an alternate exam if a student fails the EOC exam. The rationale behind the change is that the WorkKeys exam is 30 minutes only (whereas the EOC exam is untimed), and it will reduce the amount of time students are on site to take an exam. There are no concerns with the exam for CGS students.



Dr. Copeland Daniels asked why Spotsylvania County was not moving in that direction. Ms. Lentz-Johnston replied that they do use the exam as an alternate for students who have failed, but that she would forward her question to Darnella Cunningham and Tina LeCount to receive a response. Mrs. Foster from Caroline County replied that the test does have an associated fee (approximately \$12 per test), and that may be a factor in not choosing that exam as the first option.

### **2020-2021 CGS Demographic Data**

Overall, there are 625 students participating in the CGS program during the 2020-2021 school year. Of those students, the breakdown of students program-wide is as follows:

- 65% - White or Caucasian
- 11% - Asian
- 9% - Black or African American
- 7% - Hispanic
- 7% - Two or More Races
- <1% - American Indian or Alaska Native

Additionally, data was also collected in additional categories:

- 57% - Female
- 43% - Male
- 7% - Economically Disadvantaged
- 4%- Students with Disabilities OR a 504 Plan

Compared to the 2019-2020 data, we have 27 additional students participating in the program. There was a 3% decrease in White/Caucasian students, a 2% decrease in Asian students, a 2% increase in Black/African American students, and a 2% increase in multiracial students. The percentage of male students increased by 1%. There was a decrease of 3% for economically disadvantaged students and a 1% increase in students with disabilities or a 504 plan. The data for ECD students may not be updated in all divisions due to virtual learning and pulling this data earlier this school year than previous years.

### **2020-2021 CGS Demographics Report & Improvement Plan – Governor Northam’s Office**

In Governor Northam’s FY2021 budget, he included a budget item (145, C-27, i) which requires all academic-year Governor’s Schools to submit a report to the Governor by October 1 of each year outlining diversity goals for the student body and faculty. The report shall include, but not be limited to the following: utilization of universal screenings in feeder divisions; admission processes in place or under consideration that promote access for historically underserved students; and outreach and communication efforts deployed to recruit historically underserved

students. The report shall include the racial/ethnic make-up and socioeconomic diversity of its students, faculty, and applicants.

The details of the report are listed in its body attached here. Overall, the population of students applying to the program and gaining admittance (from the 2019-2020 data) indicates that CGS and its participating divisions are moving in the right direction. There is appropriate correlation (between 5-10%) between the demographics of applicants and those who gained admission into the program. The area of need that continues to be an area of growth is having more students from historically underserved populations applying for entry into the program. In order for this to occur, more students from diverse backgrounds need access to gifted and/or accelerated learning services in the elementary and middle school levels. Once students are identified and access occurs in the lower levels, students from historically underserved areas need to be encouraged by school staff and community organizations to embrace the challenge of applying and attending CGS.

Dr. Copeland Daniels commented that she appreciated the report and that the selected action steps are attainable and measurable. She asked how we plan to solicit feedback from the groups listed. Mrs. Grigsby replied that she plans to work with the Diversity Steering Committee to review the action steps and work with her to create partnerships with those local groups listed to help encourage diverse students to apply for the program. Dr. Copeland Daniels also recommended having the elementary schools track those students who attend CGS and how they do in the program. Those students can then return and help recruit students from their schools and share how the program impacted them. Also, virtual tours and presentations could be created to help those with transportation issues have access to the materials that bring about interest in applicant families. Additionally, she would like to see the counselors reach out and connect with potential applicants to encourage them and help motivate them to try this path and apply. She also asked how faculty are selected for the CGS position. Mrs. Grigsby explained that in-house applicants can be considered, but often the positions are filled from out-of-county applicants due to a lack of interest from within the county. This can be for a variety of reasons, but finding teachers who will fit well into the team-teaching concept of the program is crucial to the success of the students and program. Dr. Copeland Daniels also recommended that Mrs. Grigsby accompany the school divisions when they are attending teacher recruitment events, specifically at HBCUs, to try to increase the number of diverse applicants. On a separate note, she would like us to make sure families know that students do not need to be identified as gifted to apply. Her final question was why Spotsylvania County only uses one portfolio project instead of three like the other counties. Ms. Lentz-Johnston responded and explained that the reduction in products was made to help students with less means be able to apply more easily.

Mr. Copeland offered his contacts at the Caroline chapter of the NAACP, as he is a member.

Dr. Chase suggested diversifying the interview panels by race and gender for selecting the students through the interview process. The county liaisons felt that would be a reasonable



change in the application process if they can find individuals who meet the criteria and are willing to participate. Also, Dr. Chase inquired if we would be doing bias training. Mrs. Grigsby responded that it will occur, but the date of October 12 that was originally scheduled for PD for all divisions is now not available due to schedule changes. It will need to be rescheduled.

Mrs. Grigsby also shared that Secretary Qarni created a Governor's School task force that did not include all directors for the purpose of outlining plans to create a state-wide application protocol for all AYGS programs. It also included delegates and representatives with a wide array of recommendations. Ultimately, the task force is using Thomas Jefferson Governor's School and Maggie Walker Governor's School as pilots in what they would like to be a state-mandated application criteria in order to improve diversity in the programs. Mrs. Grigsby recommended that the CGS Governing Board members reach out to their local delegates and representatives and implore them to support regional decision making in the application process for AYGS programs based on the needs of the region and its stakeholders.

#### **FINAL COMMENTS**

Next meeting is on October 15, 2020 via Zoom starting at 4pm.

#### **Adjournment**

Dr. Chase motioned to adjourn the meeting at 4:33pm. Mr. Collins seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0.