

Summary of 1/23/12 D181 School Board Meeting

At the 1/23 meeting, Dr. Moon and associates presented their findings and assessment of our gifted program. Their presentation was consistent with what was submitted in writing. They spent two days in the fall visiting classrooms and evaluating the program as well as data that was collected from the administration. The evaluation consisted of a two day visit in December 2011 to six elementary schools and two middle schools. In all, there were 75 classroom observations, ranging from 10 to 30 minutes.

The thrust of their comments was that portions of the current gifted program were “indefensible”, including ACE which was described as a part-time solution to a full-time problem. Most of their comments were directed toward Elementary ACE and Elementary ELA. They thought that the pullout programs were not effective and that there were communication and transportation issues. Their main comment about Middle School ACE was that the affective component wasn’t there and that gifted kids affective needs could be met through the regular SELAS Program. The consultants indicated that we should start by defining what we mean by gifted, what group of students should be served and come up with a vision statement.

Several parents (pro and con) made comments after the presentation, as highlighted in the board briefs distributed by the district on Tuesday.

The board then discussed the issue amongst themselves and asked Dr. Moon questions. After much deliberation, the board agreed to look into an “inclusive” approach to gifted education. One board member asked how long this would take and Dr. Moon responded that the program would take 5 to 7 years to implement. The discussion then turned to what to do with the existing programs; and while one board member said that the current gifted and ACE programs “should be blown up”, they agreed to decide on the matter at the next school board meeting (Feb 13th, CHMS, 7:00 pm).

The board directed Dr. Schuster to look to hire another consultant (possibly Dr. Moon again) to help us create the vision. They also cancelled all testing for the ACE program (scheduled to be conducted in February) until they decide if they are going to continue the program.

GECO Position on Proposed Changes to the Gifted Program

We appreciate Dr. Moon’s and the administration’s efforts to improve the Gifted Program in D181. Every gifted program should be periodically reviewed and updated or changed as needed. Dr. Moon made some valid points, however, Dr. Moon did not spend nearly enough time in classrooms making direct observations or meeting with our gifted teachers. No children who participate in the program were interviewed, nor were the parents of any participating children interviewed. Two days of observations is not nearly enough. For what D181 invested in this evaluation, we deserve a custom solution that fits our unique needs. This presentation, while it offers many good idea and has some merit, could have presented to just about any school district.

Once we understand what the administration means by an “inclusive” gifted program and they can demonstrate that it will be an improvement over our current offering, then we would be willing to support the concept. Given the 5 to 7 year projection to implement a new program, ***GECO cannot support curtailing the current offerings until we have an equal or better replacement.*** It is completely unfair to the children currently being served by the program to wait to learn until this is figured out. None of the children currently in the ACE program will even be in the district in 5 to 7 years.