Governor's Schools - Diversity/Equity/Inclusion Group
07.24.20 | 11:00 am - 12:30 pm

Attendees

- Atif Qarni
- Dan Gecker
- Senator Lucas
- Delegate Tyler
- Delegate Bulova
- Delegate Bagby
- Delegate Guzman
- Delegate Keam
- Senator Locke
- Senator Surovell
- Senator Barker
- Senator Hashmi
- Michael Bolling
- Scott Braband
- Marty Smith
- Rosa Atkins
- Micheal Gill
- Anna Bonitatibus
- Robert Lowerre
- Brendon Albon
- Mike Robinson
- George Fohl
- Karen-Keys Gamarra
- Rasheeda Creighton
- Dinan Elsyad
- Genevieve -Siegal Hawley

Agenda

- Secretary Qarni introduces the group's purpose and Co-Chairs
- Dan Gecker and Senator Lucas - Co-chairs for group offer comments
- Rest of the group members go around and introduce themselves
- Michael Bolling, VDOE presentation on Governor's schools and Gifted Programs.
- Genevieve Siegel-Hawley presentation on the underrepresentation of certain groups in Governor's Schools or Gifted Programs and best practices/recommendations.
- Open discussion
- Co-Chairs close meeting

Notes

- Atif Qarni starts off the meeting introducing the group and the Agenda
- Dan Gecker (Chair) speaks on his experience with Governors' Schools and his hopes of a more diverse future for these schools.
- Senator Lucas (Chair) speaks on her personal experience of the lack of diversity in the Governor's Schools.
- Rest of the members introduce themselves
- Michael Bolling (VDOE) presents on Governor's schools and Gifted Programs
    - Senator Barker – What is the definition of economically disadvantaged?
        - Students are identified by their connection to their free/reduced lunch statues.
    - Delegate Bulova – How Appomattox's system of recruiting is different from other schools?
        - Focuses on Fine Arts
        - Not your typical focus on academics
        - Uses almost the exact same selection process as Maggie Walker
        - Many students coming from diverse schools
    - Senator Locke – Is diversity being identified by a student's economic status?
        - Bolling - Diversity comes in many forms; Gender, race, ethnicity, location; economic statues
    - Senator Surovell – Placed legislation a few years ago that would cap the number of students coming from each school. – Segregate by race and income. Have any of these school tried to fix these issues by capping the number of students from each middle school?
        - Maggie Walker – No
        - TJ – No
    - Delegate Keam – Are there any requirements in the Virginia Code that require Diversity as a criteria? If not, does the campus have any guild lines on these Diversity? Legal requirements
        - Sec Qarni – Some but the main purpose of this group is to come up with some sort of legislative plan or suggestion to solve this lack of diversity. We want legislative proposals.
            - No current legislation
                - Funding – to revive more funding from the Governor then they (Governor Schools) need to fix issues with diversity
    - Delegate Guzman – Provide a starting point, what can we do different to start solving the problem?
- Genevieve Siegel-Hawley presents on the underrepresentation of certain groups in Governor's Schools or Gifted Programs and best practices/recommendations.
    - Dinan Elsyad– Provide an example of a interest based model in other schools.
        - Code RVA – Lottery Based admission only based on interest
            - Wanted to mirror the community they served

    - Senator Hashmi – Focus on what's being done in early elementary school
    - Delegate Tyler - Are students who are homeschooled/private school eligible to apply to Governor's schools
        - Yes
    - Delegate Guzman – During the application process do they collect information about race?
        - No (Genevieve Siegel-Hawley – Who is collecting this data?)
- Secretary Qarni – With families prepping students as early as 3rd grade, what is a solution to that? Families who are financially not able to provide this prep for the students.
    - Genevieve Siegel-Hawley – We could eliminate the testing as a whole.
    - Rosa Atkins – Best way to change our gifted model is to change the test that determines gifted students.
    - Genevieve Siegel-Hawley – We need to provide more test prep and opportunities for all students
    - Delegate Guzman – Parents would still need to go out and seek that information and provide it for their kids – We need a more transparent process – need to let parents know about these programs during orientation – Lack of information since they are economically disadvantaged
- (Name) If the Model is eugenically biased, then how is moving forward with the same bias model going to solve anything? Wouldn't this model put a chain on black/brown students from the beginning.
    - Dinan – The whole model itself is bias and has issues
- Ann – We have a golden opportunity as a test to measure the selection of our students. We can change the standards and change the requirements for admissions.
- Brendon Albon – Second round of gifted assessments in 6th grade in his previous work as a gifted director – were able to find a more diverse group when doing this
    - Even tho we don't select our own students we have the opportunity to go out and give more information about our schools, so they have the interest to apply. – Advertise the governor's schools more in other schools – Helps reach more students – students that aren't branded as gifted (Academics or Aptitude)
- Karen-Keys Gamarra – Talk a little about mental health from the pressure of parents and academics – The pressure causing a lot of anxiety of getting into a specific school.
    - Also reaching out to underrepresented communities
- Barker – Standardized testing is a significant issue
    - The toxic atmosphere created when you have such a small number of minority students. We need to send the right message.
- Rasheeda- The personally experiences of students is critically important.
    - Her research has shown a lot of negative experiences of Black students
    - How do we address the cultural issues/ lack of representation in teachers and staff as well.
- Senator Surovell – His experience: surrounding himself with other brilliant students pushed him to work harder and get better grades.
    - Is there any research that shows kids who go to certain school actually help their communities later on? Are they doing good work after they graduate?

Next meeting

- Planning Solutions
    - Tangible solutions and ideas
- 3 Buckets
    - Legislative
    - Regulatory
    - Executive

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Notes

- Gecker opens up the meeting – welcoming everyone and starting the discussion
- Senator Surovell bring up his suggestion from the Matrix – "Program be ended unless they proposed changes are met certain metrics of improvement" Asking If the rest of the group felt the same way.
    - Responses
        - Gov. Schools give some students opportunities they would not be able to get anywhere else.
        - Some students don't have the opportunity to apply to specialty programs in their schools.
        - We should work on fixing the problem before looking at ending the whole program.
    - Elsyad – Applied to a Gov. school because she felt that's where she would get the best education.
- Solution – Providing more specialty programs in schools for kids who are unable to apply and attend a Gov. School
    - Senator Barker – Speaks on his daughter's experience in a Gov. School which helped her with getting into a good college, etc.
        - We need to provide more opportunities and options and help them develop in the way that is best for them individually
- Siegel-Hawley - What does the research say about how effective these schools are.
    - Higher Education
        - More opportunity and better chance of getting into a good school
        - Elite Illusion – students who get into a strong but not elite school preform about the same and get in about the same into a good higher ed school
    - Work on creating strong schools more than elite schools especially for those who don't have the accesse
- Senator Locke – Faulty foundation
    - Concept of Eugenics (puts black and brown students at a disadvantage from the start)
    - Counselors and their effect on brown/black students
    - Are the preparing the kids or are they pushing them away and discouraging them from applying
    - Testing
        - Testing may not be the best criteria t0 determine if a student is good for the school
            - Testing anxiety
- Delegate Bulova
    - Agrees with a lot of points from Senator Surovell

    - There are a lot of ways to be talented – we need to broaden the gifted programs
    - We should provide these programs in Home Schools
    - Provide extra support for home schools so they can accommodate the talents and gifts of the students they have.
- Fohl –
    - Purpose of a Gov. School
        - Just because something has become a certain way doesn't mean it couldn't be used for something good.
        - Gov. Schools were created to provide a service that other schools can't afford or weren't able to do for.
        - Students who can't afford a private school can attend a Gov. School with other students who share their same talent and grow that talent
    - Divisions that send and support Gov. Schools
        - If Divisions can't support a proper pipeline, then the applications won't be properly representative of the community
        - Admissions and selection and support from division schools.
- Senator Hashmi – Same concerns as Senators Surovell and Locke
    - Home schools can often be bias as well since they are determined by the wealth of the community
    - If we can reimagine schools to help, make them more diverse and enhance the diversity of these schools to provide more opportunities for each student
- Delegate Guzman – Ultimate goal is to have the best schools all over Virginia
    - Let's keep our focus on fixing the racial disparities in the Gov. Schools and let's create the best system for all students no matter their tax bracket.
- Delegate Kory – let's not be destructive but let's restructure
    - Create adequate representation for the community
    - Let's not end these opportunities but let's do our best to fix them and if that doesn't work out we can look into creating new structures.
        - Many students and families who are depended on these structures.
- Sec. Qarni
    - We are all in agreement on the issues, lets focus on the improvements that can help us set a tone for the Government to help fix this all over schools.
    - Ultimate goal as a state – rezoning to address school boundaries
    - We have a chance to set the tone for this as a state.
- Gecker – What is the evidence of outcomes?
    - Test Scores stayed the same pretty much
    - Greatest prediction how well a student does in school
        - Their socio-economic statues
        - Their peers socio-economic statues
        - What would it do to the other students left behind?
    - Looking at the teachers as well as the students
        - We need to see who were putting in front of the students

- Senator Surovell – We need to set some specific goals and requirements for schools to hit in a certain time, so we know if what we have put in place has become helpful.
    - Middle School Cap from each school in the area
        - Housing discrimination problem
- Gecker – Hear from the directors of the Gov. Schools on their suggestions
- Lowerre –
    - Part of the fundamental problem is that some divisions only send 1-2 students
        - So a cap would be good for larger districts but irrlevent for the smaller ones who only have 1 or 2 middle schools
    - Would be difficult to squeeze equity out of the larger disctritcs
    - Needs more physical and tangible
    - Lottery System with some score system could be effective
    - It just needs to be actionable and we need to find a way to yield some results
    - We are willing to work on these challenges; we are on boars but just need some muscle to fix these problems.
- Gecker – What steps have been taking to fix some of the problems you have been seeing?
    - Lowerre – Problem – Large % of students coming in is the testing
        - Communities of people who have figured out the system to help push their students into Gov. Schools
            - Stacks the deck in the favor
            - Makes them look good on paper
            - Private schools with specific curriculums to push them into a Gov. School
        - Lots of students apply but are just not given the opportunity
        - Kids weather gifted or not, if they are not in that direct pipeline, they are not able to get into the gov schools
- Senator Lucas – Our students are only as successful as the opportunities that are available to them. They are only limited to the amount of expose that is available to them.
- Delegate Bulova – Best approach would be to go through the recommendations and figure out what the next steps are
    - Find a simple way for us to each give an opinion on each solution
- Bonitatibus – coming home from visiting a family that has a long commute to school
    - We have many families who sacrifice a lot for their kids to attend the school
    - Wants to make sure that nothing becomes a barrier for kids not to attend their schools
    - Gifted students were an at-risk group of learners – need specialized centers for these students
        - Need to spot the talent early and identify it annually
        - Disrupt the current selection style to accommodate for every student
    - No lowering standers – that is in its own is a type of racism

    - How can we help students represent themselves in different and more personalized ways?
        - Demonstrate passion without Bias
            - STEAM camp vs Science class
    - We need to reach out and find these students as well
        - Go to them not make them come to us
        - Should be doing more for door opening
- Bolling –
    - Issues with the pipeline
        - Reteaching people to teach kids to take chances and opportunities
    - Gov Schools
        - Providing these services that they don't have in their school divisions
            - Rural areas
            - Smaller school districts
        - Better increase opportunity
- Albon – Directors Recommendations
    - Addressing diversity in Gov. Schools
        - They should be held accountable
            - Required to do internal addressing of the culture of the school
            - Required to review the process of how students get in
            - Gecker – Haven't we already been here with some Gov. Schools and they are just doing nothing about it.
        - General aptitude
            - Lottery System – can also become dangerous
                - Need to make sure to have certain requirements
        - Schools need to have a 5 year plan to add more Black and LatinX students
    - Pipeline from divisions to Gov. Schools
        - Looking at accreditation –
            - Direct oversight on Passed Advanced levels
            - Adjusting accreditation to help Black and LatinX students
    - Gifted is in a multitude of talents
        - Create services that accommodate to each talent
        - Add programs in certain schools or start new programs
        - We need to shift and diversify the Gov. Schools programs
- "Abolishing magnet school admissions' tests and essay requirements"
    - Something that can be done - the test can be bias
        - We would need to add something instead maybe like Interviews or looking at the broader portfolio
- "Adopt "top 10% rule" prioritizing admission for top 10% of students in each feeder school for a division"
    - What's yielding this percent?
        - Pushing the problem down a layer
    - Can defiantly be problematic because of gaining the system

        - Staying at home schools so they have a better chance to get into the Gov. Schools – Gaming the System
    - Ranking – rubric style
        - More holistic manner would be a less problematic way to decide.
        - People would find a way to gain the system either way
- Creighton - Feeder Schools
    - Every school not just the schools who send the most kids.
    - Establish state funded Office of Multicultural Affairs for Governor's Schools (VDOE office) with full-time directors placed on staff at each of the in-person, standalone Governor's schools (for a total of 3), and 2 additional full-time directors assigned to connect with the remaining 21 academic year governor's school programs. Responsibilities would include overseeing the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion aspects of recruitment and retention of students, as well as D, E and I within hiring and retention practices of the programs
        - We've left this to the schools and we need another level of accountability and oversight over this to solve the problems
- Elsayd –
    - School in Washington State
        - When they switched to a lottery system, they had a more diverse school
        - Certain requirements like math scores
        - They don't look at how well you answer the questions just weather or not you answered
    - Lottery system
        - If we don't fix the applicant pool then a lottery system won't be effective.
- Senator Barker – How have some colleges changed to help more students from different background attend? Look at that and implement those changes.
- Senator Keam
    - So many good ideas but some of these are inconsistent
        - Consistent internally/ complimentary solutions
    - Fundamental problem – mean to an end
        - Identify those kids and give them the opportunities
        - It has now become an end – it is the goal
        - Mend it – don't end it
- * Work on cleaning up the recommendations for the next meeting*
- Senator Lucas
    - Just like these students need these special tools, we need to help the students on the either end who have been purposely left behind
        - Help lift the Black/Brown students
            - Give them the opportunities
- Delegate Bagby
    - Sense of urgency
    - Wants to know what this committee is actually doing and pushing out to understand exactly what we are each supporting
    - Great opportunity to promote change

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Notes

- Gecker opens meeting
    - Trying to move to resolution
- Secretary Qarni
    - Going over some data
        - 63,000 Students in all Gov. Schools in Virginia
            - 40% are in Maggie Walker and TJ
        - 1.2 Million Students in Virginia overall
        - 16 Million for combined for the 19 Gov Schools
            - 40% of the budget
    - Keep this work group focused on admissions process
        - Improving pipeline and summer prep programs is still in the plan but later on
- Delegate Bulova – 16 million state share in Gov Schools
    - Is this more than they would have normally got? What is the Delta?
    - Qarni – Bolling would know exact numbers
    - Bolling – 16 Mil is for all 19 programs
        - MW and TJ get the most (about 2-3 Mil)
        - 40% state and 60% local
        - Each student slot is paid by the state gov.
    - Lowerre (MW) – its more like 25% from the state (2.3 Mil)
        - $7400 per student from the contributing district
        - $ 8.5 Mil total budget annually (2.3 comes from the state)
    - Bonitatibus – Similar at TJ
        - Fairfax has a formula for funding that is used in all schools
        - Then Gov School funding
            - % goes to Teachers above the Fairfax formula
                - Specialized teachers
            - Any left goes to materials/ instruction
                - Above and beyond the base formula
            - District keeps some for overall operating costs for Gov. Schools
        - Funding is almost like a grant for TJ
            - Similar to Title 1
    - Qarni- 16 mil is an add on to the Gov. Schools
- Bolling
    - Presents Options
        - Option 1
            - Criteria-Bases Lottery with SES Weights
        - Option 2

        - Percent Plan and Criteria-Bases Lottery with SES Weights
    - We will only do as good at our applicant pool
        - Changes in Division Practices (Gifted Identification and Services; specific to governor's schools)
            - Councilors and teachers pushing students to apply and recommending them for the program.
    - Qarni –
        - Guzman - about race and ethnicity not being considered.
            - Constitutional issues- legal barriers?
            - SES if done right can help with race and ethnicity.
            - Schools can no longer look at race of a student to put them into a school.
            - Race neutral based on the legal issues
        - Creighton - How is low income defined?
            - Based on free and reduced lunch. Snap
    - Bolling – Example of SES lottery Weights
        - In year 1 they met all goals in diversity
        - Schools were reflected of applicant pool and region they serve
        - Gecker – How quickly can we get the applicant pool to represent the community?
        - Bolling – Would depend on school division.
        - Fohl – Defiantly going to be a process since these restrictions and admissions have been put in place for 10-20 years.
            - People are used to something; it's going to take a disruptive change.
            - What his district did to change the pipeline
                - 2 years ago – Totally threw out a weighted matrix on testing
                    - Achievement test and aptitude test and grades
                - Funneling the pipeline
                    - Talent cultivation opportunities for kg- 2nd
                        - Develop common learning for all kids
                        - Helps enrich at a young age
            - Chesterfield
                - Extending awareness and mentorship and cultivating of opportunity in elementary school
                - Building the student up from before 8th grade so they aren't shocked
            - Communication with the community
                - Let them know about the changes and opportunities
        - Lowerre – Richmond Public Schools
            - Looking at a model that will divide all slots to each middle school (attendance zone – Public or private)

- Fohl – Chestefiled has also looked into something like this
    - Division ranking and slots
    - Issue – any change they make has to be agreed on by each county. If one chooses not to then it won't make an impact.
- Gecker – Fohl do you have the chesterfield model?
    - Fohl – Yes, What it is and what it could be
        - Presents the CCPS proposed Selection Process
            - Develop School-level Selection List
            - Students decline – Waiting list
            - Remaining Slots – Division-level Selection List
- Guzman – Amount of Latinos that were accepted
    - Issues with outreach to the community
    - How are we going to get the information to them
    - Fohl – as a gifted director I've learned that its not always convenient to every audience
        - Sometimes we had a family dinner event or brought translators
        - Drive into the neighborhood to make it more accessible
        - Divisions need to take active steps to engage their communities
- Qarni – Where do you see the most positive outcome?
    - Bolling – Still looking into the date – too early to give an answer
    - Siegel-Hawley – both options move the needle but not enough
        - Eliminate the testing
- Tyler – considering eliminating the testing - What else would be considered?
    - Siegel-Hawley - 50% goes to testing, grades and then essay portion
    - Fohl – MW
        - 35% Standardized test, 50% Writing sample (Prompt that day) 15% recommendations 35% Students grades (Last semester of 7th and first semester of 8th
        - Looking at changing the writing section
            - Evaluated for writing skill
            - Change to passion and experience – more holistic
                - More important than how well they write
- Jeremy – Works with TJ
    - 8 years ago, moved to a more holistic way
    - Staged approach
        - Grades and Test scores
        - Overall GPA
        - Then they move to round 2

        - Teacher recommendations
        - Short Answer questions
    - Changed Essay
        - Problem solving essay
        - Solve a math or science problem in the essay
- Gecker – What would you change in the process so the student body looked like the community?
    - We have already changed a lot over the years but it not has made an overall change.
    - We have seen a change in the applicant pool
    - We do Outreach – recruitment
- Brabrand – The biggest barrier is the test
    - If we want to change, we need to decide if the test is going to stay a big part of the application
    - Are we willing to change this admission?
- Atkins - Research in Charlottesville
    - The purpose of these programs was to comply the minimum of Brown V. Board of education
    - The intent was to have as few brown kids as possible
    - Across the country this was happening
        - We will use an achievement test to restrict the amount of brown kids
            - The foundation is messed up
        - Is there a norm test that will help talent brown/black kids in the nation? Can we identify one?
- Keam
    - Understand the historical issue
        - Institutional discrimination
        - Test – like Poll test/literacy test
            - Excluding
            - Not an indication of the talents of students
    - Unethical ways that people push their kids into the school
        - Money, time and resources
        - Not even going to stay in America
            - Using this to get into IV league schools and then go back to their home country
- Qarni
    - End of Sept – Package for the Governor to consider
        - Model out the outcomes of both options to see the best
    - 2 Applicant pools to help diversity – open to this
    - Dismantle the program – not very open to this
        - Give them a chance for significant change
        - If nothing happens then we can look into dissolving

- Lucus – Great meeting, very motivating meeting
    - Thank you Atkins and Keys Gamma for the important reminders