

Virginia Advisory Committee for the Education of the Gifted
Maggie L. Walker Governor's School, Richmond, Virginia
October 10, 2008
Minutes

Members present:

Rebecca L. Akers
Beverly Catlin
Elyse Devereaux
Ellen Fithian
Pam Flaherty
Judi Greathouse
Laura Hall
Richard Layman
Mary Jane Mutispaugh
Diana Naff
Brian Pace, vice-chair
Donna Poland
Sheila Roalf, chairperson
Lennie Routten
Downey Roberts-Gabay
Diane Sterbutzel, secretary
Philip Tharp
Margaret Turley
Gerry Tylavsky

The meeting was called to order by chairperson Sheila Roalf at 10:00 am. Introductions were offered all around. The minutes of the previous meeting were read, and minor changes were made before approval was moved and seconded.

A discussion of meeting dates and issues surrounding funding for meetings was moved forward in the agenda. Sheila Roalf opened the discussion regarding a proposed reduction of meetings of this committee, and the suggestion of telecommunication as a means of meeting brought up in May. Pam Flaherty offered copies of *Teleconferencing and other Electronic Meetings and the Virginia Freedom of Information Act*, which explains the regulations regarding meetings by telecommunication. Donna Poland pointed out the need for a quorum of the committee to be in one place during such meetings, if decisions are to be made by voting. Items further noted by various members of the committee were that teleconferencing by law becomes a public option for comment, that care must be taken to meet all regulations of the Freedom of Information Act, that we have not researched the costs of

teleconferencing, and that some areas of the state may have less representation if meetings are not held face to face. All were in agreement of the value of being able to discuss issues and share information in a face to face setting.

In light of the discussion, Donna Poland, specialist for gifted education, offered to request that the Department of Education sponsor committee meetings in a no-cost setting, requiring minimal travel for all members (such as a Governor's School), with a start time of 10:00 and only lunch provided. Pam Flaherty motioned that the committee meet face to face four times each year in a cost-effective setting in an area in which member travel is considered and minimized. This was seconded and passed by a unanimous vote of the membership. Projected dates for this year's meetings were reviewed and set to occur: December 12, 2008, February 20, 2009, and May 29, 2009.

For the benefit of new members, Sheila Roalf summarized the purpose of this committee. Members are appointed by the state board, and assigned a specific task by the Department of Education. The Virginia Advisory Committee for the Education of the Gifted is offered opportunities to present specific comments to the Board of Education, promoting gifted education in Virginia. Sheila, as chairperson, was invited to speak to the Board about the proposed changes to the Regulations in response to the committee's letter of concerns drafted in the May 29 meeting.

Bev Catlin requested that the minutes reflect the members' appreciation to Sheila for speaking our thoughts and concerns and contributing to this valuable dialogue with the Virginia Board of Education.

Donna Poland updated the committee on budget cuts and noted that the only cut so far to gifted education has been to the administrative account covering travel, conferences and evaluation. The overall budget of the Department of Education has been cut by 4 million dollars, with some losses evident in personnel. Richard Layman reflected that further budget cuts would be made in the coming year, with K-12 programs targeted for losses.

The state Department of Education web site is being revised, with changes in the layout and organization of information. Gifted information is being updated. A new map of the academic year Governor's Schools has been created. An informative newsletter was funded by the Friends of Virginia Governor's Schools. Ellen Fithian suggested that an informational brochure about gifted program offerings in the state of Virginia be created to promote understanding of educational opportunities to the business community. Dr. Fithian offered to do research on the cost and funding sources sought from corporations or the Office of Economic Development. Donna Poland suggested that all committee members visit the Regional Governor's Schools summer programs. The June 2008 annual report will be on line soon.

Academic Year Governor's Schools have new directors in four schools. A nineteenth school has been proposed, projected to open in the year 2010 encompassing Manassas City, Manassas Park City, and Prince William County Schools. This school will emphasize science and technology and is in the planning stage.

Regarding the revisions to the regulations governing gifted education, Dr. Poland reported that there are over 125 written communications and 688 Town Hall comments to be reviewed. The most commented upon issues in the proposed changes are: the issue of a five- year plan or annual plan for school systems, approval of plans by the local school board versus by the school board and Superintendent of the Department of Education, the use of the word *and* replacing *or* in the identification of services as Specific Academic Ability, and the issue of designated funding. When the regulations move forward in the process, changes are usually made. The timeline for presentation to the Board, after all comments have been reviewed, will be January to February. Donna will inform all committee members when the date is set.

As the VACEG was charged with the task of reviewing the Virginia Plan, all were provided with a copy of this plan, dated 1996. Ensuing discussion revolved around the purpose of the Plan, the need to rename the document and to reorganize it with clear connections to relevant regulations, and the need to add interactive links for online use with references. Previous work on the revision of the Virginia Plan by the subcommittees of December 2007, may be effected by changes in the regulations.

The committee broke into two subcommittees for the remainder of the meeting: one to review the Virginia Plan for the Gifted and one to review the Reference Guide for the Development and Evaluation of Local Plans for the Education of the Gifted. Each committee reviewed the documents to determine the purpose and use of each, and to look for areas which will be most changed by proposed changes in regulations. Each committee reported items of discussion.

The Reference Guide:

The Introduction provides an overview of purpose. This section should be renamed to reflect that.

The audience is clearly defined in the document as gifted coordinators in the state of Virginia.

The links are clear to regulations, standards and peer review documents. There is a need to make the acronyms clear to the user with an introductory chart hyperlinked to organizational web sites.

The committee recommends that experienced coordinators be asked to review this document in order to pinpoint the areas in need of change in the light of changes in the *Regulations*.

The Virginia Plan for the Gifted:

This was originally written in 1996 to provide guidelines assisting school divisions with implementation of the Standards of Quality and regulations for the provision of services to gifted students.

The committee recommended that the document be renamed “The Guide for Understanding the Virginia Regulations Governing Educational Services for Gifted Services.”

The committee focused on the revision of the Introduction, keeping in mind the target audience for the document, the reorganization of the table of contents.

More work on both documents is projected for the December 12, 2008 meeting.

During reports from members and groups, several issues were discussed.

Richard Layman reported that the University of Richmond is not giving automatic credit for dual enrollment classes. Other colleges may have other policies. This is identified as an issue for discussion among the directors of Governor's Schools. The state may be in need of a unified clarification policy. Committee members and chairperson Roalf will research more background information and community college articulation agreements. This will be discussed in the upcoming December meeting.

Bedford is participating in a virtual school that includes elementary students.

Jackson River Governor's school has a new director and a doubled enrollment.

Maggie L. Walker is in the search process for a new director in the coming year.

Frederick County is in the third year of the Mountain Vista Governor's school with an enrollment of 800.

Hampton is seeking a satellite campus to the Governor's School.

Southwest Virginia is seeing a very favorable impact of Governor's school upon its students.

Manassas City schools are involved in Children's Engineering projects and staff development, looking forward to the formation of a new Science and Technology Governor's school.

All Project Promise units are now available on the Internet through the DOE web site.

The recent meeting of the Consortium of Gifted Coordinators was extremely well attended.

After a brief discussion of the Bylaws of the Committee, Donna Poland advised committee members to look into the uniform Bylaws for committees the Board of Education is putting forward. These will be discussed in the December meeting.

All were thanked by Chairperson Sheila Roalf for their time and interest in gifted education, and the meeting adjourned at 3:00. A brief meeting of the executive committee followed adjournment.