

**Douglas County School District
Gifted and Talented Task Force Meeting
Monday, February 17, 2015
4:00 p.m.**

***Minutes Approved
March 25, 2015***

MINUTES

Present

Committee Members: Brooks, Manya – Parent CCMES
Robbe Lehmann – Board Member/Parent
Jennifer Sphor – GT Teacher PHES
Kellie Esterby – GT Teacher GES/MES
Kristy Reck – GT Teacher CCMES/SES

District Personnel: Brandon Swain, Director of Education Services – Area 4

Call to Order:

Mr. Swain called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was taken.

Public Comment:

Students from a few of our elementary schools spoke in regards to the Gifted and Talented Program. These students expressed their concern with the changes in the GT Program for next year with the 6th grade moving to the middle schools. One concern is that they will not be prepared for Advanced Placement courses in high school should they not have GT at the middle school. Two of the students provided information from a study conducted by a researcher at Vanderbilt University Peabody College. The research shows that gifted students encounter road blocks that prevent them from achieving the highest of their ability and that they will not meet their full potential unless given access to advanced classes and education programs that place students with their intellectual peers. The research also states that GT students need ability, motivation and opportunity. These students indicated that they have ability and motivation, but need the opportunity provided to them. These students would like to see the GT program move to the middle school with 6th grade.

A comment was made regarding Sandoval's tax increase passing. If the 700 million dollar influx is given to education, with 500 million of that supposedly being allocated to the GT program, what will that mean to the GT program and what will it mean if it did not pass.

Mr. Swain stated that funds are usually distributed per capita – the size of the district determines what each district will receive. If funds are received, it would be determined at that time how they would be used. If no funding is received, Douglas County is still obligated to provide a GT program according to NRS and under IDEA.

Approval of Minutes of the meeting of October 27, 2014:

Mr. Lehmann motioned that the minutes of October 27, 2014 be approved as presented. Seconded by Ms. Sphor. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Swain did an overview of the agenda. Mr. Swain noted that the 6th grade transition to the middle school was requested as an agenda item, but was not included. Reason being that the transfer process of teachers has not been finalized and no definite decisions have been made at this time.

Deeper discussion of push-in versus pull-out GT Programs:

A description of push-in and pull-out was given, as requested by Mr. Lehmann. Ms. Spohr, the GT teacher from Piñon Hills Elementary School gave an example of how this is done at her school. Ms. Spohr stated that this might be done slightly different at each school site. A push-in is when a GT teacher goes into the K-3 classrooms and teaches critical thinking skills with the entire class in order to identify students that should be tested for GT. This also benefits the entire class, as they receive the higher thinking services. In the 2nd and 3rd grade classes are those students in the GT program so they receive benefits from the push-in as well. A pull-out is where the GT students come out of their classroom to their GT teacher and are given instruction in STEM activity and high level thinking skills - this fulfills their 150 minutes of GT instruction time. At some schools you may have a group of GT students in a class, which would be considered a cluster, you may push into that class and work with this group of students to further challenge them. Push-in benefits all of the students. Pull-out times are essential. The 150 minutes determines the pull-out time. The group agreed to continue the pull-out for grades 2-5 with opportunity to push-in when appropriate. In grade 6 continue pull-out program. Continue the use of clustering, as stated in the Administrative Regulation for all grades. Mr. Swain agreed to take this information to the middle school meetings that are currently taking place.

Quantifying benefits of the GT program for GT students and other students:

Mr. Swain did some research. There are pros and cons on the quantifying programs and it has a lot to do with the kind of program that is put in place at the various schools and different school districts. Mr. Swain spoke to the Director in Washoe County. They do not have any quantifiable data other than CRTs and MAP testing. There is nothing categorical on this topic. The reason for gathering this information is to justify keeping the GT program. The GT program is definitely beneficial. There should not be an issue in justifying the reason for keeping the GT program to the Board.

Substitutes for GT teachers:

Discussion ensued regarding subs for GT students. Students are not getting what they need when the GT teachers are out. Administrative Regulation 320(a) states that there are certain types of teachers that do not get substitutes when they are out and GT teachers are on the list. It is stated in NRS and under IDEA that the district is required to provide a GT program for students. There are no stipulations in NRS on the amount of time for the program, only that there has to be a program provided. Washoe County does not provide substitutes for their GT teachers. They currently have two situations in place: There are teachers that do GT only and this is at their Magnet schools. These teachers may have a GT endorsement, so they would get a sub. They also have teachers that do push-ins which are at the majority of the schools and they do not get subs. It was stated that since the GT students fall under the same category as the special education program, and the special education teachers get subs, that the GT teachers should also be allowed to get subs. The GT and special education students are at different ends of the spectrum, but still fall under IDEA; therefore, should receive the same instructional benefits.

Alternative to present process for GT testing including identification methods for ESL students:

Mr. Swain spoke to Washoe County and they currently use a combination of verbal and non-verbal tests, as we do. They have an administration review on students based on CRT, MAPS, and classroom grades in order for students that are recommended by the teacher, but do not meet the testing criteria be able to enter the program. There are students that might qualify that are receiving Sped or ESL services. Washoe County feels that these services are initially more important than GT because students need to be at a level in order to be engaged in GT. The

group will continue to look for alternatives on being diligent in identify students for the GT program. This has to be fair and unbiased. Mr. Swain will have a further discussion with Washoe County on how their administrative review process works. The WISK was used in Douglas County in the past and that may be an option again.

Public Comment: No public comments were offered.

Future Agenda Items:

- What will 6th grade look like next year at the middle school?

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

Submitted by,
Margaret Guzman
Douglas County School District
Education Services; Area 4