

**Santa Barbara Unified School District  
Gifted and Talented Education**

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**Robin Sawaske, Associate Superintendent**

**Sandy Robertson, Secondary GATE Coordinator**

**District Advisory Council**

**Minutes**

**December 8, 2011**

**(Off schedule)**

**Attending:**

Sandy Robertson: Secondary GATE Coordinator

Liz Downey: Secretary

Beth Berlese: Fundraising Chair

Cathy Oliverio: Goleta Valley Junior High Parent Delegate

Bill Woodard: Dos Pueblos High School Site Coordinator

Dan Terry: Dos Pueblos High School Parent Delegate

Jill Feldman: Dos Pueblos High School Parent Member and  
Evaluation Committee Co-Chair

Karen McBride: La Colina Junior High School Site Coordinator

John Hutchinson: La Colina Junior High School Parent Delegate

Lara Willbanks: San Marcos High School Site Coordinator

Catherine Weissenberg: San Marcos High School Parent Delegate

Leo Borden: Santa Barbara Junior High Site Coordinator

Katie Pelle: La Cumbre Junior High School Site Coordinator

Larry Harms, La Cumbre Junior High Parent Delegate

Justina Weinbender: Goleta Valley Junior High School Site Coordinator

Lorraine Saunders: Goleta Valley Junior High Parent Delegate

Patricia Ruth: Santa Barbara High School Site Coordinator

Jean McKnight: Santa Barbara High School Parent Delegate

Marie Profant: CEO, Visual Travel Tours Guest Speaker

Teresa Koontz: Elementary GATE Program Coordinator

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Adoption of October Minutes: Minutes approved as written.
3. Annual Evaluation Report: Jill Feldman and Marisa Miller

Jill reviewed the trends of the survey, noting particularly that the response rate was quite low on all accounts from parents, teachers and students compared to prior years. We are not sure if the lower survey participation is related to the economy, the shift from GATE to include Honors students, or if the method of delivery was an issue. However, we see the value of this information from the survey as a tracking method to demonstrate the general trends over time. Of

particular concern was the decrease in the rating of “highly satisfied” by parents in the current survey.

Marisa Miller made the following comments/observations regarding the survey:

a. We had a 50% increase or so of our target audience. We had a drop in responses from previous two years (especially the previous year) from all three categories: parents, students, and educators. The previous 3 years we had a mailing of approximately 2500 hundred families and last spring that jumped to approximately 3800. Both numbers include Spanish-speaking parents but I’m unclear how much of a jump were specifically Spanish-speaking parents.

b. We had a far higher number of views/incompletes than we did completions (i.e approx 445 views from parents but only 278 completes). The survey was longer this past year than any other year by at least three or four items in the interest of teasing out impact of GATE/Honors changes. However, every single item you include on a survey reduces the number of complete responses you get.

c. In the interest of financial challenges due to a change in bulk mail permits, we produced a 4-color postcard as the direct mailer this past spring. We had notable and severe challenges with them physically in that they were too slick and labels in wrong place so they were held up in Santa Clarita processing center of USPS for several days before they were actually delivered, so we missed our delivery date by a solid week when the survey was already open. While we left the survey open for longer than the posted dates, it is unclear how much that helped since school was ending and families had their focus elsewhere by then.

d. Other challenges: the removal of the 3 year history of mild student incentives with 5 points of homework or extra credit; while this is understandable for why this ended, it is likely but unquantifiable how much this suppressed our responses from students. Also, from the pattern of lack of educator and student responses, it is clear we had a lack of teacher continuity in regards to informing people of the survey and supporting the execution of the survey (the educators themselves had a poor completion rate too!).

e. The 50% increase of families being contacted about the survey had no history of knowing we implement this survey at all, whereas most of the “previous” 2500 families are in their 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> year of implementation.

f. It is also unquantifiable regarding how many of the “new” families responded versus the “previous” families as accuracy in self-reporting about GATE identification and participation in the previous school year’s GATE classes, while items on this survey (and not in earlier years) is unknowable. Though the variation between parent responses and student responses suggest inaccuracy is a factor to some degree.

g. Regarding the interpretation of parent responses over the past three years as dropping in highly satisfied as a trend...I don’t feel we can be sure of that. The 2010 survey was conducted literally in the weeks of the announcements regarding upcoming changes in GATE/Honors which were controversial and caused a lot of anxiety, and the

2011 survey (the current results) are the first with a largely completed school year. I feel at least two more years would need to be conducted to state a trend exists.

h. Regarding the survey itself...it is a snapshot of approx 15 online minutes at home on largely self-reported perceptions of program quality as shared by students, parents and educators. This survey doesn't have items of independent measures (ie. GPA, CST, AP pass scores, etc) nor do we collect such data to pair with this opinion/perception survey. Also, perception/opinions regarding individual teachers and peers is highly suggestible and not necessarily reflective in any way of actual program quality in Honors programming. I feel we can only call our current evaluation process as focused on measuring participant satisfaction and priorities rather than any kind of rigorous evaluation.

i. Future Recommendations:

i. Return to the bulk mailing of letter in school district envelopes for survey notification

ii. Examine other options (other than homework or extra credit points) for mild student incentives for completion

iii. Review the survey for better clarity and the possibility of having fewer items to increase the number of completes since the more we capture of people who actually make it to the survey the better the results.

iv. Consider including other aspects to our evaluation to enhance our trust level regarding program quality, such as GPAs, CST scores, AP pass rates, scholarly achievements, etc.

Sandy expressed appreciation for the time and expertise both Jill and Marisa bring to the project. The entire DAC applauded them, and said "Thank you" as well. Sandy also reported that these minutes, along with the PowerPoint presentations themselves, will be forwarded to Robin Sawaske and Davis Hayden for their review.

4. Fundraising Report: Beth Berlese commented that the Dos Pueblos GATE/Honors Information Night was very effective with Sandy, Bill Woodard and Dan Terry each speaking. The turnout was high. Sandy suggested that it might be a good idea to have our Honors meeting take place **before** the Back to School Night event and she will revisit this with Robin Sawaske. Beth also brought up the "Honor Your Teacher" Holiday fundraising idea that Lori Goodman started last year. She felt it is a good campaign, even though it generated only \$2000.00, and that we ought to continue it this year, even though Dos Pueblos PTSA is doing it as well. The group agreed to proceed. Sandy will deliver the flyers to schools next week, and asked that they should be distributed by Wednesday or Thursday at the latest.

5. Fundraising Update: Marie Profant, CEO of Visual Travel Tours reported that while there has been increased traffic to VTT's website, very few purchases have been made. She presented ways to promote the fundraiser and reviewed some marketing techniques.

She made a specific request for more participation in the classroom, specifically asking teachers to let the students know about the campaign for Travel Tours and to encourage them to pass information to their parents. She also requested volunteers to film a promotional video next week to be posted to their web site. No one volunteered.

6. Fundraising Ideas: Liz Downey asked that each DAC parent member come up with a fundraiser idea so that we can brainstorm on how we can become more public advocates for this committee. Specifically, she suggested placing a piggy-bank—hand-made by students/DAC members—in classes, and students could bring coins from home to donate. While the issues around the logistics for such a project were obvious, she said the point was to begin a discussion about what more and innovative ways the DAC groups could work together to be creative about fundraising. She suggested that we might investigate finding out from specific teachers what their wishes are and then doing a call for small donations for particular wishes. This would be an opportunity for us to target families whose children are in honors classes where teachers have made a "wish list" for supplies or technology. The donation from the parent would have a specific target rather than the general fund which gets distributed by DAC by vote. This would have to go to the School Board for approval. For those schools who do not have a wealthy constituency, perhaps DAC could advocate in alternative ways rather than directly to the parents; i.e., finding philanthropists in the community at large to participate. Another idea is to have DAC members make contact with site coordinators, getting an alliance with the coordinator and teachers. DAC members could reach out to AP, IB and academy teachers and let them know that they too might be eligible for funds. Another comment noted that creating a "wish list" approach to the distribution of funds might not be as fair as the current system. In the interest of time, further discussion was postponed until the next meeting.

7. Budget Report: Fundraising is running below the amount we raised last year at this time. Additionally, there are many, many more donations of a smaller amount than in the past. A typical donation so far this year is in the \$25-\$50.00 range.

8. Tri County GATE Council Report (postponed)

9. Parent Education Events: Dr. Michele Borba is scheduled to speak on Saturday, February 4, in the Marjorie Luke Theatre, from 9:00-10:30. She will speak on the topic of "How to Raise Happy, Successful, Ethical Kids in a Crazy Competitive Environment." Susan Goodkin, Hoby Pearce, Magna Sundstrom (Princeton Review), and Maritza Mieja (Santa Barbara Scholarship Foundation) will speak on "The College Application Process," on Saturday, March 10, in the San Marcos High School Auditorium. Translation services will be provided for each event. Lyn Olsen, GATE Coordinator for the Pajaro Unified School District, will present to parents on the topic of "What's Wrong with 'You're So Smart!'" on Saturday, April 21. Location to be determined.

10. Professional Development Report: Dr. Michele Borba will also conduct a session for teachers on the same date, Saturday, Feb. 4, but the time for teachers will be from 11:00-

12:30. Lyn Olsen will also present to teachers, again following the session for parents. We are excited to present these outstanding speakers, and Sandy thanked DAC for their advocacy and support to help raise the funds for these events.

11. Newsletter Update: Harriet Whaley was absent.

Meeting Adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 19, 3:30-5:00 p.m., in the Globe Theatre, Santa Barbara Junior High School