

Maggie L. Walker School Advisory Council 2020 -2021

End of Year Report

Michael Larkin - Chair

It is my pleasure to provide this report on the activities of the Maggie Walker Governor's School for Government & International Studies (MLWGS) School Advisory Council (SAC) for the 2020 – 2021 year. My name is Michael Larkin, and I am the 2020 - 2021 Chair of the SAC. I am the parent of a graduating senior in the class of 2021 and have been a resident of both Chesterfield County and the City of Richmond during my daughter's tenure at MLWGS. It has been an honor to serve on the SAC and in particular contributing as a member of the Strategic Plan Committee in 2019-2020. I am here today to provide you a summary of SAC's work during this past school year.

16 representatives served on SAC this past year, as follows:

- 6- Parents (representing various school districts)
- 4- Students
- 3- Faculty and Staff
- 1- Director's appointee
- 1- Gifted Coordinator
- 1- Administrative Representative

Despite the unprecedented challenges of this year, the SAC remained focused on key goals and our agenda included both near-term and long-term objectives. The SAC also pivoted mid-year to reduce the time commitment for our volunteer members and to provide some much-needed space for stress-management. We also recognized the opportunity to expand access to SAC through our virtual meeting format. The work of the SAC had both immediate impact and provided a foundation for meaningful contributions to Strategic Plan elements in the near future. This work was accomplished under the most challenging of circumstances, which speaks to the integrity and dedication of our SAC members.

The work of the SAC falls into three categories:

- Ad-hoc advisory services
- Standing committees
- Special committees

Ad-hoc advisory services:

As an advisory group, the SAC responds to requests from the Director for recommendations or subject matter advisory assistance. Two ad-hoc advisory requests were fulfilled by the SAC during this year:

- Gabriella Watson and Madison Kang served as panelists for the Virginia Secretary of Education's forum on Governor's School admissions policies in September 2020.
- A subset of SAC members, led by Rachel Loving, researched tradeoffs related to removing numerical grades from official MLWGS transcripts and prepared a recommendation for the Director.

Standing Committees:

Calendar Committee

The Calendar Committee created the academic calendar for 2021-2022. This process was informed by the 2020-2021 academic calendar, as well as draft calendars posted by MLWGS's participating divisions. Three parents, one faculty member, one student, and one member of the Planning Committee contributed input. The committee was chaired by Max Smith, MLWGS Assistant Director, who is a valuable standing member of the SAC. The standard start date calendar for 2021-2022 was submitted to the school board for first read in March and was adopted in April. Changes include additional religious observances in a step toward greater cultural inclusivity. The committee also completed an early start draft for 2022-2023, which models shifting the calendar's start and end dates forward by two weeks for better alignment with APs, SOLs, and VHSL sports. The draft will be submitted for first review in June with anticipated adoption in August. Communication will be extensive to students, parents, and faculty this summer.

Nomination & By-Laws Committee

The Nominations Committee accepted applications, conducted interviews, and held elections to replace the various openings to replace outgoing SAC members. This committee was chaired by Karen Townsend. There was a significant increase in interest for serving on SAC, and committee members conducted thorough interviews with parents and students. One of the more significant long-term accomplishments of the committee was to codify the processes so future SAC members will be able to leverage process templates in subsequent years.

Policy & Handbook Review and Revisions

There were no new Handbook or Policy revisions reviewed by SAC this year.

Special Committees:

The SAC had several Special Committees this year, which were aligned to both short and longer-term Strategic Plan objectives.

Removing structural barriers to student engagement:

This committee was chaired by Rachel Loving and is also a key component of the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan. The objective of this group is to determine the elements which inhibit the participation of students, particularly those who are members of underrepresented populations, in educational and social activities at MLWGS. This team included representation from all constituencies on the SAC, with significant contributions from students Gabriella Watson and Chase Gunlicks. The committee facilitated the popular Black History Month assembly in February, which included a "Maggie Walker House" video, African American poetry performed by the Slam Poetry Club, and a keynote presentation from Faithe Norrell, a Maggie Walker family member. This team also prepared and executed a student survey related to the racial climate at MLWGS, the results of which were presented to the Regional School Board in May 2021.

Special Committees, Cont.

Campus life during COVID

This committee, co-chaired by student Gabriella Watson and parent Rachel Gable, was formed to address gaps in broad student engagement programs resulting from COVID restrictions. Addressing this gap with a sense of urgency, the committee worked with Max Smith, Paige Hawkins, SCA Class Officers the PTSA, and the Foundation to plan and execute several events which drew significant student participation and contributed to a sense of community during the first two quarters of the school year. Events included: A drive-in movie, Chalk/Yoga Day, and a Virtual Game Night. The committee's work was concluded in conjunction with the return to campus in March, 2021. The focus of this committee on countering the impacts of isolation and contributing to the community culture were clearly demonstrated in the results.

MLWGS Strategic Marketing Plan:

Inspired by discussions during the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan development, this committee investigated factors which may be relevant to parent and student choice of MLWGS, including market perceptions and higher education selection. The committee was co-chaired by students Chase Gunlicks and Virginia Warren, with guidance provided by parent Colleen Hall. This committee's work is seen as a multi-year effort, with the work completed this year forming a foundation for ongoing efforts. A framework was proposed for additional research and prioritization of criteria for development into a concrete marketing plan in 2021-2022.

Prospective Students Early Engagement:

A component of the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, this committee formed the approach to engage with elementary schools to provide awareness of MLWGS, access for interested parents and students, and a visible presence of role models in constituent communities. Given the limitations presented by COVID, the decision was made to delay tactical plans until restrictions were lifted. We expect that this committee will have a significant contribution in the next year as a carry-over.

SAC Marketing and Communications Plan:

The purpose of this committee is to increase the awareness of SAC amongst students, parents, and alumni to provide transparency into the work of the SAC and engagement with constituent groups. One of the more significant accomplishments was to move SAC artifacts and document management onto MLWGS Sharepoint. This will ensure documents and sustainable processes will be established for future SAC members. This committee will be a carry-over into the next year.

Looking forward and in conclusion, three of our four Executive Committee (EC) members will be returning for 2021-2022 and have been re-elected to their respective positions. The 2021-2022 SAC Executive Committee will be: Michael Larkin, Chair; Ed Coleman, Vice Chair; Karen Townsend, Secretary; and Rachel Gable is our newly elected Historian. The SAC EC functioned exceptionally well as a team under difficult circumstances, and we believe the continuity of leadership will allow the SAC to provide even greater impact in the coming year. On behalf of the entire SAC membership, thank you for the opportunity to serve MLWGS and its constituents.