

MINUTES

The Maggie L. Walker Governor's School for Government & International Studies Regional School Board Meeting

Thursday, January 19, 2012

9:00 a.m.

I. Call to Order

Don Skeen, Director of the Maggie L. Walker Governor's School Regional School Board, called the meeting to order.

II. Introductions

Each Board member introduced him or herself and stated their locality, (listed in alphabetical order by locality).

Present:

Mrs. Barbara Crawley, *School Board*, Charles City Public Schools
Mrs. Dianne Smith, *School Board*, Chesterfield County Public Schools
Mr. Kevin Hazzard, *School Board*, Goochland County Public Schools
Mr. John Axselle, *School Board*, Hanover County Public Schools
Mrs. Diana Winston, *School Board*, Henrico County Public Schools
Ms. Cora Armstrong, *School Board*, King & Queen Public Schools
Mrs. Sarah Grier Barber, *School Board*, New Kent Public Schools
Mr. Kenneth Pritchett, *School Board*, Petersburg Public Schools
Mrs. Valarie Ayers, *School Board*, Powhatan County Public Schools
Dr. Norma Murdoch-Kitt for Ms. Kimberly Gray, *School Board*, Richmond Public Schools
Mr. Jerry Warren, *School Board*, Prince George Public Schools
Dr. Janet Crawley, **Superintendent**, Charles City Public Schools
Dr. Marcus Newsome, **Superintendent**, Chesterfield County Public Schools
Dr. Jamelle Wilson, **Superintendent**, Hanover County Public Schools
Dr. Pat Russo, **Superintendent**, Henrico County Public Schools
Mr. Charles Clare, **Superintendent**, King & Queen Public Schools
Dr. Robert Richardson, **Superintendent**, New Kent Public Schools
Dr. Alvera Parrish, **Superintendent**, Petersburg Public Schools
Dr. Bobby Browder, **Superintendent**, Prince George Public Schools
Dr. Yvonne Brandon, **Superintendent**, Richmond Public Schools (late arrival)
Mr. Don Skeen, **Director**, Maggie L. Walker Governor's School
Mrs. Barbara Marshall, **Clerk**, Maggie L. Walker Governor's School
Mrs. Megan Marcinkevich, **Deputy Clerk**, Maggie L. Walker Governor's School

Absent:

Mrs. Dudley Olsson, *School Board*, West Point Public Schools
Dr. Linda Underwood, **Superintendent**, Goochland County Public Schools
Dr. Margaret Meara, **Superintendent**, Powhatan County Public Schools
Dr. Jeffrey Smith, **Superintendent**, West Point Public Schools

Also present:

Phil Tharp, Patti Chappell and Wendy Ellis – Administration, Hal Waller - GS Foundation, Julie Weissend – PTSA President, Michele Surat – Faculty Liaison to the School Board and Paul Fleischer, Genevieve Siegel-Hawley and Malesia Fuller of the Richmond Peace Education Center.

III. Approval of Agenda

On motion by Diana Winston, seconded by Valarie Ayers; the agenda for this meeting was unanimously approved.

IV. Election of Chairman

Nomination: Kenneth Pritchett. With no other nominations, on motion by Valarie Ayers, seconded by Diana Winston; Kenneth Pritchett was unanimously elected to serve as Chairman for 2012 of the Maggie L. Walker Governor's School Regional Board. The Director turned the gavel over to Mr. Pritchett.

V. Election of Vice-Chairman

Nomination: Diana Winston. With no other nominations, on motion by Valarie Ayers, seconded by Barbara Crawley; Diana Winston was unanimously elected to serve as Vice-Chairman for 2012 of the Maggie L. Walker Governor's School Regional Board.

VI. Election of Board Clerk and Deputy Clerk

Nomination: Barbara Marshall for Board Clerk. With no other nominations, on motion by Barbara Crawley, seconded by Diana Winston; Barbara Marshall was unanimously approved to serve as Board Clerk for 2012 of the Maggie L. Walker Governor's School Regional Board.

Nomination: Megan Marcinkevich for Deputy Board Clerk. With no other nominations, on motion by Valarie Ayers, seconded by Barbara Crawley; Megan Marcinkevich was unanimously approved to serve as Deputy Clerk for 2012 of the Maggie L. Walker Governor's School Regional Board.

VII. Approval of Minutes

On motion by Valarie Ayers, seconded by Barbara Crawley; minutes as submitted for December 15, 2011 were unanimously approved.

VIII. Recognitions

Saumil Bandyopadhyay ('13-Henrico), accompanied by science department chair Pam Edgerton, was recognized for his 1st Place finish at the 2011 International Space Olympics held in Korolev, Russia, summer 2011.

Ryan Murphy ('13-Henrico), accompanied by co-activities director Paige Hawkins, was recognized for his selection as a Lexus Pursuit of Perfection Weekly winner. Also selected but not in attendance: **Siobhan Rigby** ('13-Richmond).

Faculty member **Matt McGuire** (not in attendance due to We the People District competition) for selection as the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) Richmond Area Teacher of the Year.

IX. Public Comments

The Public Information Period shall not exceed thirty (30) minutes. Each speaker will be allotted three (3) minutes (in the discretion of the Chairperson) to make his/her comments. Individuals representing groups will be allotted five (5) minutes. Citizens must schedule their appearance with the Board's Clerk, not later than 10:00am on the last business day before the meeting at which they desire to be heard.

First speaker, Paul Fleischer, thanked the Board for the opportunity to address them. He began by stating last week he heard one of the young people from his organization, the Richmond Peace Education Center, talking about how excited she was about her upcoming testing for admission to Maggie Walker. "I thought about what I might tell her; I wanted to be encouraging, but I also had to think about the statistics we will be sharing with you today. As an African American applicant her chances for acceptance are very low. I wished her the best of luck, but I also wanted her to be prepared for disappointment and I encouraged her to make sure she had other options. As most of you know, we have been encouraging this Board to address the racial disparity in admissions for many years. In fact, when we first spoke to the Maggie Walker Administration and Board about this issue, the young lady I just mentioned had not yet begun her school career. We are heartened that this Board, the Superintendent's and the school Administration have shown an increased concern about giving black students a fair and equal opportunity to the education that this great school offers. But as you will see in the latest data that we will share with you today, despite the UVA study that you commissioned and some adjustments that were later made to the admissions' process, the numbers have still not improved. Black students are still systematically and persistently excluded from entrance to Maggie Walker. We commend you for the steps you have taken so far, but we are here once again to encourage this Board to take further action and to act with urgency. I would hate to think that bright children just entering school in 2012 would still be faced with this same level of inequity when they apply in their eighth grade year. It's time for action."

The Chairman thanked Mr. Fleischer for his remarks.

Next speaker: Malesia Fuller. “I also represent the Richmond Peace Education Center, but will speak from a parent’s perspective. My daughter Elise was one of two hundred seventy-five African American students who applied to the school last year. We prepared. We talked with Director Fred Morton, Patti Cover (Chesterfield), and the local counselor of the gifted program. Elise was capable of the work; she had been in the Johns Hopkins University CTY program since second grade; she received high honors from John Hopkins for her results from the ACT college exam; in eighth grade she was in an accelerated program taking Algebra II, Physics I, Spanish I, Latin I along with core subjects and extracurricular activities so rigor was not an issue. On the assessment Elise scored in the same stanine (89-95%) percentile of those accepted. She received a perfect score for writing. Her GPA included no grade below a B+. Why was she not selected? Like so many of the two hundred seventy-five black students who applied; they qualified, but the scoring algorithm used yielded less than 3% of blacks being selected. The scoring algorithm that I speak of specifically, is the fact the stanine percentile (89-95%) on the same test earned different points depending on the actual percentile. This practice rewards those with prior knowledge of assessment, better socioeconomics, and those who have had other people go through the program. If you are going to continue to use composite scores, than try to close the gap of achievement between blacks and whites and provide some sense of fairness. Assign a single value to the stanine rather than different values for percentiles. Statisticians will tell you there is no proof that a child who earned an 89% will fair any less than the child who earned the 95%. And since we were told often that there are few slots and only one for blacks, which was something that was really disheartening, I would say to you, consider a lottery. Don’t let these kids who qualify not be accepted. Make it fair. Place them all in a lottery and select their names that way. Thank you.”

The Chairman thanked Mrs. Fuller for her remarks.

Final speaker: Genevieve Siegel-Hawley. “Thank you for giving us the opportunity to speak to you today. ...I want to do two things: highlight a couple of key numbers here that are a lot...you’ll need your reading glasses because it goes over time. ...These are the admissions and enrollment statistics over the past eleven years. ...And the second thing I want to do and I’ll close with it is...review some of the key components of the newly released federal guidance by the US Department of Education and the US Department of Justice that relates to...competitive procedures in the admissions process.”

“So table wise, this is to give you a bench mark, the overview of the Richmond Metro area demographics. I should note that I am defining the Metro here as Richmond, Chesterfield and Henrico; which I realize this isn’t the broader Richmond metropolitan area ... but those three districts send ... make up 85% of the student body here so I am focusing on them. For white students in the Richmond Metro area you will see that twenty years ago they made up almost 60% of our student population; today we have become a majority/minority metro area ... with white students making up 47.3% of students. ... In terms of black students, 2008 saw about 40% of the enrollment, so with that figure in your mind ... could the separate districts (Richmond City is about 87% black ... in their student population, Henrico County has gone up to almost 40% and in Chesterfield its about 30%). ... So hold those numbers in your mind as we go through some of these figures on the next page.”

“Figure 1 is the raw number of black and white students accepted. I pulled these numbers from the much bigger table on the final page. What you really should notice here is that the lines for black and white students applying are much closer together, meaning they apply at a closer rate than they are being admitted. See how far apart those lines are down at the bottom.”

“And then for Figure 2 the percent of students accepted by race, if you go back to Table 1 and remember the overall metro population is less than 50% white, at Maggie Walker the incoming freshmen class last year was about 65% white and 4% black and the metro area is about 40%. So those are huge disparities. ...Table 2 is where I was pulling those pin lines from.”

“If you’ll move to Table 4; I’m sorry I know I’m going really quickly with this...limited amount of time. Table 4 is the acceptance rate by district, for all districts...so over the past eleven years about a quarter of white students who apply to Maggie Walker get in, for black students it’s about 5%. So another way to look at that table is to say that white students are more than five times as likely to get into Maggie Walker as black students. You’ll see that the rates are higher for both Asian and Latino students.”

“And then finally, by district, I have included Richmond City, Henrico and Chesterfield’s trends over time here. ...In Richmond, this is Table 8; remember 85% of students in Richmond City schools are black, 75% of the enrollment from Richmond City to Maggie Walker is white. Just 6.8% of the students from Richmond City going to Maggie Walker were black.”

“Henrico, Table 10, ...I think the key thing here is that over the past eleven years, seven black students from Henrico have gone to Maggie Walker. That’s less than 1% or less than one student per year even though the district is now 40% black. And then in Chesterfield, slightly better; fifteen students over the past eleven years from Chesterfield coming.”

“The second thing I want to call your attention to is ... beginning to think about some possible solutions. I know each of the districts are able to decide their admissions process. ...This is really, really subtle guidance, it’s supposed to help clarify the current legal parameters for considering race ... when you are trying to promote diversity in schools. ...They have given concrete examples of what schools with a competitive admissions process might do when they are trying to promote diversity. ...I would just call attention to Example 2 and 3 ...for you to think more closely. We think it would be reasonable to try to do a trial run with these different strategies with the applicant pool from last year to see what type of enrollment you would get using these strategies.”

“...I’ll close by saying that I am encouraged by the progress that is being made ...but strongly urge you to continue to address the glaring inequities that have persisted. Thank you.”

The Chairman thanked Ms. Siegel-Hawley for her remarks.

X. Director's Report

Mr. Skeen updated the following activities for the Board:

International Language Fair, February 25, 2012: Rachel Johnson ('12-Richmond) and Mrs. Dawn Grois, International Languages Department, addressed the Board extending an invitation to each of the divisions to participate. The Fair is designed to offer a learning experience in a foreign language outside of the classroom setting to the middle school language student. A detailed description is included in the Board packet on page 22.

Additional Updates:

- Proposal to change Board calendar of meetings to allow for work sessions. New proposal or traditional calendar format for consideration under Item XI.a of this meeting
- Proposed Board Orientation, February 1, 2012
- Previously approved (October 20, 2011) international trip to China cancelled due to low enrollment
- Testing
The following divisions will test approximately 600 students on January 28, 2012:
Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, King & Queen, New Kent and West Point

The following divisions will test approximately 600 students on February 4, 2012:
Charles City, Chesterfield, Petersburg, Powhatan, Prince George and Richmond

Testing Snow Date: February 18, 2012

Total testing in 2012 = 1,200 prospective students

Total testing in 2011 = 1,163 prospective students

Total testing in 2010 = 1,130 prospective students

Coming Events: See Page 25 in the Board packet.

At this point individual and group pictures of Board members were taken.

Ms. Cora Armstrong and Dr. Pat Russo left the meeting.

XI. Action Items

a. Proposed Calendar of Meetings for 2012-January 2013

Discussion occurred involving a newly proposed calendar schedule that opens three previous Board meetings for work sessions if needed in place of or in addition to a regular meeting and also included a Board orientation on February 1st (detail listed on page 29 of the Board packet).

The Chair asked for Superintendent input regarding the alternative calendar of meetings. Dr. Wilson remarked that should the Board alter their schedule of meetings, that action would not impact calendars because superintendents would still make every effort to attend as they want to have the same information as the Board. Further, Dr. Wilson suggested the Board may consider in the future if monthly meetings are required in general to conduct its business as various pieces are put into place such as policy review or review of a strategic plan, and perceives this proposal as a first step in redirecting or reorganizing meetings that would lead to a step two and step three.

Dr. Newsome noted the alternative calendar proposed by Mr. Skeen is consistent with discussions the Superintendent's Steering Committee has had and remarked this schedule will allow the Board a measure of flexibility they currently do not have. Also, there seems to be a consensus among the superintendents that perhaps it is not the most efficient use of everyone's time to meet just because the date is on the calendar and that the alternative proposal flexibility will give members an opportunity to gauge the need.

Mrs. Winston started a discussion regarding adjusting the currently devised recognition section of meetings where students and faculty are presented, offering a proposal for a possible assembly program where Board members, Superintendent's, parents and other students would be involved. Mr. Pritchett agreed that Mrs. Winston's point was worthy of note and asked Board members if there was interest in adjusting the February agenda accordingly. Mr. Axselle proposed quarterly recognitions, with Mrs. Ayers remarking that the Board decided to utilize the current format as a way to make recognitions timely and to limit the encroachment on instructional time for the students. In conclusion, Mr. Skeen offered to develop a recognition plan(s) for Board review in February.

Mr. Axselle proposed the Board consider a policy for Board members that serve on an active committee in a given year would be ineligible to serve on any other committees during that same year; however, no action was taken by the Board.

On motion by John Axselle, seconded by Barbara Crawley, Option 2 Calendar of Meetings for 2012-January 2013 was unanimously approved.

b. New Course Proposals

There being no discussion, on motion by Valarie Ayers, seconded by Barbara Crawley, the addition of French Conversation and Film (VCU FREN307) and Classical Mythology (VCU EUCU311) to the curriculum offering was unanimously approved.

Dr. Robert Richardson left the meeting.

Dr. Norma Murdoch-Kitt left the meeting.

XII. Materials for Board Review

a. Custodial Management Services #2011-2

Phil Tharp was asked to review specifications and the procedures taken regarding bidding a custodial management service four-year contract to be rendered in the 2012/2013 academic year with three (3) one-year renewal options. Pre-Bid and Bid Opening Sheets from December 8, 2011 and January 6, 2012 respectively are included in each Board packet.

After his report Mr. Tharp responded to questions from Board members.

John Axelle made a motion to **amend the agenda** changing the custodial management services contract award from review to action; seconded by Barbara Crawley, the motion unanimously carried.

Mr. Axelle made a motion to accept the recommendation of Phil Tharp and **award the custodial management services contract to GCA Services**; seconded by Kevin Hazzard, the contract award was unanimously approved.

b. International Trip Proposal by Mrs. Dawn Grois 'Rebirth' – Interdisciplinary Trip: Berlin, Prague & Munich, March 29-April 8, 2013

In this proposal Mrs. Grois will include a teacher from each department at MLWGS and plans to participate in a cross-curricular journey to the above cities that fulfills the mission of this school to develop broad based educational opportunities and develop student understanding of world cultures. Colleagues will work as a team to create a curriculum which focuses on making connections to specific sights/areas with the underlying theme of 'rebirth.' The complete proposal and itinerary was provided to Board members outside of their packet.

Mrs. Grois anticipates costs will be \$3,300/student, and with Board approval she will sponsor fundraising efforts to aide students needing financial assistance in addition to a subsidy request from the Foundation.

Mrs. Winston asked how many students and faculty are required on this trip to which Mrs. Grois responded "I could do it with twelve, but we are hopeful for forty," stating the bus could accommodate forty-eight people (including chaperones at a 1-6 ratio). Mrs. Grois noted this proposal includes an administrator accompanying the group to oversee supervision.

As follow-up, Mrs. Winston asked Mrs. Grois to address concerns regarding the availability of alcohol in Germany where the drinking age for beer and wine is sixteen. She responded

that a) as the group is contained it offers more protection and b) each student and parent must sign a contract of student expectations which addresses this issue; should that agreement be violated that student(s) will be sent home.

The specific contract to which Mrs. Grois referred was adopted by this Board June 6, 2005 – Amended January 6, 2011. The section regarding alcohol follows:

“#5 That Student failure to obey the laws of the sites of the trip, the laws of Virginia and the MLWGS Standards for Student Conduct, including, but not limited to, those prohibiting the possession, use, or distribution of drugs, alcohol, or tobacco (even in countries where such possession, use, or distribution is permissible by law), will mean termination of participation in the program with NO REFUNDS, the Parent/Guardian agreeing to cover all resultant expenses to return the Student home and the discipline of the Student;”

Mrs. Winston asked that this issue be addressed in the application.

One Board member asked if this trip was open to students in all four grades, to which Mrs. Grois stated yes, with first come first serve placement until filled.

As an observation, Mrs. Winston stated she learned from the directors search process that MLWGS stakeholders have a strong interest in having an international perspective here. She remarked that “one candidate made an interesting point...the United States of America is a part of the international community. People visit our country all the time for the very reasons Mrs. Grois listed in her proposal. No, we have not been bombed yet to their extent, but we have 9-11 that people can visit. I see this school as a school of creative thinkers, leaders and problem solvers. What about the rebirth of Detroit, Michigan? How is that going to occur? What about the rebirth of Richmond, Virginia? That is an ongoing process; you’re sitting right here in it. How is that going to occur? This is a city that after 1865 did look like that (*referring to bombing photos projected by Mrs. Grois*) and has experienced a physical rebirth. But economic times...again, I’m asking you to think broader than just it’s not all there. We now are at a point in our history, and we are not as old as these countries or these cities, but we are at a point in our nation right now, just like they are economically, we are experiencing a rebirth and we are having a real hard time right now getting born. And how are we going to do business from now on when we have the federal government telling us what type of light bulb to use? I’m just asking you to think, when you think international, we are international and people come here from all over the world all the time and I think it’s just as important that we travel and see where we’re born and look at our history as we go back and look at this.”

Mrs. Grois replied that comparison (countries, cities and history) is part of their mission and the learning process.

In conclusion, Mrs. Winston stated, “But they have to go there. Detroit, Michigan today; and I’m just speaking for myself personally, is probably the closest...well, Petersburg is trying to experience a rebirth itself, right here in the greater Richmond area. So it’s an issue that we are looking at in our locality and you all are the problem solvers. You are the

creative thinkers. Why aren't you going before City Council? Why aren't you speaking to the Governor? The idea pool is here, why aren't we doing that? I don't think there is much we can learn here about how they did that. Pollution...I haven't been in Prague for eight years but it was black because of the pollution from automobiles. And cleaning these buildings was very costly and it was a big problem; same thing in Berlin when I was there last time. It will be interesting to see how green they really are and want to be, but again, I haven't been there recently so I'm not going to judge on that. I just think we are missing the big picture here. If you want to make an impact, if you want kids to come here, than do something here. And help right here with information you know about all these places, put it to work right here."

Mr. Hazzard applauded Mrs. Grois for having the disposition and experience that she brings for this proposal, and made suggestions regarding the timeline of preparatory meetings with students and parents, recommending that notification of student expectations be available early as well as obtaining signed agreements among all participants and parents of said expectations.

The Chairman thanked Mrs. Grois for her presentation.

Mr. Skeen thanked Board members for their questions and observations on this issue, stating that part of the upcoming orientation session will include some issues around international travel, policies and development of a strategic plan. One part of procedures and policies that this Board approved in 2011 was the international travel piece which does include an information session and expectations for students and parents, and includes a sign-off waiver. Board orientation on February 1st will include this review.

XIII. Informational Items

- Planning Committee Minutes, December 6, 2011
- Student News:
 - MLWGS Foundation Funds Class Trip to Washington
 - Cross Country Runners Win National Honors
 - Forensics Team Takes Second Place
 - MLWGS Athletes Named to All-Metro Fall Sports Teams

XIV. Superintendent's Steering Committee Meeting

New Chair, Dr. Alvera Parrish stated there was no formal report at this time. Items and issues that have been discussed by the Superintendent's have already been addressed in this meeting.

XV. Director's Search Committee

Mrs. Winston, Chairman, reported that five candidates were interviewed on January 13th. Three recommendations will be presented to the Superintendent's Steering Committee for their consideration.

Responding to an earlier request by Mr. Skeen to address the search committee and give input on his view of the director's role, Mrs. Winston asked the Superintendents to consider giving Mr. Skeen some time to address them because a forum was never available with the committee.

On behalf of the committee Mrs. Winston formally sent commendation to Dr. Russo regarding the work of Mr. Howard Banks. Additionally, Mrs. Winston commended the members of the search committee and interview panel for their professionalism.

At this time the committee is awaiting a response from the Superintendent's Steering Committee to act on their recommendation.

Dr. Newsome reported that members of the Steering Committee that are able to stay after the conclusion of this meeting will review the recommendations from the Search Committee.

XVI. Closed Meeting

None

XVII. Certification of Closed Meeting and any action, if necessary, as a result of closed meeting.

None

XVIII. Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss, on motion by John Axselle, seconded by Barbara Crawley, the motion was unanimously approved and this meeting was adjourned.

XIX. Next Meeting

February 16, 2012 at 9:00am. MLWGS Board Room, 1000 N. Lombardy St., Room 226, Richmond, VA 23220. 804-354-6800 x2190 or x2111.

Kenneth Pritchett, Chairman

Don Skeen, Director

Minutes Recorded by:
Barbara Marshall, Regional Board Clerk