



## GATE District Advisory Council Meeting November 3, 2009 MINUTES

### I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

**ATTENDEES:** Brian Sarvis, Superintendent, Teresa Koontz, GATE Program Coordinator, Harriet Whaley, GATE Identification Co-Coordinator; Sandra Robertson, Secondary GATE Coordinator; Nathalie Ireland, Franklin teacher; Ken Babcock, WA parent; Kate Yamasaki, WA parent; Rebecca Goodman, Peabody parent; Barry Nitikman, WA teacher; Howard Park, parent; Stephanie Hastings, WA parent; Laurie Yarnell, WA teacher; Bettina Chin, WA teacher; Beth Nansen, HSSB parent; Kristen Sneddon, Peabody parent; Nan Mills, WA parent; Heidi Kirkpatrick, WA parent; Cindy Stoutenborough, WA parent

### II. DISTRICT UPDATE

Dr. Sarvis shared that the future is looking bright for the SBSB. Test scores are up and presently the budget is in the black. He feels encouraged by these signs.

### III. PROGRAM ASSESSMENT – *This topic was postponed until the December DAC meeting.*

### IV. GATE IDENTIFICATION –Harriet Whaley

- a. **GATE Criteria** – Harriet Whaley shared that the secondary GATE Program has revised the criteria for entrance into the program (grades 6-12). Elementary staff carefully reviewed the criteria and modified the current elementary criteria to align with the secondary guidelines. The new criteria will be implemented during the next testing period which begins January 2010. Copies of the revised criteria will be sent to families of students in grades 2-5 and will be available on the Elementary GATE website.
- b. **English Learners** – The District continues to seek ways to identify/qualify second language learners. We will implement the “District Nomination” whereby EL students who score ADVANCED in either math or ELA on the California Standards Test (CST) are invited to take the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT6). Often parents do not return the referral forms, so this year principals will be contacted with names of the District-referred EL candidates and asked to encourage families to have these students tested. In addition, EL scores will be placed in a distribution analysis whereby students scoring in the top 5% on the CogAT6 will be considered for GATE identification.

### V. BUDGET

- a. **Budget Cuts** – Last year the GATE budget sustained a 20% cut. This year an additional 20% cut. Presently the program receives approximately \$34K from the California State Department of Education and \$10K from the District. In addition, the District pays the salary of the District GATE Program Coordinator from a separate funding source.



- b. **GATE Site Funds** - In the past, the District has contributed \$10K each to the elementary and secondary GATE programs. This funding was distributed to each site based on the number of students served. As a result of State funding cuts, the District has redirected that funding to be used for GATE identification.
- c. **Budget Comments** – Some parents expressed concern regarding the lack of materials (books, computers, etc.) in some of the GATE classes. The group briefly discussed this matter, however, it was determined that the issue is a site issue rather than a GATE issue.

## VI. GATE LIBRARY

T. Koontz has been working to collect and provide a set of GATE-specific materials and books that would be available to staff and parents. Last year she applied for a grant but did not receive funding. A few parents have donated books. Currently Washington School houses a collection of GATE related books/articles. Site teachers are no longer able to house the collection and suggested the possibility of giving them to T. Koontz to include in the District GATE Library. The group agreed that this is a good plan. A parent will catalog the books and they will be sent to the District Office. A list of available books and resources will be posted on the Elementary GATE website where parents/ teachers may request to borrow books.

## VII. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- a. **TRI-COUNTY GATE COUNCIL** - Due to budget cuts, Tri-County GATE Council will not host the two presentations it offers annually. Instead, the Council discussed the idea of hosting a local sharing conference for GATE teachers and parents. SBSGD GATE coordinators offered to host this event at one of our schools. A task force will be organized to plan this event which is tentatively scheduled for spring 2010.
- b. **OTHER TRAINING** – Since funding is limited, the District is exploring cost efficient ways to provide staff development to teachers and parents. One idea is to offer training featuring one of our GATE teachers. Barry Nitikman (Washington, Gr. 4/5) offered to present a GATE Math Games workshop.
- c. **CAG CONFERENCE**– This year the annual conference will be held in Sacramento which means it will be more expensive for our teachers to attend. Tri-County GATE Council offers scholarships to parents and staffs. Perhaps schools would be able to fund teachers and/or parents might want to sponsor an interested teacher from their child’s school. Mr. Nitikman and T. Koontz expressed their enthusiasm for the conference, encouraging others to attend. This year Mr. Nitikman will present a math workshop at the conference.

## VIII. SITE GATE ADVISORY COMMITTEES

- a. Some schools have organized SITE GATE Committees. These committees address issues that are site specific. This might be something other schools might want to pursue. If you are interested in organizing this at your school, please contact Teresa Koontz and your site administrator.



- b. Comment – Some parents inquired as to why the GATE DAC meeting appears to be attended primarily by Washington parents/staff. It was noted that all schools are encouraged to participate.

**IX. OTHER ISSUES**

A brief discussion was held regarding site issues at Washington School. Dr. Sarvis and T. Koontz suggested that a separate meeting be scheduled to address these issues.

- X. GATE DATES** *(see handout) – A handout was distributed listing meeting dates. The dates may be accessed on the elementary GATE website.*

**HANDOUTS:**

- **Gifted Education Communicator** - *Keeping Gifted Education Alive in Contemporary Times* – Sandra Kaplan
- **Gifted Child Today** - *Besides Google: Guiding Gifted Elementary Students Onto the Entrance Ramp of the Information Superhighway* – Joan Schneider
- **National Association for Gifted Children** – *Back to School for Precocious Readers* (Ann Robinson) and *Harnessing the Power of the Computer; Challenging Your Gifted Child* (Lisa Natcharian)

**HANDOUTS FROM MAY MEETING:**

- *How Creativity Can Support Your Gifted Child's Talents and Abilities in These Challenging Times* – Joan Smutny, Director, The Center for Gifted at National-Louis University, Presentation April 14, 2009, Ventura



## Washington School GATE Parent Meeting Tuesday, November 17, 2009 *Minutes*

- I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS – Robin Sawaske, Associate Superintendent**
- Mrs. Sawaske asked attendees to introduce themselves and grade level of their child.
  - Stated purpose of meeting – “We all care about our GATE students and want to provide them with a challenging academic experience in a safe learning environment.”
- II. OVERVIEW OF STAFFING – Demian Barnett, Principal**
- Impact of budget cuts and declining enrollment – Normally the staff is provided to the schools and the principals arrange teachers into the assignments. This year was very different for several reasons. There were a number of tenured teachers from other schools who had the right to move to Washington School. This forced temporary teachers out of their positions. In addition, when the K class did not fill, WA was forced to let go of a teacher (Jennifer Gibson was the last teacher hired). Had the budget been stronger, this class would not have been closed. Mr. Barnett felt that it was not feasible to shuffle WA teachers who were already placed and teaching because it would have negatively impacted *many* more students. Mrs. Sawaske described the situation as the “perfect storm.”
- III. PUBLIC COMMENT – Robin Sawaske**
- Parents were invited to share one issue of concern. Mrs. Sawaske stated norms for sharing and encourage constructive criticism.

### QUESTIONS

- ***How can we ensure that qualified teachers are placed in GATE classes?***  
A GATE credential is available to teachers but it is not mandated by the state or the district. It is highly recommended. The group agreed that *at least* two criteria are necessary:
  1. A teacher who wants to teach the class.
  2. A teacher who is willing to be trained in GATE practices and strategies.The District is working to provide additional training to GATE teachers who are new to the program (e.g. peer coaching, GATE Program Coordinator provides demonstration lessons, GATE Teacher Handbook, and support materials to teachers).
- ***Is the District in charge of its own rules? If so, why can't they require special requirements for GATE teachers?***  
This issue would need to be discussed with the School Board and the Teachers' Union. It would have to be negotiated and voted on. Contract negotiations are conducted every 3 years.
- ***Why can't a teacher from another school who wants to teach the WA GATE class transfer?***



There are teachers who are interested in teaching the GATE classes, but due to Union rules, it is not possible to transfer these teachers. Teachers may make their requests known in May. If space is available, they can be transferred.

● ***Is all teacher hiring based on tenure? Is there a way to place teachers on merit and reward teachers for excellence?***

The School Board is interested in this. The Race to the Top grant money is something the District is interested in obtaining.

● ***Can a temporary teacher become tenured? How many teachers have done this?***

Mrs. Sawaske estimated that about 3 or 4 teachers have become tenured in the past 2 years.

● ***Can and should parents contact the Teachers' Union to express their concerns?***

It is best for parents to work with Mrs. Sawaske to present concerns and suggestions.

● ***Do Union and School Board members care about GATE?***

It is unknown how the Union feels about the GATE program. Their job is to protect the rights of all teachers. Mrs. Sawaske expressed that the School Board has cited improvement of GATE /advanced academics for all students as a goal.

● ***If we are not able to provide qualified staff for the GATE positions, then what is special about the self-contained GATE program? Isn't this false advertising to parents who are interested in the program? Why even identify students if they are going to be placed with generic teachers?***

The self-contained GATE program is unique because the students are clustered with GATE peers. Teachers are provided with additional training and support.

**IV. BUILDING BLOCKS – Where do we go from here?**

● ***Next year – Can we assume that the same budget constraints will affect the program? Will there be another shuffle of teachers?***

Dr. Sarvis shared that he does not anticipate the impact we suffered this year. The District is working to prevent this from happening again. Currently ALL teachers at WA are tenured teachers. The only way to bring in a new teacher is for a teacher to leave or retire. Incentives are offered to teachers to retire. In addition, Mr. Barnett is working to recruit current qualified WA teachers to move into GATE assignments for the 2010-11 school year. Mr. Barnett advised there are non-GATE teachers at Washington who want to teach GATE.

● ***If current WA permanent teachers do not wish to teach the classes, could the GATE position be considered a "hard to fill spot" and the rules be changed? Can hiring GATE teachers be made separate from other positions? Could the contract language be changed?***

It would be necessary for WA to have a special need such as Program Improvement. Since that is not an issue, there is no special exception. Again, this would have to be negotiated with the Union.

**V. FINAL COMMENTS**



## Santa Barbara School Districts Gifted and Talented Education (GATE)

- a. Parents are concerned that since there have not been teachers in some of the GATE classrooms, students have lost 7 weeks of instruction. This was reflected in their report cards. How will this impact CST scores and their preparedness for junior high?
- b. Parents expressed that they don't want to lose the GATE self-contained program at WA. "We want this program."
- c. Parents commented that they were concerned the Washington GATE program is in sharp decline. Mr. Barnett countered, stating that although GATE staffing has been unstable this year, he believes that there are many good things happening at WA school – 620 students, test scores are up, and even the non-GATE classes are excellent. There are things to fix but WA students are thriving.
- d. Follow up to this meeting – It was suggested that WA parents reorganize the WA GATE Parent Committee. In addition, a follow up meeting will be scheduled in two months.