



**York County School Division
Gifted Education Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday, March 15, 2022, 6:30 p.m.
School Board Office Conference Rooms A/B

Welcome and call to order: Vanna Upchurch

The meeting began with a call to order at 6:32pm by Mrs. Upchurch

Committee and Consulting Members in Attendance:

Simna John, Bethel Manor Elementary

Aubrie Caskey, Dare Elementary

Dr. Francis Erebholo, Grafton Bethel Elementary

Nikki Koszewski, Magruder Elementary

Vanna Upchurch, Mt. Vernon Elementary

Peter Spaeth, Vice Chair, Tabb Elementary

Christina Parrott, Waller Mill Elementary

Laine Briddell, Yorktown Elementary

Lindsey Cook, Grafton Middle

Monica Hyjek, Queens Lake Middle

Colleen Petrie, Yorktown Middle

Janine Felsman, Bruton High

Liz Hass, Grafton High

Deanne Thorson, Tabb High

Louise Casini Hollis, Community Member

Lin Chen, Community Member

Sarah Haywood, Coordinator of Gifted Education

Christina Head, Associate Director of K-12 Academic Services

Brett Higginbotham, YCSD School Board Liaison

Absent:

Dr. Chrysoula Malogianni, Coventry Elementary

Marti Caldwell, York High

Guests: None

Secretary's Report: Louise Casini Hollis

A draft of the January 18th GEAC meeting was posted on the YCSD's website and committee members were notified on February 13th, 2022.

Motion to approve the minutes made by Monica Hyjek. Seconded by Liz Hass.
Motion passed unopposed.

Gifted Education Update: Sarah Haywood

The YCSD Selection Committee (composed of high school teachers and counselors) met to determine nominees for Summer Residential Governor's School programs. There were 13 applications forwarded to VDOE for the second round of reviews (9 academic and 4 visual/performing arts) in addition to 7 world language applicants. All applicants and their parents (both those selected to move forward for state consideration and those who were not) received an email notification from Sarah Haywood regarding their status. Final decisions will be announced by mid-April.

Eligibility meetings were held recently for spring placement, and 44 new students in grades 2-7 will begin receiving services this week. In addition, almost 60 new first graders have been identified as a result of the fall screening, and they are also starting this week. This prompted some schedule changes as additional first grade classes were formed at the Center.

Kindergarten referrals have been submitted and the testing for that round is almost complete. Eligible kindergarten students will participate in half-day seminars during the fourth quarter. In addition, this year's final referral cycle is quickly approaching. Referrals for that cycle are due next week, and testing will take place right after spring break (for placement at the start of the next school year).

Online applications for New Horizons Governor's School for Science and Technology (GSST) students have been submitted for GSST and applications for PAS/PSP are still being accepted. GSST is a part-time daily program for juniors and seniors who take advanced science and math classes at the GSST campus on Butler Farm Road in Hampton, while taking other classes at their home schools. The Pre-Admission Series (PAS) was the program formerly created for 8-10th graders to join the GSST mailing list and stay informed as students expressed interest in potentially joining the program in the future. The PAS program has been rebranded as the Prospective Student Pipeline (PSP) although its goal is the same. Currently within YCSD the number of applications for next year is about the same as in previous years, and the high school counselors have done a great job managing parts of the applications and are definitely appreciated for their work to help make these opportunities possible for students. Please share the webpage with additional information for prospective students and their families: [Information for Prospective Students - New Horizons \(nhrec.org\)](https://www.nhrec.org).

Statewide, a big focus of our advocacy work for gifted education remains “on hold”. The proposed updated gifted regulations document is still due to be returned to the VDOE in June after a review from an outside group. Gifted coordinators will be provided with further direction at that time.

No update from the Odyssey of the Mind Coordinator at this time.

On talent development:

Sarah Haywood explained that the talent development pilot program is currently paused as staff members are shifted to accommodate the number of first graders recently placed. This was to be a two-part initiative this year: whole class enrichment lessons prior to the first grade screening followed by targeted group sessions developed as a result of the screening. Christina Head stated she believes the fall talent development lessons have helped to cultivate the increased number of identified gifted students at Magruder and Yorktown. The talent development pilot will continue next year at those schools. Mrs. Haywood noted that students identified for talent development services typically come from historically underserved groups in gifted education, so they may be English learners, economically disadvantaged, or twice-exceptional.

Additional member questions:

Vanna Upchurch asked who is responsible for testing to which Mrs. Haywood answered that the gifted staff is responsible. In the future they may rely on the counselors or other school-based staff to help with testing. That aspect of planning will be discussed further at the end of the school year as staffing and finances are considered. Mrs. Head also mentioned that York County has more testing cycles than most neighboring school systems. Mrs. Haywood added that the EXTEND program has implemented a trimester schedule that allows new students to be referred, tested, and start pullout services in a timely manner. EXTEND enrollment has returned to a pre-pandemic level.

Peter Spaeth asked about preliminary information regarding the changes to identification testing. Sarah Haywood clarified that CogAT replaces the two ability tests used in the past, the OLSAT and the NNAT. She believes it is more child-friendly with its questions and its timing. The tests and norms are updated, and are more reflective of our current students. Kindergarten and first grades take a paper and pencil test. Grades 2 and up use an online format. Mrs. Haywood noted that the pacing of the online directions is very slow so they are working out the kinks out with the timing of the testing sessions.

Vanna Upchurch asked if first grade identification numbers are up because of talent development. Mrs. Haywood explained they'd like to believe that the series of whole class lessons taught in the fall at the two schools involved in the talent development pilot helped to cultivate the talent but there's not enough data to reach that conclusion. Mrs. Haywood and Mrs. Schwalenberg conducted the talent development pilot, and as they taught the lessons, they modeled several “thinking strategies” during these lessons that classroom teachers can continue to incorporate. YCSD's pilot is based on Fairfax County's Young Scholars model.

Local Plan Update: Christina Head and Sarah Haywood

York County received an excellent review and positive feedback on its local plan from the Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE) technical review. Mrs. Haywood shared the suggestions received for strengthening the current plan as well as commendations given by the review group, and she explained how each item would be incorporated into the draft of the new plan. She noted the gifted plan is provided as a template from VDOE.

Aubrie Caskey also complimented the “robust” gifted program YCSD has, having experienced the gifted program of several local school districts.

Mrs. Haywood then shared a draft of the proposed goals and objectives chart for the upcoming plan, along with feedback/questions that was provided by the Gifted Steering Committee, a group that recently reviewed the draft of this document. There was discussion about the proposed addition of specific academic aptitude identification and services in math. There was also discussion about providing increased support for students in grades 6-12. Mrs. Haywood and Mrs. Head shared that a proposed timeline had not been discussed and that would be forthcoming.

Peter Spaeth asked how they will assess their progress. Sarah Haywood clarified that each objective has a column on the goals and objectives chart to indicate the expected results to occur as they move toward accomplishing the larger goals.

Deanne Thorson asked, “What is the overall goal of participating in EXTEND? Mrs. Haywood responded that, “with its goals and objectives, [EXTEND] helps address the YCSD strategic goal of all students being provided with rigorous learning opportunities and helps ensure that gifted students are growing and learning.” Christina Head added that the goal is to help learners all rise to their full potential.

Simna John asked for clarification on the EXTEND program and how services were provided after that pullout program ended. Vanna Upchurch clarified the variety of options provided along with sharing how staffing and scheduling contribute to the services offered in the upper grades.

Several parents expressed that their children may not participate in EXTEND at the middle school level because of class conflicts, such as with band. Other parents expressed concern that EXTEND ends in 7th grade. Colleen Petrie expressed how important the EXTEND classes are to so many students. Christina Head mentioned that during last year’s steering committee it was suggested to offer enrichment clubs after school to provide additional support to middle school gifted students. Colleen Petrie requested that if offered, the clubs do not conflict with band. Lindsey Cook requested that the clubs offered go beyond a STEM-based focus.

Liz Hass chimed in that she applauds what they are doing in the elementary program. Lindsey Cook commented that her daughter is more resilient because of the explorations she had in EXTEND.

Christina Head invited parents to give more feedback via email if needed.

Old Business: Vanna Upchurch

GEAC Bylaws update

The new bylaws went before the general school board January 24th and were unanimously approved.

Vanna Upchurch noted that applications for GEAC will go out soon. Because bylaws approval took longer than expected, GEAC does not plan to welcome any student applications for the 2022-2023 school year..

Christina Head stated that applications will be accepted for GEAC vacancies later this spring.

New Business: Vanna Upchurch

Annual review letter process

The letter writing committee will plan a meeting for April to begin the planning process for the annual letter.

Parent Comments

Peter Spaeth commented that one of the Tabb Elementary Kindergarten teachers has retired and asked if that would affect this year's Kindergarten referrals.

Christina Parrott asked about next year's plans for a teacher covering Waller Mill Elementary's EXTEND classes. Mrs. Head assured Mrs. Parrott that they are interviewing and hiring teachers to lead those grades.

Adjourned 8:05pm

Next GEAC Meeting:
May 17, 2022, 6:30 pm