

SPAN Meeting Minutes
January 7, 2016 – 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM
Westwood Media Center

Apryl Henry

A welcome to everyone and to our panel.
MCGT Introduction and Mission (see more at mcgt.net)
Future Meetings – 2/11 with Michelle Tindal on Stress and 3/22 with Jeff Holmberg on Acceleration Policies within the district

An Overview of Gifted Education from K-12 within the Prior Lake-Savage Area School

The Panel (in the order they spoke)

Becky Smith – SYNERGY Specialist Glendale, Grainwood, Westwood
Jane Balow – SYNERGY Specialist Five Hawks, Retail Ridge, Jeffers Pond
Lori Bui – SAGE Teacher
Katie Mahoney – Westwood/SAGE Principal
Dan Edwards – Principal Twin Oaks Middle School
Sasha Kuznetsov – Principal Hidden Oaks Middle School
Missy Short – SYNERGY Specialist Middle Schools
Jill Kind – Curriculum specialist, Secondary Schools
Dave Lund – Principal Prior Lake High School
Teri Staloch, Superintendent

The District Website lists Gifted and Talents Services as:

The district gifted/talented program, called SYNERGY, serves gifted and talented students in Prior Lake- Savage Area Schools. In grades K-2, students are not formally identified as gifted and talented. However, second grade students with high MAP test scores will have an opportunity to be nominated by their classroom teacher to participate in a short-duration talent enrichment class (TEC) in reading and/or math taught by Synergy staff.

In grades 3-12, students are formally identified as gifted/talented using nationally recognized aptitude and achievements tests. These students are usually clustered together in a grade-level classroom at the elementary schools and provided pull-out opportunities to engage in Synergy program activities led by the Synergy staff.

Additional explanations at each level are found on the District Page under Gifted and Talented.

Jane Balow & Becky Smith gave an overview of SYNERGY at the elementary level.

1. Identification – use MAP scores, CogAT and teacher recommendation
2. Weekly Attendance – stand alone lessons (TEC classes for 2nd grade are these types of lessons) and National contests (in grades 3-5 things like WordMasters or Math Olympiad are also used) which are enrichment focused
3. Communicate with Teacher

Lori Bui & Katie Mahoney gave an overview of SAGE

SAGE is:

- Full time gifted
- School within a school
- Homogenous grouping
- Appropriate books and activities for gifted learners
- High level of rigor, faster pace, etc

Academics in SAGE are different because:

- Reading lessons tailored
- Quantity and quality of writing intensified
- Science and Social Studies are offered every day
- Math is accelerated

Affective Needs are addressed in classroom, including:

- Healthy idea of self
- Expectations that are appropriate
- Development of (academic) risk taking behaviors

Missy Short gave an overview of SYNERGY at the Middle Schools

Background: Missy serves 400 students, 320 of which have been identified as needing Gifted and Talented Services through the district, through the Middle School Advanced Class offerings in the 4 core subject areas of Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, and Math

Programming: Provides support in core subject areas by providing national contests, challenges, etc.

Also addresses social and emotional needs of G&T students including executive functioning skills (organization, time management, etc.).

Communication: Uses Schoology daily with students, monthly newsletters to parents and SYNERGY Curriculum Letters with each unit.

Jill Kind talked about Curriculum choices at the Middle Schools and teacher development to ensure needs are being met. Jill supports Missy in supporting teachers with curriculum needs for SYNERGY activities. Jill also works on teacher development to ensure teachers have what they need to work with their advanced sections.

Dave Lund talked about offerings at the High School.

SYNERGY

SYNERGY is run by Jared Daggit. He meets with students for social and emotional skill development at the high school. He has 1 class period each day for Synergy when students can seek out his help.

AP Classes

- AP classes are nationally recognized to meet certain standards of rigor. You can then choose to take the AP test after the class and score between 1-5. College credit can then be awarded based on score.
- Currently the HS offers 13 AP classes
- 82% of AP test takers at the high school get a 3 or above on the AP test
- It is not necessary, or intended, for students to take all of their core classes as AP classes.
 - Parents are usually the ones who push for this.

- Remind yourself that AP does not mean better
- Remind yourself that it is ok to not get all “As” in AP classes; the classes are intended to be challenging (often come with hours of homework and summer work).

Concurrent enrollment classes

- Concurrent enrollment classes are dual High School and College classes. You get dual credit (both HS and College credit) for these classes. Credits look the same on your transcript as if you took the class at a college.
- Currently the HS offers 7-8 concurrent classes

Honors Classes

- Offered as an advanced offering
- Physics is currently offered as an honors class, but kids are able to score 4s and 5s on the AP test after taking this class

PSEO

- Post Secondary Education Option allows HS Juniors and Seniors to take classes at local colleges.

MNCAPS

- New program in conjunction with Lakeville North and Lakeville South with real world experience and concurrent classes together.
- Allows student to learn real world skills, skills that may be missing from their previous class work, in a different way. This may not fill the needs of gifted learners in our community.

Teri Staloch addressed the issue of transitions.

- Transitions from elementary to middle school and then middle school to high school can be challenging for kids and parents.
- The district has plans for each of these transitions. Sasha talked about the middle school transition.
- The high school transition includes a meeting with counselors and a 4- year plan for coursework and college planning.
- At no point are you or your child on your own, as far as planning course work goes.

Question: Math double acceleration is allowed. Is Language Arts acceleration allowed?

Answer: Since LA lends itself well to differentiation; we don't tend to accelerate in this subject in SAGE. However, it does happen sometimes in the middle school. The district policy for acceleration is followed at the Middle Schools. At TOMS, there are two 6th grade students who accelerated in Science and at HOMS there is one 8th grader taking LA at the High School. More on these policies will be presented at the March SPAN meeting.

Question: How has the transition of SAGE student been going to the middle school?

Answer: This might be a good time to introduce Missy Short to talk about SYNERGY at the Middle School. (see information presented above by Missy)

Question: Forgive me, I am new to the middle school (coming from Aspen Academy), can you talk about the difference between 5th grade gifted programming and 6th grade SYNERGY?

Answer: At the middle school, we use the process of Vertical Alignment for students. We use information from the elementary teachers to address individual needs and rely on parents to let us know when their child's needs are not met. Students take advanced classes in the areas where they have been identified, through testing, as needing more rigor. Missy had already talked through how SYNERGY plays into those classrooms.

In elementary, SYNERGY kids are clustered in regular classrooms in groups of around 5. The teacher differentiates for those five. SAGE is full-time gifted programming with more depth and rigor for all students in the class.

Question: How are out of District Student identified for gifted services if they end up at a Prior Lake Middle School?

Answer: We use MAP scores, CogAT results, or whatever testing you have on file. We look at that data and determine what might be the best placement for your child.

Question: Do the middle schools interact with each other?

Answer: Yes. Students cross the street and take classes at both schools. Co-curricular activities are combined. We see this as a real plus. Curriculums can be aligned because colleagues can just cross the street. Elective offerings can be doubled because we don't need to offer everything in both buildings.

Question: What can we do to get ready for Middle School?

Answer: Work with your student on time management and executive functioning skills

Also note: the Parent Information Night for incoming 6th graders to the Middle School will be on January 26 at 6:30 PM at TOMS.

Question: Do all colleges recognize the credits from concurrent classes?

Answer: Colleges in the MNSCU system do. All other colleges decide for themselves; some will and some will not.

Question: Can you talk about the difference between AP classes and concurrent classes?

Answer: AP classes do not offer college credit. The credit comes from taking the AP test (which is an additional step, and optional). Each individual college decides whether to give credit for AP classes based on the test scores. Concurrent classes are college classes taught at the High School by high school teachers.

Question: You talked about wanting to offer an option to graduate with an associates degree within 3 to 4 years. Will this be a program offering or will this be a mix and match program where the students can pick their focus?

Answer: I envision this to be a menu of options. The purpose would be to get some of the college generals out of the way.

Question: With SAGE students advancing in math, do you think there will be a time when math beyond AP Calculus will be offered?

Answer: There is not a need for this right now. I do not see there being a need soon. We do offer AP Statistics.

Question: You mentioned that students are entering the High School with missing real-world skills. What is being done to address that?

Answer: The MNCAPs partnership with Lakeville is one way we hope to address this issue. Real World experience in the Health fields, business and technology will prepare students for life beyond high school. The fab lab is a great way for students to gain skills in technology.