

SPAN Meeting Minutes January 31, 2012

UPCOMING SPAN DATES TO REMEMBER:

***Th. Feb. 23, 7pm**, WestWood Media Center: SPAN meeting with Superintendent Sue Ann Gruver and Curriculum Director Jeff Holmberg. We will also be taking nominations for Board positions. We currently have two co-presidents (Lisa Garborg and Apryl Henry), a vice president (Julie Mueller), and a treasurer (Anne Fry). In order to serve on the Board and to vote for Board members, you must be an active MCGT (Minnesota Council for the Gifted and Talented) member. (Please see www.mcgt.net for more information.) If you are an active MCGT member and would like to make a nomination but cannot attend the February meeting, please email Apryl at span@mchsi.com with your nomination. We would like to find someone to fill the Board position of secretary.

***Fr. Feb. 24, 6:30-8pm**, Prior Lake High School: "The Amazing Race" Synergy/SAGE Family Fun Night. To RSVP, volunteer, and/or find out more information, go to <http://mcgt.net/priorlake/calendar> . We are still in need of volunteers to staff booths; we would love to have some high school Synergy students fill these roles.

***Tu. Mar. 13, 7pm**, Prior Lake High School auditorium: MCGT CHAT (Connect, Help, Advocate, Talk) Night "College Planning for Gifted Kids" with Valerie and Donna from <http://www.collegeconnectors.com/> . This CHAT night would be particularly of interest to parents of middle school and high school kids, but elementary school kids' parents would also likely find information to consider.

***Tu. Apr. 24, 7pm**, WestWood Media Center. SPAN meeting focused on summer planning for gifted kids. Board elections will also occur at this meeting.

DISCUSSION ABOUT HOW THE NEEDS OF GIFTED KIDS ARE BEING MET AT THE HIGH SCHOOL:

***High school principal Dave Lund and Synergy teacher Jared Daggit** were introduced. Jared is in his 2nd year working with Synergy students at the high school. There are currently 209 students at the high school who are identified as gifted/talented (Synergy) students. Jared has one class period each day devoted to Synergy. That class period is 3rd hour, which is over one of the lunch periods. The goal was to have his prep period be during the other lunch period so that all Synergy students could have access to him during the school day, but it was not possible for him to have 4th hour free due to the need for AP Human Geography (a class he teaches) to meet during 4th hour. Jared is available both before and after school for students who would like to meet with him. He sees his main job as being a resource for students. He has emailed all parents of Synergy kids. (Please email him if you have a child who has been part of the Synergy program, but you and/or your child has not been contacted by him.) His schedule is on his webpage. He does have planned bimonthly lunch meetings on Wednesdays where he is offering intellectually stimulating problems and other extracurricular activities.

Jared sees two **main goals** in his role:

- 1) Get his name out to students so that they know he is there as a resource.
- 2) Get to know needs of students in order to design programming; he has surveyed the kids, and the results of the survey show that kids don't want/need additional work and that they want a place to go to meet their social/emotional needs; they want a trusted adult.

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He is still trying to create a reliable email network with students. Jared is also looking to involve the community more with job shadowing/internship programs. He'd like to develop a mentorship program where upper-level high school Synergy students would work with lower-level high school as well as middle and elementary students. Jared would like to make himself available for scheduling help and possibly schedule college seminars to help students with the application and selection process.

Q: Do high school students change lunch periods at semester changes (so that students who didn't have 3rd-period lunch and therefore have access to Jared might then have access to him)?

A: Students' schedules do change at semester, so lunches may change, but Jared's schedule won't change due to the AP classes he teaches. Follow-up: How many of the 200+ Synergy students have 3rd-hour lunch and could meet with Jared? They don't have this data.

Q: What are the common needs/requests of Synergy students?

A: Questions about PSEO (Post-secondary Enrollment Options) and the application process and an understanding ear for emotional needs/stresses. Jared also acts as an advocate for programming for advanced learners.

Q: Do you only advise students about PSEO options at Normandale?

A: No...he has a generic packet about everything related to PSEO at any college/university in the State. Requirements for acceptance at different schools may be different, though. Jared can show students options at all area schools.

Q: What is PSEO?

A: Post Secondary Enrollment Option is something available to juniors and seniors that allows them to take college classes on a college campus. PSEO applications are essentially college applications. Generally, the upper third of a junior class and upper half of a senior class are eligible to apply. Some schools (like the U of MN) are more strict; there, you must be in the top 5-10% of your class to apply. The high school also currently offers one class...physics...where students are enrolled in the class concurrently at the high school and St. Cloud State U., and it is taught at the high school. Chemistry was offered in this format but did not have high enough enrollment to "go." Although not 100% confirmed, it appears that there may be a concurrent enrollment option with Makato State for Spanish 5 next year. With concurrent enrollment, a course will appear on both the high school and a college transcript. Overall, colleges seem to be looking for well-rounded students (not just taking the core curricular classes, but also taking art, music, etc.).

Q: Is the credit for the concurrent enrollment physics class accepted just at St. Cloud U?

A: Other MnSCU (Minnesota State College and University) schools will accept the credit. Non-MnSCU schools would be on a case-by-case basis. AP scores are not accepted everywhere. There is nothing lost by taking these types of courses, however; they are designed to help students prepare for taking classes in college.

Q: How is GPA affected by PSEO and concurrent enrollment classes?

A: Both are worked into the high school GPA as other high school classes are.

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Q: As college admissions departments are looking at GPA, a lower grade in a college or AP course could lower that GPA; is it then not to a student's benefit to take a lot of AP/college-level classes in high school?

A: Dave has been told from admissions people that they are looking at a student's profile, not just GPA. They look at the rigor level of the courses taken. They also look at the graduating class's profile at each school. Lisa commented that you can see how different colleges weight standardized (ACT,SAT) test scores, GPA, etc. when deciding which students to admit at www.collegeboard.com.

Q: Can you do PSEO full-time and still participate in things like band?

A: No. You would have to be part-time PSEO and part-time high school.

Q: Can you do Spanish 5 if not PSEO?

A: Yes...through concurrent enrollment at the high school (that's the plan for next year). There currently is a Spanish 5 class at the high school, but the planned concurrent enrollment Spanish 5 would be at a higher level.

Q: What are the advanced course offerings at the high school?

A: 9th-grade: AP Human Geography, Honors English and Math; 10th-grade: AP World History, Honors English and Math; 11th-grade: AP Language and Composition, AP US History, Honors Math (or AP AB or BC Calculus); 12th-grade: AP Literature and Composition, AP Economics or AP American Government, AP Environmental Science, AP AB or BC Calculus or AP Statistics. There also would be the concurrent enrollment and PSEO options.

Q: Why is there no AP/Honors science?

A: 9th-grade and 10th-grade teachers have curriculum that was recently revised to give a good foundation for future courses and to embed State standards. There is Honors Physics, which, while not AP, is a more rigorous college-type class. Students from this course do go on to take the AP Physics exam. (You don't have to take an AP course in order to take the corresponding AP exam.)

Q: But what if these science courses are not challenging for the students? There is now advanced science being offered at the middle school; what about when these students get to high school?

A: The high school science teachers believe that all students need the same foundation. Curriculum Director Jeff Holmberg has been asked to look at this again.

Q: Is there no more fast-track science?

A: No. There were problems when students got to chemistry.

Q: Are there conversations happening between the middle school and high school teachers related to advanced classes so that the high school teachers are aware of the level of curriculum students are getting in the middle school? The high school science teachers are aware of the middle school advanced science?

A: Yes; there is vertical teaming happening on workshop days.

Q: Is zero-hour an option for students to fit in other classes?

A: Right now, only PE is offered at that time for 9th-grade students. (9th-grade students who want to take the year-long AP Human Geography course rather than the regular semester-long social studies class AND who want to take band or choir as well as Spanish cannot fit

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semester-long PE/Health into their schedules and must do this during zero-hour.) Other offerings have not had the necessary enrollment (at least 24 students) to run.

Q: What is the population at the high school now, and how are Synergy kids doing? Are they the top 10% of the students grade-wise?

A: They don't have that data, but of the students with whom Jared works, he would say that they are the higher-scoring ones.

Q: How does this district compare to other MN districts with respect to the amount of support that gifted kids receive at the high school?

A: In the south metro, most high schools offer no support other than the AP/honors classes. We are a step ahead with what we are doing, with our full-time elementary gifted program, advanced courses at the middle school, and Jared at the high school.

Q: We should point out that there aren't high grade requirements to enroll in AP classes....

A: Yes. The minimum grade to get into honors and AP classes is C-. Rigor is still maintained in the classes. The high school recently received an award from the College Board (who oversees AP classes) for not only increasing the percentage of students taking AP tests but also increasing the percentage of students earning a 3 or better on AP tests.

Q: Do teachers of AP classes look at the grades they give students and the students' corresponding AP scores to see if they match up? Do they adjust rigor of their classes accordingly?

A: Yes, teachers see this data. Jared said that in his AP classes, he does try to give some AP-type questions on his tests to help prepare students for what they will see on the AP exams.

Q: Do all students who want to take an AP class get into those classes?

A: Yes.

Q: There are some very large class sizes at the high school; is this leading to watered-down teaching?

A: There are 11 classes with sizes well over 40. There shouldn't be watered-down teaching due to this. Next year, schedules will be built based on a quarter rather than a semester system, which will help with scheduling so that these larger class sizes won't occur. It will also help with students being able to take more of the electives that they'd like to take.

Q: With respect to 9th-graders wanting to take AP Human Geography and take band and Spanish, does this mean that they can't participate in Jazz Band (as that meets before school, when they would have to be taking PE/Health during zero hour)?

A: Jazz Band was moved to after school for this reason, but there may still be conflicts with other before-school activity meetings.

Q: Is there any thought to students getting waivers for taking PhyEd if they are involved in a sport outside of school?

A: Few districts do this. There would be difficulty in determining exactly what would qualify a student for a waiver.

Q: How can a parent help an incoming 9th-grader to determine what they can handle honors/AP-wise?

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A: Talk to the student's 8th-grade teachers. They do make these kinds of recommendations. You don't want to over-stress a kid. A parent commented that it was important for her current 9th-grader to take all of the available honors/AP options, as he otherwise wouldn't be challenged and wouldn't be happy. The decision about how many AP/honors courses to take depends on each individual kid.

Q: How can a parent help an incoming 9th-grader with the social/emotional adjustment to the high school?

A: Access the assistant principals and counselors as needed; they are underused in this capacity. Find teachers with whom the student connects. Have the child talk with Jared. Stay on top of studying. There is more studying (vs. just doing homework) required in high school, and it can't all be done the night before a test.

Q: Is it the case that a course (like Honors Algebra 2) taken at the high school by a middle school student would earn high school credit, but a course like honors geometry taken at the middle school will not earn high school credit? What if the Honors Algebra 2 is eventually taught at the middle school; will high school credit be given?

A: If a course is taken at the high school site, then the student will receive high school credit; if it is taken at a middle school site, then the student will not receive high school credit.

Q: Will there be math courses available at the high school for students who are accelerated 1 or 2 years in math?

A: Right now, a student taking Algebra 2 as an 8th-grader would have Honors Precalculus, AP Calculus, and AP Statistics as options. There is talk of adding an AP Accounting class in the future, which, while not strictly math and would be offered through the Business Department, might be of interest to some of these students. There may be more math offerings as the need warrants. PSEO is also an option.

Q: Is anyone looking to offer AP Computer Science classes at the high school?

A: No. There are some offerings of classes feeding out of the Project Lead the Way classes at the Middle School that are offered through the Industrial Technology Department that might be of interest. There also is a quarter-long Robotics course.

Q: What is the scoring system on the AP exam? Can a student's grade predict their AP score?

A: Highest score on an AP exam is a 5. The grade can't exactly predict a score. A 5 is considered above an A.

Meeting adjourned at 8:40pm. Next meeting is Th. Feb. 23rd at 7pm in the WestWood Media Center with Superintendent Gruver and Curriculum Director Holmberg in attendance. Synergy Family Night at the high school is Feb. 24th.