

# Maggie L. Walker Governor's School for Government and International Studies School Advisory Council

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## *Minutes from SAC meeting on May 11, 2021*

The virtual meeting was called to order (via Zoom) at 7:33 a.m. by Chair, Michael Larkin

**Members Present:** Michael Larkin, Ed Coleman, Karen Townsend, Denise Rasmussen, Max Smith, Rachel Loving, Rachel Gable, Leigh Anne Ratliff, Virginia Warren, Gabriella Watson, Madison Kang, Colleen Hall, and Karen Smith-Will. A simple majority was present for quorum at the time the meeting was called to order.

### **Approval of Minutes and Agenda**

- The agenda for today's meeting was approved.
- Minutes from the March meeting were approved.

### **Nominations and Elections**

- Karen T. gave a summary of the slate of candidates for Parent (PTSA) 3-year positions on SAC. The Nominations and By-laws committee made its selections following interviews with 7 candidates. All were highly qualified and multiple candidates mentioned interest in working on student re-orientation/socialization following the long period of virtual school. There is the potential for these individuals to serve on special SAC subcommittees next year even without election to the full board.
- Using Google Forms, Michael collected 10 affirmative votes from members present for the two nominees: Julie Solomon and Jill Blondin. Both are parents of rising sophomores at MLWGS, live in Chesterfield County, and will serve in Parent (PTSA) roles on SAC from 2021 to 2024.
- Nominations for SAC officers were requested and this voting will take place at the June meeting. The Nominations and Bylaws committee is continuing to work on identifying new faculty and student representatives.

### **Numerical Grades on Transcripts**

This is a new topic which SAC is being asked to study and make a recommendation. Rachel L. provided background information:

- Numerical grades began appearing on transcripts in the Spring of 2017 and continued for a 3-year period to cover students who had initially been graded on a 7-point scale before the current 10-point scale took effect.
- When the Class of 2020 graduated last summer, the Counseling Department polled rising seniors as to their feelings regarding numerical values. 46% said they preferred to keep

numerical grades on transcripts, 26% said they wanted numerical grades removed, and the remaining respondents were undecided or did not have an opinion. Absent a strong desire to make changes to the current practice, MLWGS decided to table the issue and keep the numerical values.

- This year, as parents of younger students have asked to receive transcripts for various reasons, it came to their attention that numerical values appeared on official transcripts that were sent to colleges—a fact that some parents and students were unaware of until spring of junior year when the transcript is shared as a part of the formal “college meeting” with the student’s senior counselor. The question has been raised again, this time formally, as to whether this level of detail is still necessary since it is no longer needed to provide context for the shift in grading scales.
- The Counseling Department is currently exploring options for students to have more readily available transcripts, where parents and students can access a consistent version of an unofficial transcript whenever needed.

SAC members discussed the topic:

- Rachel L. suggested polling students and parents at all grade levels and contacting about 5 colleges.
- Denise wondered if universities moving away from SAT and ACT testing might want that added information. Rachel L. stated that with tests optional in recent years, colleges are looking at every piece of information available about a prospective student. Colleges may like to see the information, but does it put too much pressure on the student to go for every single point?
- Gabriella asked what other high schools do. Rachel L. said Chesterfield County only has letter grades on transcripts. Other school systems could be queried as well, but the general practice is to present only letter grades.
- Virginia mentioned she had talked to groups of parents and said their concerns were that zeros were appearing for classes taken outside of MLWGS (summer PE in Chesterfield County, for example). Audit classes are also not able to present accurate numerical values.
- Rachel G. suggested we think about the theoretical grounding of showing the number and what are we signaling. MLWGS must take a stand about what the school values. Leigh Anne concurred that we want to do no harm.
- The group agreed there is a level of urgency to have this addressed for rising seniors. Rachel L. will put together a little committee of counselors and key individuals to launch a survey of the student body. She will reach out to a couple of schools to inform the drafting of survey questions.

### Committee Reports

- Removing structural barriers to student engagement – [A early draft](#) of the Racial Climate Survey was shared with SAC members. Rachel L. and Gabriella gave a quick summary, but time did not allow for detailed examination or discussion by the group. Michael suggested that a separate meeting be set up for interested SAC members to further study the findings and recommendations.

- Calendar – *(written report from Max)* The Calendar Committee has completed their work for the year. Our standard start calendar for 2021-2022 was submitted to the school board for first read in March and was adopted in April. It is now on mlwgs.com. Changes include additional religious observances in a step toward greater cultural inclusivity. The committee completed an early start draft for 2022-2023. This would shift the calendar's start and end dates forward by 2 weeks for better alignment with APs, SOLs, and VHSL sports. Dr. Lowerre has previewed the concept with the school board and received positive feedback. 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. I would like to commend all members of my committee for a year of hard work.
- Campus life during COVID – This committee's work concluded several months ago. *(Additional comments in written report from Gabriella)* We made this decision because of school being back in session and the numerous on-campus events coming down the pike. The current events scheduled for upperclassmen include junior/senior prom and graduation. Between the drive-in movie in the fall, Chalk/Yoga Day, and Virtual Game Night, we feel like we have contributed to the campus life before things picked up to where they are now. I want to shout out to Mr. Smith for being the point person for the drive-in movie and making that event possible and commend my entire committee for all our work throughout the year!
- Prospective students /early engagement – *(written report from Virginia)* We gathered much insight from Dr. Loving during a meeting with her and met to discuss how the information could be used going forward. We thank her for her involvement and willingness to answer our questions. We also met to discuss how our plans throughout the year have formed a strong foundation for plans going forward next year with marketing to Elementary and Middle Schools and Colleges.
- Nominations and by-laws – *(written report from Ed)* I am in the process of preparing the balloting and application procedures for two groups: the faculty/staff SAC representatives and the student SAC representatives.
  - For the faculty/staff: I have sent out an initial interest form and collected responses. Thirty-one (31) people have responded, a little less than 50% of the staff; of that number, only two people indicated they would be willing to serve on SAC. All 31 nominated other candidates, some of whom did not respond to the survey. My next step is reaching out via email to those who were nominated and did not indicate they would be unwilling to serve and to those who indicated they would be willing to serve, and I will create a digital ballot based on those responses. Voting will take place next week and I should have results by our June meeting.
  - For the students: I posted information about the SAC application process in the 10th grade Schoology page and on the Director's Sunday Bulletin. Twenty students emailed me expressing their interest in applying for SAC representative. I have an application package from Dan Brown from two years ago that I will distribute to students this week, with a deadline for completion next week. Karen T. has offered to help me interview a smaller group of candidates.

## **Announcements and Closure**

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 a.m.