

## **MINUTES OF TRANSITION COMMITTEE MEETING JANUARY 9, 2008**

**Persons in attendance:** Phyllis Pajardo, Louise Porter, Gary Hinson, Ulysses Cox, Linda Washco, Daniel Cottle, Laura Walter, Carina Olsson, Beth Gehring, Dean Shepherd, Debbie Gupta, Patrice Robataille, DeQuinton Taylor, Flora Brown-Taylor, Krishna Chintagunta, Kristina Sheridan, Heather Brennan, Pam Sellars, Grace Cassidy

Minutes submitted by Kristina Sheridan, GT Transition Committee Member

### **I. Introduction**

Ms. Porter provided copies of the presentation and handouts given during the Information Nights at Mosby Woods and Louise Archer Elementary Schools. Both evenings were considered a success because they outlined clearly the differences between the GT and Honors Programs, and introduced the Luther Jackson GT Center.

Dates for the upcoming Orientations were reviewed:

Feb 19 7:00pm:	Rising 7 <sup>th</sup> Grade Parent Night (6:15pm for GTC, Honors, Special Ed and ESOL sessions)
Feb 26, 27, 28:	Elementary School Visits
March 14:	Course Selection Sheets due to elementary schools
March 10-28:	Counselors meet with rising 8 <sup>th</sup> graders to discuss course selection
March 29:	Course Selection sheets due to counselors

No formal 8<sup>th</sup> Grade parent orientation is required but a Meet-and-Greet will be planned after the teachers and counselor are selected.

### **II. General Meeting**

To discuss ideas for next year, parents split into two groups: one for rising 7<sup>th</sup> Graders and one for rising 8<sup>th</sup> Graders. Dr. Cottle and Ms. Porter led the 8<sup>th</sup> grade discussion and Ms. Washco and Mr. Cox led the 7<sup>th</sup> grade discussion.

#### 8<sup>th</sup> Grader Meeting Summary:

Parents of rising 8<sup>th</sup> graders provided the following comments, suggestions and ideas to be considered for next year:

1. Consideration should be given to including at least one qualified Luther Jackson incumbent on the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade GT team to ensure continuity and familiarity with the school.
2. Keep to County guideline and coordinate between teachers to ensure a 1.5-2 hour limit of homework each night.

3. Keep electives open to all students (GT-only electives not required).
4. Hire 8<sup>th</sup> Grade teachers early in the summer so they can train and plan together during the summer.
5. Plan to offer Spanish, French, Japanese and Latin for 8<sup>th</sup> Grade. Both Falls Church and Oakton High Schools offer these languages. A minimum of twenty-five students is needed to support each class.
6. Expand the use of Blackboard to provide a consolidated test schedule and project due dates. Look into an integrated single schedule for four core subjects. Dr. Cottle and Ms. Porter re-iterated that Blackboard is good for weekly and long-term assignments but that the student planners would remain the main source of information because the amount of work covered during each class varies from the baseline. It is not feasible for teachers to update Blackboard more than on a weekly basis.
7. Consider offering the following after-school activities: Math Counts, Model UN, Odyssey of the Mind, Chess, Science Olympiad. The group suggested the administration should ask parents for input on interests and request volunteers.
8. The group emphasized their interest in note-taking and development of organizational skills. Teaching these skills should be a specific curriculum item for 7<sup>th</sup> graders.
9. Several parents have heard positive feedback about Dr. Cottle's lunch-time quiz and students would like to start it up again. Discussion included Quiz-Bowl (It's Academic) which is often offered at high school. There was some discussion about purchasing a replacement buzzer system for the lunch-time quiz sessions.
10. Because of the increased number of GT students, the Math teacher should grow more focused on GT classes, and he/she should have 2 preps. Teaching multiple levels results in too large a large prep load.
11. The Luther Jackson librarian has purchased several additional books to support the GTC. There is no County-recommended list available but other GTC's and High Schools have been contacted to help secure appropriate text selection at Luther Jackson.
12. There was a brief discussion on team grouping: the pros and cons of having an all-GT team vs. a mix. It will be a couple more years before this will become an issue so the topic was deferred.
13. The rising 8<sup>th</sup> graders will have summer assignments in at least Math and English.
14. Early in the fall, there will be parent sessions to discuss Advance Placement, International Baccalaureate and Thomas Jefferson Programs.

15. The County requires that GT teachers with a full GT 5 course load must pass the GT endorsement within five years. All teachers are recommended to take the one week County course which helps identify GT students. Ms. Porter is requiring all Luther Jackson GT staff to start the process for GT endorsement.

16. Luther Jackson will be offering a Spring Musical and is planning for productions in the fall and spring of next year. This may expand into a drama program if there is interest the following year but will be an after-school activity for this year.

17. An addition elective considered for next year is creative writing. There was some discussion about the need to develop debating and public speaking skills as part of the core classes.

18. One parent mentioned that many of the after-school programs were filled to capacity and wondered if they could be expanded to accommodate additional students.

19. Parents would like to know from the teachers if there is anything they need from the parents to make 8<sup>th</sup> grade successful.

#### 7<sup>th</sup> Grader Meeting Summary:

Areas of focus:

**Extracurricular Program:** There was a discussion about the importance of extracurricular activities that would interest GT Center students.

- Math Counts
- ECybermission
- Model UN
- Chess
- START – computer assistants – work with SBTS (school based technology specialist).
- Robotics

Extracurricular activities are contingent on student interest and faculty sponsors. Parent support is also needed for some programs.

#### **Orientation Events:**

- Meet & Greet – parents can meet 7<sup>th</sup> grade teachers and counselors
- Ice Cream Social – June timeframe
- Potluck dinner – September

#### **Communication:**

- Electronic progress reports
- Website – suggestion to add teacher biographies on this page

**Teacher Advisory Class:**

- Discussion about how this class supports students and their transition to middle school.
- Currently, a committee is addressing TA and how it might be adapted to better serve students
- Some interest expressed in introducing extracurricular activities during TA

**Field Trips:**

- What field trips are taken for both grade levels?

NEXT MEETING WILL BE HELD ON FEB 27<sup>th</sup> AT 7PM IN THE LIBRARY