MEETING MINUTES
Virginia Advisory Committee for Advanced Learners
10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Friday, May 1, 2026

Attendees: Mark Levy (Chair), Melissa Hayes, Anna Vijayan, Kerry Ambrosino, Dr. Beth Teigen, Ladona Gorham, Christopher Taibbi, Debra Tisler, Dr. Roxanne Souma, Gail Staton, LaRae Snoddy

Per subsection of the Code of Virginia 2.2-3708.3, the Chair has allowed virtual participation for the following members:
Vanna Upchurch (resides more than 60 miles from location)
Dr. Nick Colangelo (resides more than 60 miles from location)
Teresa McNeely (resides more than 60 miles from location)
Toya Williams (resides more than 60 miles from location)
Katie Gaffney (resides more than 60 miles from location)

VDOE: Amanda Nevetral (ex-officio), Kevin Carr
Guest: Lee Ann Whitesell, Director, Shenandoah Valley Center for Advanced Learning

Welcome and Introductions
Mark Levy, Chair

Mark Levy (Chair) called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m. welcomed members, and reviewed meeting objectives. At 10:10 a.m., Dr. Beth Teigen moved to approve the agenda and virtual participation requests; Debra Tisler seconded, and the motion was approved by voice vote; at 10:11 a.m., Ladona Gorham moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting; the motion was seconded by Anna Vijayan and approved. Members introduced themselves and Mr. Levy reviewed the committee's advisory role to the Virginia Board of Education and support of VDOE initiatives related to advanced learning.

Office of Advanced Learning Overview
Amanda Nevetral, Office of Advanced Learning, VDOE

Ms. Nevetral began at 10:17 a.m. with updates on current state initiatives and processes for the Office of Advanced Learning. Highlights included:

- **Gifted Education:** completion of technical reviews for gifted local plans; discussion of a trained technical review team to provide more consistent feedback; ongoing revision of the Gifted Annual Report and related reporting guidance; and continued development of professional resources.
- **Governor's Schools:** Opening of the New River Valley Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities in Fall 2026; completion of four Academic Year Governor's School site evaluations; continued PBS video work; increased Summer Residential Governor's School applications; visits to summer residential programs; possible development of an aviation-focused summer residential program; 18 of 21 Summer Regional Governor's School programs for summer 2026.
- **Advanced Coursework**: Continued collaboration with VCCS on dual enrollment and College and Career Ready Virginia; implementation support connected to HB1892; upcoming AP Business with Finance and AP Cybersecurity courses; coordination with CTE on course coding and the 3E Readiness Framework; legislative updates affecting IB, dual enrollment, and college readiness.

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Mr. Levy commended the Office of Advanced Learning for work to increase statewide access to Summer Residential Governor's Schools.

Public Comment
At 10:36 a.m., Mr. Levy reported that no written public comment was submitted, and no one requested to make a public comment.

Organization and Meeting Reports
Mark Levy, Chair

At 10:36 a.m., Mr. Levy invited organization and member reports.

- **Dr. Roxanne Souma** presented an overview of the New River Valley Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities, which will open at Radford University in August 2026. She described the school's service area, inaugural sophomore cohort, half-day model, arts and humanities pathways, college-readiness support, community partnerships, and planned dual enrollment opportunities.
- **Dr. Nick Colangelo** shared national-level observations about advanced learning, including early assessment, local norms, auto-enrollment with clear on/off ramps, challenging curriculum, and the shift from gifted label toward advanced learning.
- **Lee Ann Whitesell** provided an overview of Shenandoah Valley Governor's School, including its STEM and arts/humanities areas, half-day model, research and capstone experiences, practical and professional learning opportunities, and service to students from Augusta County, Staunton, and Waynesboro.

Recess called at 11:13 a.m. The meeting reconvened at 11:32 a.m.

Legislative Update
Amanda Nevetral, Office of Advanced Learning, VDOE

At 11:37 a.m., Ms. Nevetral provided an overview of recent legislation connected to the work of the Office of Advanced Learning. Topics included:

- AP African American Studies as a substitute for certain history/geography graduation requirements
- Requirements for school divisions to offer SAT School Day or a similar opportunity
- changes to the College and Career Ready Advisory Group
- FAFSA and financial aid information
- Expanded use of scholarships connected to Brown v. Board of Education
- Licensure information for qualifying college faculty teaching in public high schools

Gifted Annual Report
Amanda Nevetral, Office of Advanced Learning, VDOE

At 11:43 a.m., Ms. Nevetral presented updates on the Gifted Annual Report. She noted that the report has not been substantially updated and described current work to improve transparency, consistency, and usefulness. Discussion focused on the Build-A-Table tool, draft reporting guidelines, and survey feedback from gifted coordinators about how divisions report data. Members discussed the report with topics that included economic status, twice-exceptionality, English learner status, division-level versus school-level reporting, AP and dual enrollment as high school gifted service options, specialized counseling, gifted-

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endorsed teachers, and need for clearer definitions. Dr. Colangelo emphasized that data collection requires narrow, exact definitions so comparisons are meaningful.

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Subcommittee Discussion
Mark Levy, Chair

At 12:28 p.m., Mr. Levy reviewed the purpose and structure of the three subcommittee's work; Gifted Annual Report guidelines, Academic Year Governor's School growth and membership processes, and Academic and Career Plan guidelines. A working lunch in subcommittees began at 12:37 p.m.

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Subcommittee Share
Mark Levy, Chair

At 1:48 p.m., Mr. Levy reconvened for subcommittee reports and discussions:

- **Gifted Annual Report:** clearer parameters for data collection, including referral windows, definitions, not-applicable options, updated terminology, and possible subgroup tagging for referral and identification data. The group planned to continue work on Section 2.
- **Academic Year Governor's Schools**: reasonable growth guidance, enrollment changes, processes for adding new divisions to existing Governor's Schools, and possible updates to procedures for initiating a new AYGS depending on final budget language.
- **Academic and Career Plan Guidelines**: academic planning as well as career planning, Virginia's higher education landscape, and gaps in career and planning resources for divisions, students, and families across the Commonwealth.

Policy Discussion
Mark Levy, Chair

Following subcommittee reports, Mr. Levy led a discussion of policy concerns that may inform future Board of Education recommendations. Members reaffirmed support for universal screening & funding, agreed that the committee should recommend consistent weighting for AP/IB and dual enrollment courses, and recommending increased funding for Summer Residential and Regional Governor's Schools. The committee discussed Standards of Quality for gifted education and recommend adjusting VLA requirements to allow appropriate materials for advanced learners.

College and Career Ready Virginia
Amanda Nevetral, Office of Advanced Learning, VDOE

At 2:39 p.m., Ms. Nevetral presented information and requested feedback on the CCRV implementation. She provided survey data and stakeholder feedback, including awareness of DE options, implementation across divisions, lack of a statewide definition, course coding, accommodations for students, and need for additional guidance & training. Future efforts may include parent/division communication guides, regional work sessions, an updated VDOE/VCCS document, and continued work related to HB1892.

Adjournment of Meeting
Mark Levy, Chair

Mr. Levy thanked members for their participation, noted that the meeting slides would be shared, and stated that subcommittee leaders would follow up regarding future work. The next VACAL meeting date

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is to be determined, pending funding and scheduling. Dr. Beth Teigen moved to adjourn the meeting; Gail Staton seconded. **The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.**

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