

MINUTES

The Maggie L. Walker Governor's School for Government & International Studies
Regional School Board Reorganization Meeting
1000 N. Lombardy Street, Richmond, VA

Thursday, January 21, 2016

9:00 a.m.

I. Call to Order

Jeffrey McGee, Director of Maggie L. Walker Governor's School, called the meeting to order.

II. Moment of Silence

The Director called for a moment of silence.

III. Pledge of Allegiance

Alum Austin Higgs led the pledge of allegiance.

IV. Introductions

Each Board member introduced him or herself and stated their locality (listed in alphabetical order by locality). Welcome, new members Dr. Javaid Siddiqi and Mr. John Wright.

Present:

Dr. Javaid Siddiqi, *School Board*, Chesterfield County Public Schools
Mr. John Wright, *School Board*, Goochland County Public Schools
Mr. John Axselle, *School Board*, Hanover County Public Schools
Mrs. Michelle 'Micky' Ogburn, *School Board*, Henrico County Public Schools
Dr. Deborah Marks, *School Board*, Hopewell 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
Ms. Kristen Larson, *School Board*, Richmond Public Schools
Dr. David Gaston, **Superintendent**, Charles City Public Schools
Dr. Marcus Newsome, **Superintendent**, Chesterfield County Public Schools
Dr. James Lane, **Superintendent**, Goochland County Public Schools
Dr. Michael Gill, **Superintendent**, Hanover County Public Schools
Dr. Pat Kinlaw, **Superintendent**, Henrico County Public Schools
Dr. Melody Hackney, **Superintendent**, Hopewell Public Schools
Dr. David Myers, **Superintendent**, New Kent Public Schools
Dr. Eric Jones, **Superintendent**, Powhatan County Public Schools
Mrs. Renee Williams, **Superintendent**, Prince George Public Schools
Dr. Jeff McGee, **Director**, Maggie L. Walker Governor's School
Mrs. Barbara Marshall, **Clerk**, Maggie L. Walker Governor's School
Mrs. Megan Perez, **Deputy Clerk**, Maggie L. Walker Governor's School

Absent:

Ms. Martha Harris, *School Board*, Charles City Public Schools
TBD, *School Board*, King & Queen Public Schools
Mr. Reeve Ashcraft, *School Board*, Prince George Public Schools
Dr. Carol Carter, **Superintendent**, King & Queen Public Schools
Dr. Linda Shifflette, **Interim Superintendent**, Petersburg Public Schools
Dr. Dana Bedden, **Superintendent**, Richmond Public Schools

Also present:

Phil Tharp and Dr. Wendy Ellis– MLWGS Administration
Lynn Reed, Lisa Williams, Joy Davis, Robinette Cross and Deborah Snagg – MLWGS Staff
Laura Lewis and Burt Hazelwood (late arrival) – GS Foundation
Peggy Feldmann – PTSA President
Anne Hayes – PTSA Advocacy Committee
Leslie Hausser – School Advisory Council
Sydney Bland – Citizen
Christopher Turner – Parent of Current Student
Austin Higgs – Alum (Class of 2009)
Ralph Westbay (late arrival) – Richmond Public Schools
Katie Pokorny, Krystal Turner, Jaylaan Bell-Colley, Taylor Farrar, Stephanie Jones and Jayla Rose - MLWGS Students

V. Approval of Agenda

On motion by Deborah Marks, seconded by Kenneth Pritchett, the agenda for this meeting was unanimously approved.

VI. Election of Chairman

Nomination: John Axselle was nominated by Valarie Ayers. There being no other nominations; on motion by Valarie Ayers, seconded by John Wright, John Axselle was unanimously elected to serve as Chairman for 2016 of the Maggie L. Walker Governor's School Regional Board. After congratulations, the Director turned the gavel over to Mr. Axselle.

VII. Election of Vice-Chairman

Nomination: Sarah Barber was nominated by Valarie Ayers. There being no other nominations; on motion by Valarie Ayers, seconded by Kenneth Pritchett, Sarah Barber was unanimously elected to serve as Vice-Chairman for 2016 of the Maggie L. Walker Governor's School Regional Board. The Chairman congratulated Mrs. Barber.

VIII. Election of Board Clerk and Deputy Clerk

Nominations: Barbara Marshall was nominated for Board Clerk and Megan Perez for Deputy Board Clerk by Jeff McGee. There being no other nominations; on motion by Kenneth

Pritchett, seconded by Deborah Marks; Barbara Marshall, and Megan Perez were unanimously elected to serve as the 2016 Clerk and Deputy Clerk respectively of the Maggie L. Walker Governor's School Regional Board. The Chairman congratulated both Clerks.

IX. Announcement of Superintendent's Steering Committee Leadership

Per agreement among the Superintendent's, Dr. Marcus Newsome will serve as the committee Chair until July 1, 2016, at which time Dr. Michael Gill will assume leadership. *[Not announced at table: Dr. David Myers will serve as Vice-Chair.]*

X. Approval of Minutes

On motion by Valarie Ayers, seconded by Deborah Marks, minutes for the regular meeting of December 17, 2015, were approved with John Wright abstaining, and all remaining members voting aye.

XI. Recognitions

- **Katie Pokorny** ('16-Chesterfield), Lexus of Richmond, **Pursuit of Perfection Leadership Award** weekly winner, January 11, 2016.
- **Congratulations Mrs. Renee Williams** appointed Superintendent of Prince George Public Schools.
- **Distinguished departed Regional School Board Member in absentia: Dianne Smith** – Chesterfield School Board, MLWGS Regional School Board 2012-2015.

XII. Public Comments

The Public Information Period shall not exceed thirty (30) minutes. Each speaker will be allotted three (3) minutes to make his/her comments. Individuals representing groups will be allotted five (5) minutes.

The following comments are not recorded verbatim:

Lisa Williams and **Joy Davis**, MLWGS faculty sponsors, spoke on behalf of **Peer Mentors (PM)** to explain the purpose of this program, which is to promote and encourage academic excellence by providing personalized academic and social support for minority students at Maggie L. Walker Governor's School. Founded in 2005/06, PM is patterned after the peer advisory program at UVA. Since its founding, PM has branched out to include students from other minority groups and from Walker's smaller counties where there might only be one or two students. Each year we match freshmen/sophomore students with a junior or senior to allow them a first line of questioning when it comes to academic and social adjustments at Maggie Walker (MW). Two special activities occur every year for our students and they are; 1) we take students on a trip to bond outside of school taking their learning out into the community, and 2) the donning of the Kente stoles ceremony at graduation. The Kente cloth is a West African tradition that we use as a rite of passage for seniors as they move away from their four years at MW, and as a way to recognize and thank them for their years of work in the program.

Ms. Davis distributed a packet of letters from former MW alum that describe what PM and the Kente stoles meant to them. A copy of those letters will be retained in the permanent record of this meeting.

Stephanie Jones (Henrico), **Taylor Farrar** (Richmond), **Krystal Turner** (Richmond), **Jayla Rose** (Henrico), and **Jaylaan Bell-Colley** (Richmond), Class of 2016 students and **Peer Mentor Members** shared their experiences as minority students at MLWGS.

Ms. Jones stated she wanted to speak to the true value of PM during her four years at MW. As the only minority student coming from Wilder Middle School that year, this added to the feeling of alienation as most people didn't even know that school; it created an unintentional divide between myself and other students at MW. Peer Mentors helped anchor me into this school by having their emotional support as well as teaching me academic excellence. The mentors showed me how to pursue things I never thought were imaginable, even when I was accepted here, and that meant a lot to me. As a mentor myself now, I can really see the change that I have made for my mentee, the same way my prior mentor saw changes in me. I wouldn't want to see that go, in fact, I want to see the program expanded. A big part of Peer Mentors is the Kente cloth, which in part represents the transition from struggles to moments of happiness and real involvement in the community, and to transition as I go to college. It means so much to me and I hope to keep that memory and I also hope it can be continued in the graduation ceremony.

Ms. Farrar read a prepared statement: For the past few years that I have been a student here at Maggie Walker, our club Peer Mentors has had a ceremony, as Ms. Davis explained, called the donning of the drapes near graduation time. At first, I didn't really know what this meant or what the drapes entailed, but as they explained I started to understand that it was a tradition deeply rooted in West Africa which was used to honor people in the black community. As Stephanie said, just being accepted into this school has been a tremendous honor and graduating is an honor in and of itself as it shows we've overcome all the stress, all the exams, all the rigor that this school encompasses. I just wanted to express that this school was built on the accomplishments of African Americans and I feel that we should be able to share our accomplishments by wearing the Kente stoles and by participating further in the PM program.

Ms. Turner referenced the handout of alumni letters that board members received earlier from Ms. Davis and Mrs. Williams. She stated that when they [*alumni*] heard about the situation they felt as though they needed to express their concerns. Ms. Turner then read briefly from one alum letter, Kameron Adams, Class of 2009: "To me that [*Kente cloth*] was a symbol of honor and pride. It paid homage to the people who fought so I could have an education at Maggie L. Walker. In essence, it honors Ms. Maggie Lena Walker herself, which our school is named for. By having them taken away, it is if all of that is being ripped away as well, and it is disgraceful. My Kente clothe was as equally and arguably more important than my cords from the National Honor Society, National Spanish Honor Society, and National Italian Honor Society. If you took away the Kente clothe you may as well have taken away the other cords I was adorned with. There should be no question of the relevance and importance of Peer Mentors to students at Maggie Walker if they choose to be a part of it, and is something I hope to see flourish with support over years to come."

Remarks by **Ms. Rose** were not audible on the recorder for transcription.

Mr. Bell-Colley touched on the family aspect [*of Peer Mentors*] stating mentors, even those that weren't his mentors, check up on me to see if I need any help in my core subjects. It meant so much to me and I probably wouldn't be here but for my mentors.

Mr. Christopher Turner, parent of Krystal Turner addressed the board with a parent's perspective on the advantages of the PM program and the Kente stoles being worn at graduation. He began with a brief description of his own educational record. Part of his history was spent at Henrico High School where he was the only African American student in each of his classes. Upon graduation in 1971, there were four African-Americans to graduate. In many ways, he stated, he identifies with these students. Mr. Turner distributed notes to board members he assembled about graduation regalia that included the MW mission statement, commitment to diversity, a brief biography of Ms. Maggie Walker, and the origins of the Kente cloth. Mr. Turner read a brief passage from his notes: "the Kente cloth has its origins with the Ashanti Kingdom, and was adopted by people in the Ivory Coast and many West African countries. Legend has it that the Kente was first made by two Akan friends who went hunting in an Asanteman forest and found a spider making its web. The friends stood and watched the spider for two days then returned home and reproduced what they had seen. The term 'kente' is derived from the word 'kenten' which means a basket. The original kente fabric weavers used raffia fibers to weave cloth that looked like a basket often referred to as 'kenten ntoma' – meaning basket cloth. Each cloth has a name and a meaning that is derived from an African proverb, an achievement, moral values, literature, as well as other sources. Over time, the use of kente fabric became more widespread. However, its importance has remained and is held in high esteem in the Akan family and the entire country of Ghana. Kente may be used as a special gift item during such ceremonies as child naming, graduation, marriage; as it represents social values, history, political thought, ethics, and philosophy. It may also be used as a symbol of respect for the departed during funerals and ancestral remembrance ceremonies.

The Chairman directed Mrs. Marshall to email Mr. Turner's notes to board members as there was an insufficient number of copies for distribution. A copy will also be kept in the permanent record of this meeting.

Austin Higgs, Class of 2009 addressed the board about his experience as a minority student at MW and what Peer Mentors and the Kente stoles mean to him. Mr. Higgs started with greetings and then informed that his class was the first to innate the program [*PM*]. He said, "coming to MW was pretty much the highlight of my academic career. I came up with pretty much nothing and from a family that was not traditionally educated themselves, so for me to make something of myself was really important to them. Coming to MW was probably the catalyst for all the other work I had done to build myself up." I was extremely excited and wanted to do the best I could and make my family proud, but for the first time in my life, I was challenged academically, so much so that I wasn't sure if I was good enough. At that time, it was hard to get through every day, and as I looked at my peers I saw they were having a much easier transition, it took me a really long time to figure that out. I probably didn't know until after I graduated it was really just a system of privilege that had missed me. What I did notice at MW, was that equality was a big deal, but what I didn't notice was an attention to equity. There are a lot of challenges that face the black community that is outside the control of MW, but that doesn't mean MW can't influence the outcome of some affirmative action and consideration. So when PM came out it's what changed everything for me; my grades improved almost immediately because I had finally gotten some guidance on how to navigate this uncharted territory. Without PM, I don't know if

I would have been empowered enough to make it to graduation and that Kente cloth is a symbol that represents all that I have overcome and all that I will overcome. I will take everything that I have learned from PM and use it in my life. I would love to see the stoles still given out at graduation because I don't think people truly understand how powerful that is for somebody who has been disenfranchised; it means everything.

The following remarks are verbatim provided by Lynn Reed about Faculty Council

Good morning! I am **Lynn Foshee Reed**, and I am a mathematics teacher here at the Governor's School and a member of the MLWGS Faculty Council. The following remarks are from the Faculty Council.

We welcome the new members of the MLWGS Regional School Board, and we thank all of you for your service to our school.

In 1995-96, the Faculty Council of the Governor's School for Government and International Studies was created. It consists of 5 elected members from the faculty and staff, each of whom serves two years. This year we come from Art, English, Global Studies, Mathematics, and support staff. Some of us are relatively new to the school, and some of us are "old-timers."

Since this is the 20th anniversary year, we wanted to tell you about the mission and share some of the highlights and accomplishments from our history.

In the By-laws of the Faculty Council, it states:

It shall be the mission of the Faculty Council to address concerns of the faculty, as a whole or in part, and to provide a forum for conflict resolution on matters that interfere with the delivery of instruction and professional growth by:

1. Serving as a sounding board for ideas, proposals and concerns
2. Proposing recommendations and solutions to matters brought before the Council
3. Supporting and nurturing professional development
4. Establishing a direct avenue of communication and participation between the faculty and the following bodies:
 - ✓ Administration
 - ✓ Specialists
 - ✓ Teams
 - ✓ PTSA
 - ✓ MLWGS School Board
 - ✓ MLWGS Foundation
 - ✓ Regional Planning Committee

Recently we conducted a review of our 20-year history, and to this end we consulted past Faculty Council representatives, former administrators, Faculty Council meeting minutes and documents, and School Board meeting minutes to better understand the role Faculty Council has played in supporting communication among faculty as well as between faculty and other groups.

We found that The Faculty Council has consistently been a channel for two-way communication between administration, faculty, and the Board. Over the past 20 years, there were numerous instances in which Faculty Council worked with administration to facilitate changes that benefited students, teachers, and the school community overall. In the past, Faculty Council has helped facilitate discussion and collect data on issues affecting faculty such as the following:

- exam guidelines and the exam exemption policy,
- the extra workload involved for AP teachers the first year of the AP Audit,
- workload inequity (class size, number of preps, etc),
- implementation of PowerSchool,
- teacher and administrative evaluation processes,
- investigation of “sick bank” policies,
- international travel concerns.

Let me share next an excerpt from the 2003 minutes of the Faculty Council:

Mr. Hunt indicated that he had appreciated the input from Faculty Council throughout the year and felt it helped focus administration's efforts on matters that concern many staff members and that the basic format for communication is working. ... all agreed that the school environment should be one of flexibility, professionalism and trust.

More recently, the Faculty Council is working with MLWGS members of the Virginia Education Association to investigate establishing our own affiliate or whether to remain as part of the Richmond Education Association.

As you are probably aware, Dr. McGee prefers a top-down, strict chain of command model, and Faculty Council will thus be guiding individual faculty members to report concerns to their department chair, but also Faculty Council will gather common concerns and raise such issues to the appropriate groups so as to make sure that problems affecting the atmosphere and delivery of instruction receive necessary attention.

We met with Dr. McGee’s designee, Mr. Tharp, for the first time of this school year on Tuesday, we are hopeful that the Faculty Council will continue to fulfill its mission as we enter the third decade of service to the school.

The Chairman thanked today’s speakers. As a follow-up, Mr. Pritchett asked for an update regarding the concerns of speakers pertaining to the Peer Mentors program and the use of Kente stoles at graduation. The Director indicated that update would be part of The Director’s Report.

XIII. Director’s Report

A. Verbal Updates

- The Director expressed gratitude to Dr. Lane for his service as Superintendent’s Steering Committee Chair 2014-2015.

- Graduation Regalia Update: Before the winter break leadership began consideration of our graduation regalia. In prior years, there has been a very strict protocol of only honor cords permitted at graduation. However, given the breadth and depth of all that our students do and all that is important to them, we proposed expanding the opportunity for students to wear regalia to include other service or academic honor societies and approved regalia reflecting significant school-related leadership, service or academic competitive achievement in enduring MW organizations. This expansion would include cords, stoles or other adornments. With change comes some anxiety; however, our leadership team believes it is important and in-line with our mission and vision statement to expand this protocol. Answering Mr. Pritchett's question, the Director stated he felt today's comments reflected the importance to students of having an opportunity to wear their stole, an opportunity that they previously had not had.

However, Dr. Marks noted confusion as alum letters and student remarks today suggest they previously did have that opportunity, and now believe it is being taken away. Dr. McGee spoke to the range of options; i.e., students wearing nothing [*regalia*] to wearing anything they wanted. The leadership team never proposed wearing nothing. We have always advocated for expanding opportunities for students to wear their regalia. Mr. Axselle requested input and feedback from the divisions regarding what regalia they allow with Dr. Marks adding that in Chesterfield each of the thirteen high schools has their own autonomy to do what's right for their clientele. Dr. Gill and Dr. Hackney affirmed the same practice in their divisions.

Mrs. Ayers reminded this discussion does not relate to policy for board approval, it's about a practice that has been followed. Dr. McGee stated revised regalia standards are being considered based upon updated vision and mission statements. A question followed relating to if PM has been advised of a proposed regalia expansion, to which Dr. McGee responded they had. When leadership took this issue up we started with 'we are going to expand,' so the 'what' is in place, the 'how' is what we are working on now. Dr. Jones clarified: a final decision has not been made at this point on all organizations; that process is still ongoing. Dr. McGee agreed with this statement and discussed how feedback is being obtained from faculty and students.

Dr. Siddiqi asked if Peer Mentor students wore their stoles last year at graduation, and if so, what has led them to believe they will walk across the stage not wearing them this year. Further, did the previous board make a decision that those stoles were no longer going to be permitted? Is there a board action that we are supposed to be considering or is this a conversation that we won't impact? Dr. McGee responded that under current practice only honor society cords are allowed and Peer Mentors did not wear their stoles last year, they put them on under their garments and exposed them after they walked across the stage. We are advocating for expanding so students can be proud of wearing them and trying to clear up erroneous communication that is out. Dr. Siddiqi suggested the best path forward would be to end today's conversation and allow Dr. McGee time to develop a presentation that includes his process of engaging students and faculty in this matter and what the different considerations are so this body can have an informed conversation if this is going to be an item for board discussion.

Mrs. Ayers requested alumni letters shared with the board today also be made available to faculty and staff. Dr. McGee will also provide the board and superintendents with currently followed regalia protocol.

In response to a question from the Chair, Dr. McGee specified this topic will be a matter for board awareness as to what is currently being undertaken.

- Admission testing will occur on January 23rd for Goochland, Hanover, Henrico and King and Queen. Admission testing on January 30th for Charles City, Chesterfield, Hopewell, New Kent, Petersburg, Powhatan, Prince George and Richmond. Testing snow date is February 6h. Regional Evaluation of student assessments is scheduled for February 17th.

1,077 students will be tested in 2016.

- Board and Superintendent pictures will occur at their February meeting.
- Save the date: Night of the Dragon Auction, Saturday, February 27th.
- Capitol Day – Monday, February 8th.
- Fulbright Scholar from Uruguay visiting MLWGS in February.
- The Washington Post's list of America's Most Challenging High Schools 2016, information has been submitted for inclusion. A reminder that Newsweek's new criteria preclude Walker's participation.
- Niche.com ranking submission has been submitted for inclusion in their 2017 listing.

B. Coming Events

January 21, 2016 through February 18, 2016 (see page XIII.b for details)

XIV. Unfinished Business

None

XV. Action Items

- a. Code of Conduct for Board Members and**
- b. Code of Conduct for Clerks (*a + b voted as a slate*)**

Codes of Conduct for Regional School Board Members and for Clerks is grounded in model codes of the Virginia School Board Association. There being no changes from the first read, the Chairman called for a vote to approve both codes as a slate.

On a motion from Valarie Ayers, seconded by Deborah Marks, both the Codes of Conduct for Regional School Board Members and Clerks was unanimously approved.

c. 2016 Regional School Board Calendar of Meetings

There being no changes from the first read, the Chairman called for a vote. On motion by Deborah Marks, seconded by Sarah Barber, the 2016 Regional School Board Calendar of Meetings was unanimously approved.

d. Policy Proposals

The following were submitted from the Policy Steering Committee for Board approval:

Policy No. 3011	School Counseling Program
Policy No. 3013	Driver Education Amended
Policy No. 4001	Student Transportation Services

Dr. McGee stated each proposal was seen by the Board in December. Only Policy No. 4001 was edited per request adding “the driver” to language in the second paragraph.

On motion by Kristen Larson, seconded by Sarah Barber, the aforementioned policies were unanimously approved as a slate.

XVI. Materials for Board Review and/or Discussion

a. Custodial Management Services FY17

Documents supplied for Board review included the bid opening (included vendor bids from GCA Services, Jan-Pro, and Snow’s Professional Cleaning), bid pricing (annual, monthly, and supervisor and housekeeper rates) and a bid comparison sheet.

Assistant Director Phil Tharp is recommending Snow’s Professional Cleaning Services for a contract in FY17 based on his diligent review of Snow’s current clients. The Director will request Board approval at its February meeting.

b. School Photography Contract FY17

Documents supplied for Board review included the request for proposal and bid opening sheets (included vendor bids from Strawbridge Studios, LifeTouch, Orrie Gaines Photography, and Keepsake Images).

The Director is recommending Strawbridge Studios for a contract in FY17 and will request Board approval for this action at its February meeting.

XVII. Information Items

- Finance Steering Committee Minutes, December 15, 2015

- MW GSMA Hosts Regional Conference with Participants from 14 High Schools in RVA and Beyond
- Dr. Mary Frances Berry at MW on February 12 speaking on civil rights
- Kevin Mootz on his Mentorship Experience with The American Civil War Museum
- National English Honor Society Writing Contest Winner is MW Sophomore
- MW Fencer takes Gold

- Lynn Foshee Reed and Hana Reed Win 4th Annual Pat Taylor Teaching Award

- Goochland Middle Wins National Honor
 - Dr. Newsome added that Winterpock MS in Chesterfield also made this list. Nonetheless, this is a great accomplishment and what it says is other middle schools may look to these schools as examples of best practices. Mr. Kinlaw added that Short Pump in Henrico is also on the list!

XVIII. Superintendent's Steering Committee Report

Dr. Newsome stated that seven superintendents were present at their morning meeting with the primary item for discussion being the FY17 budget. There was a consensus among the group to support the proposal recommended by the Director.

The other item for discussion was the approaching inclement weather event.

XIX. Closed Meeting

None

XX. Certification of Closed Meeting

None

XXI. Announcements/Additional Discussion

A Board work session on the proposed budget will follow the conclusion of this meeting.

Mrs. Ayers asked if anyone was capable of donating blood prior to the approaching storm to please do so.

Lastly, Dr. Lane asked what methods were used to advertise RFP's and apologized for not asking his question during that portion of the meeting. Dr. McGee replied it is on the website and posted in the newspaper. Dr. Lane suggested future advertising also be posted on EVA for a wider broadcast to vendors.

XXII. Adjournment

On motion by John Wright, seconded by Deborah Marks, the meeting was unanimously adjourned.

Next Meeting

February 18, 2016, at 9:00 am. MLWGS, 1000 N. Lombardy St., Room 153, Richmond, VA 23220. 804-354-6800 x2190.

John Axselle III, Chairman

Jeffrey McGee, Ph.D., Director

Minutes Recorded by:
Barbara Marshall, Regional Board Clerk