

Maggie L. Walker School Advisory Council 2021- 2022

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 2021 – 2022 school year. My name is Michael Larkin, and I am the Chairperson of the SAC. I am the parent of a 2021 graduate of Maggie Walker and am completing a three year appointment to the School Advisory Council. It has been an honor to serve on the SAC and as a contributing member of the Strategic Plan Committee in 2019-2020. I am here today to provide 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

This year continued many of the themes from last year: A focus on the school culture and student engagement with recognition that we are still working within a period of unprecedented change. We have remained cognizant of this in providing flexibility for SAC members for time commitments and access to participation. Despite many distractions, the work of the SAC continues to provide momentum to achieve components of the Strategic Plan.

The work of the SAC falls into three categories:

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

Ad-hoc advisory services:

SAC did not receive any requests for Ad-hoc advisory services this year. The SAC remains available to the Regional School Board for the development of insights or recommendations in the future.

Standing Committees:

Nomination & By-Laws Committee

The Nominations and Bylaws Committee accepted applications, conducted interviews, and held elections to replace the various outgoing SAC members according to guidelines set forth in the Bylaws. The committee was co-chaired by Karen Townsend and Ed Coleman, with additional support from Rachel Gable and Leigh Anne Ratliff. Interest in serving on SAC remains high among students and parents at the school, with many more qualified candidates applying than openings available. Interviews were conducted with six students and seven parent finalists, leading to the eventual selection of two students and three parents to join SAC in 2022-2023. Two teachers will also be joining in 2022-2023 as new members of the SAC.

I recommend that this committee review the Bylaws of the School Advisory Council in the next year to propose "housekeeping"- type updates to committee scope and membership recommendations.

Policy & Handbook Review and Revisions

This standing committee spent this year gathering information to inform potential recommendations for GPA weighting of honors classes. This team conducted surveys to assess both student impressions and college admissions professionals' impressions of how Maggie Walker's GPA weighting policy may impact student demand for these courses and college admissions. Survey results were not available at the time this report was created, and the work of this committee will continue in the fall.

Special Committees:

The SAC started out with several Special Committees. However, there was enough overlap in scope to combine them into a single special committee.

Student Culture and Engagement:

This year, The Student Culture and Engagement Subcommittee had the goals of eliminating barriers to student participation at the school as well as working to create an even more accepting and inclusive environment at Maggie Walker by organizing and facilitating more accessible activities and events. One of the most significant accomplishments that this subcommittee drove was the creation of a more encompassing recognition of Black History Month at Maggie Walker, which included many events hosted by a wide variety of clubs and organizations. Activities this committee helped facilitate included art and writing contests and a newly-introduced scavenger hunt that took place throughout the month of February.

Additionally, the committee worked to promote guest speakers at Maggie Walker and assisted in promoting an open dialogue day for students of Maggie Walker with the goal of facilitating cultural understanding. Alumni from the prior Maggie Walker High School were also invited to share their experiences as students of the-then segregated school, providing current students a better understanding of the heritage and history of this building and the students who walked the halls before them.

In the coming year, this committee would like to address student feedback related to the desire for an anonymous feedback process for students to escalate opportunities or issues without fear of negative consequences. Additionally, promoting more student engagement by reducing or eliminating barriers of participation, such as transportation, fees, and scheduling remains an objective for further investigation and recommendations.

Black History Month events will also be revised to increase student engagement and interaction. Other cultural recognitions will take place next year, including Arab American, Desi American, and Native American cultures, as well as Women's History Month. Finally, a revision of standard student club policies to promote inclusion and access will be considered next year. The Student Culture and Engagement Subcommittee has made significant progress in improving student life at MLWGS for the past two years, and this primarily student-lead committee continues to be a beacon for positive change at Maggie Walker.

Looking forward and in conclusion, I'm very excited to introduce our Executive Board for 2022-2023, which was elected by the School Advisory Council last Tuesday. Rachel Gable, a parent from Richmond will serve as Chair and was the Historian on the Executive Board last year; Rachel Loving, faculty member will be Vice Chair; Lee Anne Ratliff, a parent representative from Richmond will serve as Secretary; and Dr. Lisa Williams is our newly elected Historian and will engage student members of the SAC to drive the outreach capabilities for the Council. The incoming board has a wealth of experience both with Maggie Walker and the functioning of the School Advisory Council. I believe that there could not be a better qualified team to lead the SAC as we move forward in a less disruptive status quo. We've developed a culture of collaboration, inclusion, and respect over the last several years, and I look forward to seeing an even greater impact of the School Advisory Council in the future.

I'd also like to express my gratitude for the work of the outgoing members of the School Advisory Council and the Executive Board, particularly Karen Townsend who served as Secretary for the past two years and was a catalyst for efficiency on the SAC. I'd also like to acknowledge Ed Coleman, who served as Vice Chairperson on this year's Executive Board and will be continuing as a Director's Appointee in the upcoming year. Ed has been an invaluable asset for SAC and for the Executive Board, serving as a liaison between the SAC, the Regional School Board, and the Strategic Planning Implementation Team. Lastly, I want to recognize the outgoing student representatives, Virginia Warren and Madison Kang. These two outstanding individuals went beyond simple participation, leading committees and taking ownership of the objectives of student culture and engagement for the past two years. After three years on the School Advisory Council, I'm still amazed and humbled by the capabilities and contributions of the students who step up to serve on SAC.

I would also like to close by encouraging this board to increasingly leverage the School Advisory Council for input and recommendations. Its power comes from the diversity of experiences of the SAC members and the ownership those members feel about Maggie Walker Governor's School's Mission and Vision.

On behalf of the entire SAC membership, thank you for the opportunity to serve MLWGS and its constituents.