

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

Minutes from SAC meeting on June 8, 2021

The virtual meeting was called to order (via Zoom) at 7:32 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, Karen Smith-Will, Lynn.Pleveich, and Chase Gunlicks. 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 May meeting were approved following a request that they be amended to include the presented racial climate survey results.

Nominations and Elections

- Ed reported on student and faculty recruitment for next year's council. The committee interviewed 6 of the 15 students who applied and ultimately selected Sean Fang and Audrey Paulson. All of the candidates were very well qualified, and the interviews helped sort out who best complimented SAC's current membership. MLWGS faculty members elected Joy Cobb (counseling) and Kyleen Teranna (French) to join SAC next school year.
- Michael briefed the group on various appointed positions: Max Smith will be continuing on in the MLWGS administration role; Karen Smith-Will has been reappointed by Dr. Lowerre for a 1-year term. Dr Lowerre has two additional appointment positions to fill, and SAC is requesting that one represent alumni and the other come from an RPS middle school.
- Lynn Pleveich was approved by board vote for another two-year position as gifted specialist.
- Executive committee elections were held, with Michael, Ed, and Karen continuing on as Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary respectively. Rachel G. was newly elected as Historian.

Numerical Grades on Transcripts

- Rachel L. followed up on last month's special topic concerning numerical grades on transcripts. Over the past month, a small committee made up of counseling, administration, teachers, students, and parents drafted a survey which was launched 1 week ago. 184 survey responses were received: 53% were students, with others being teachers, staff members, and parents. Most respondents were not aware prior to receiving the survey that transcripts included numerical grades. 57.6% stated they prefer MLWGS discontinue the practice of including this

level of detail. Chesterfield and Henrico don't include numerical values, nor does RPS' Thomas Jefferson.

- Michael asked if colleges were queried and Rachael said no, due to the short turnaround time of the investigation. She suspects colleges would say they want as much information as possible. The concern is that a straight-A transcript looks less 'perfect' if the numerical grades are there.
- Chase stated that he feels there are larger issues to the transcript and GPA than the numerical grade for individual classes. Chesterfield gives additional half-point weight to honors while MLWGS does not. Leigh-Anne noted her observation as a parent is that MLWGS classes are more rigorous than same-named classes at other schools. She feels the work needs to be properly quantified. Chase stated that MLWGS students who score 4 or 5 on the AP exam often don't have an A grade, while students in county schools scoring 3 on the AP exam do receive A grades. Ed Coleman said it's almost impossible to make grading and GPA a uniform process. Some colleges will weight AP scores higher and have their standard metrics. The reputation of the school is known by most but not all college admissions.
- Virginia summarized the conclusion of the small committee was that numerical grades should be removed from transcripts and that counselors could work with individual students who have concerns about the change through comments and letters of recommendation.
- Gabriella asked about the COVID (short-year) transcripts and expressed a desire for numerical grades to add clarity there. Rachel L stated that P/PS scores are explained on the transcript.
- Max also served on the committee and added his conclusion that removing numeric grades would help some students, hurt others, and for most it will be a mixed bag. He appreciates the counseling department being willing to work with students who have concerns.
- Leigh Anne made a motion to recommend remove numerical values and develop a process for students who have concerns. Ed seconded and the motion carried with unanimous approval.
- Virginia asked that recalculation of the GPAs also be tackled immediately. Michael noted that this was not part of the request which came from Dr Lowerre but could be included in future SAC efforts.

Committee Annual Reports

Michael has created a draft of the Annual Report for SAC and he will be presenting the report to the Regional School Board next week. He highlighted a section of the report which mentioned the unprecedented challenges from the 2020/21 school year and how well the committees worked together on many goals.

He thanked Colleen, Denise, Chase, and Gabriella for their service as they are stepping off of SAC.

Announcements and Closure

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 a.m.