

## SPAN Meeting Minutes Dec. 12, 2019

Date/Location: Thursday, Dec. 12, 2019 at 7 PM, Westwood Media Center

Opening Remarks included a reminder of upcoming meetings:

- College Connectors – Tues., Jan. 21 @ 7 PM, TOMS auditorium will present about post high school options
- Coffee chat – late Jan. (exact date TBD)
- High-Ability Student panel & their parents – Thurs., Feb. 6 @ 7 PM, Westwood Media Center
- Coffee chat – March (exact date TBD)

Assistant Director of Student Services Melissa Knettel presented on the services of the district, related to gifted students.

### Overview:

- 9.2% of total district student population has been identified as gifted students (23.5% elementary, 35.1% middle school and 42.2% high school level)
- We have disparities in students represented in the identified gifted population

### Elementary Identification:

- Universal screening process: CogAT screener for all 2<sup>nd</sup> graders (30-minute pre-assessment and less sensitive to language than full test)
- 85<sup>th</sup> percentile or above on screener will take the full CogAT
- SAGE identification is an “and” – CogAT and MAP (reading/math) and teacher evaluation

### Elementary School:

- On-going monitoring of student data
- G/T specialist supports daily classroom instructional practices: co-planning/push in, modeling, flexible grouping
- G/T specialist provides curriculum extensions/enrichments (i.e. Word Masters)
- SAGE Academy option for qualified students, grades 3-5

### Middle School:

- G/T specialist supports daily classroom instructional practices: co-planning/push in
- Ongoing monitoring of student data
- Expanding project-based learning
- Advanced/accelerated classes
- Supporting extensions/enrichments to core curriculum

### High School:

- On-going student data monitoring
- Advanced/accelerated course placements
- Wide array of course options

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- Wide array of activities/clubs
- Guidance services for social/emotional

**Activity:** parents' hopes and dreams for child and wants for support system from the district

**Panel:**

- Dan Edwards: TOMS principal (Sasha K. unable to attend due to illness)
- Jennifer Maloney: Elementary Gifted and Talented Specialist/Teacher
- Missy McFadden: Middle School Gifted and Talented Specialist/Teacher
- Lori Bui: SAGE 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher
- John Bezek: PLHS Principal
- Karen Zwolenski: Westwood/SAGE Principal
- Jane Balow: Elementary Gifted and Talented Specialist/Teacher
- Becky Smith: Elementary Gifted and Talented Specialist/Teacher

**Panel Discussion:**

**Who is responsible for communicating about gifted education at elementary level?**

The student's teacher is the first, primary communicator. Then gifted specialists and building principal.

**What is the process for gifted and talented education to make sure things are moving forward (i.e. like an IEP)?**

G&T isn't mandated like special education so there is not set process. Advocate for your kid.

**Do parents at the elementary level know if their child has been given gifted education?**

This is fluid. Gifted specialists are often working with teachers to help them facilitate enrichments within classrooms. This may include flexible groupings. Pull out groups are generally no longer offered, as Synergy has taken on a new form.

**What grade levels do the elementary gifted specialists cover and how are children identified?**

Elementary gifted specialists help teachers and students in grades K-5. They use data as the starting point and watch progress. In 2<sup>nd</sup> grade the CogAT and MAP (reading/math) test scores are evaluated.

**What does the move look like from SAGE to 6<sup>th</sup> grade (specifically Science and English)?**

The SAGE students are integrated with all students in both buildings. There are advanced course offerings. It was specifically discussed that SAGE and 6<sup>th</sup> grade Advanced Science having duplication of content/units.

The district leadership acknowledged they are aware of the concerns and that they need to continue to look at and focus more on determining how to move SAGE students effectively into middle school, specifically related to Science and English. The State-mandated Science

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curriculum is changing in middle school, and that will impact this process. The district is aware and looking into it.

### **What has been done to address the gaps in challenging middle school students?**

There have been some changes in personnel and training. We have more content specialists at the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade. This is not the case for 6<sup>th</sup> grade, due to licensure. It is something the district is paying attention to. The project-based learning is also being implemented more to give kids additional opportunity to move at the level they want to in an area of interest to them. At high school, the goal is to provide lots of opportunities and let students find their way.

### **What is the G&T support/availability at the high school?**

There are 6 counselors at the high school building. There is no longer specific G&T support time allocated from an FTE. They are looking at other options and what other school districts do. It has been suggested that the district consider a counselor assigned to gifted students to assist with colleges, requirements and emotional needs of gifted students. It was expressed that this may be a good idea as their needs are not necessarily the same as other students.

### **What are the push-in opportunities for Spanish immersion?**

There is a MN Zoo program being implemented. It isn't completely in Spanish but there are elements that are in Spanish. The topic for this program is challenging due to the specific topic chosen this year and not much detail on the topic being available in Spanish. But, the district is finding ways to bring gifted and immersion together.

### **How are students with asynchronous behaviors being supported at the middle school level?**

Start with your teachers (in middle school, it means up to 8 teachers). The middle school has two counselors in each building and one gifted specialist across the two schools. Contact these individuals and they will figure out the path forward with you. Advocate – either self-advocacy by the student or parent. At the high school level, teachers are spending more time getting to know the students and gathering information to better understand a student's learning preference/style.

### **What are the policies for grade acceleration (subject specific)?**

It is on the district website, under the school board > board policies. The first step is for the parent to email the principal.

### **How is it determined if a student qualifies for advanced courses in middle school?**

The criteria is 90<sup>th</sup> percentile or above based on 5<sup>th</sup> grade MAP test scores (fall scores primarily with follow-up, as necessary, in spring). The district will let a family know what advanced classes your child is qualified for, before 6<sup>th</sup> grade registration.

### **How are K-1 students accessed for gifted?**

Kindergarten/First grade teachers track multiple data points and monitor each student's progress to ID these students.

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**Concern was expressed that if CogAT is the only screener/test used for identification, that it is a day in time and may not be fully reflective of abilities. How is that addressed?**

If a student's progress doesn't match the CogAT test results, the teachers keep an eye on it. Sometimes the district will re-administer the CogAt in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade if the student's progress/accomplishments are incongruent with the test scores.

**What is the ongoing data analysis?**

Teachers look at classroom/student data regularly to guide their instruction in the classroom. It is not necessarily communicated to parents. Advocate for your child and ask, if you think your child may be gifted. Conferences is when this topic is generally covered but if you have questions before or after conferences, follow up. Advocate for what your student needs.

**What are the signs of gifted?**

I'm bored at school, making up projects on their own, unusually high emotional responses, behavioral concerns. The list is wide and varied as it depends on the child, teacher and situation. There is not one answer to this.

**How do we identify 2e children earlier?**

The gifted specialists are now K – 5 instead of 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grade (which they had been for a number of years). The hope is that their involvement at younger grades will help identify children earlier.