

BOARDROOM CHATTER

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BOARD OF EDUCATION

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Mrs. Debra Frank, Vice President
Dr. Edward Root
Mr. Robert Farrell
Dr. David Bohn
Mr. Jeff Blank, Interim Superintendent

INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Health Department Procedure Review

Dr. Jennifer Corder, Medical Deputy Health Officer for Allegany and Garrett Counties, provided the school board with an update on the updated guidance received on August 28, 2020, from the Department of Health and the State Department of Education. The guidance accompanied the "Decision Aid: Exclusion and Return for Laboratory Confirmed COVID-19 Cases and Persons with COVID-19-like Illness in Schools, Child Care Programs, and Youth Camps."

This guidance applies to people with a laboratory confirmed case of COVID-19, regardless of whether they have symptoms, and people with symptoms of COVID-19. Exclusion, quarantine, and return to school for people with lab confirmed cases, and people with symptoms of COVID-19 is based on CDC and Maryland Department of Health and the Maryland State Department of Education guidance and is to be implemented by schools and local school systems in collaboration with the local health department.

The guidance is meant to supplement, where necessary, current communicable disease outbreak investigation processes, current school health services illness management processes, and current local health department COVID-19 response processes. It is also designed to expedite notification, isolation, and quarantine of school staff and/or students, as indicated, when a person notifies the school that they or their child has a lab confirmed case of COVID-19, regardless of whether the person has symptoms, or exhibits symptoms of COVID-19. The specific processes to implement this guidance within each school are to be developed and carried out as collaboration between the school and the local health department.

Attachment

Decision Aid: Exclusion and Return for Laboratory Confirmed COVID-19 Cases and Persons with COVID-19-like Illness in Schools, Child Care Programs, and Youth Camps

For the purposes of this decision aid, COVID-19-like illness is defined as: Any 1 of the following: cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, new loss of taste or smell, OR At least 2 of the following: fever of 100.4° or higher (measured or subjective), chills or shaking chills, muscle aches, sore throat, headache, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, and congestion or runny nose.

Person (child, care provider, educator, other staff) with 1 new symptom **not meeting the definition of COVID-19-like illness.**

Exclude person and allow return when symptoms have improved, no fever for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing medication, AND criteria in the [Communicable Diseases Summary](#) have been met as applicable. If person develops symptoms of COVID-19-like illness, follow processes below for person with COVID-19-like illness.

An asymptomatic person (child, care provider, educator, other staff) who tests positive for COVID-19.

The asymptomatic person should stay home for 10 days from positive test.

Close contacts should stay home for 14 days from the date of last exposure **even if they have no symptoms or they have a negative COVID-19 test done during quarantine.**

Person (child, care provider, educator, other staff) with COVID-19-like illness:

- Exclude person and recommend that they talk to their health care provider about testing for COVID-19 or whether there is another specific diagnosis.
- The person should isolate pending test results or evaluation by their health care provider.
- Close contacts of the ill person should quarantine per [CDC guidelines](#).

Person has positive test for COVID-19.

Person does not receive a laboratory test or another specific diagnosis (e.g. influenza, strep throat, otitis) by their health care provider.

Person has negative test for COVID-19.

Health care provider documents that the person has another specific diagnosis (e.g. influenza, strep throat, otitis) or health care provider documents that symptoms are related to a pre-existing condition.

The ill person should stay home at least 10 days since symptoms first appeared AND until no fever for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing medication AND improvement of other symptoms.

The ill person should stay home until symptoms have improved, no fever for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing medication, AND criteria in the [Communicable Diseases Summary](#) have been met as applicable.

The person should consider being tested/retested for COVID-19 if symptoms do not improve.

Close contacts **DO NOT** need to stay home as long as they remain asymptomatic.

Attachment for document entitled, "Response to a Laboratory Confirmed Case of COVID-19 and Persons with COVID-19-like Illness in Schools"

August 28, 2020

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approve minutes for meeting held on August 4, 2020.
2. Approve routine personnel actions for the period of August 1-31, 2020.
3. Receive school construction/maintenance report for the period of August 1-31, 2020.
4. Receive Fiscal Year 2022 Capital Improvement Program (CIP).
5. Pine Mountain Coal Company, Inc. contract extension for 2020-2021
6. Fuel oil bid for 2020-2021
7. Burgmeir's Hauling, Inc. contract extension for 2020-2021
8. Fiscal 2020 year end budget amendment

INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT CONT.

Food Service Update

Mr. Todd Lutton, ACPS Supervisor of Food and Nutrition Services, provided the school board with an update on the food service program. Beginning on Tuesday, September 8, 2020, Allegany County Public Schools will once again provide FREE meals to all children age 18 and younger through December 31, 2020, pending the availability of funding. This is a change to an earlier update provided by ACPS to families and comes as the result of an announcement just released by the federal government (USDA). Breakfast and lunch will still be provided at all 21 school locations Monday-Friday from 12:00-1:30 p.m.

Since March and the start of the mandatory school closures, the ACPS Food and Nutrition Services Department offered free meals to students under the Summer Food Service Program. Typically on the first day of school, the summer program ceases and transitions to the National School Lunch and Breakfast Program. As the result of the USDA's waiver, ACPS is allowed to continue offering free meals, again, pending the availability of funding. ACPS served more than 1,700 meals to students on the first day of school. Monthly menus are posted to the school system's website under the Food and Nutrition Services Department page.

Retiree Health Plan Subsidy for 2020-2021

Mr. Larry McKenzie, ACPS Chief Financial Officer, reviewed the retiree health plan subsidy for 2020-2021. The maximum total subsidy will be \$275,000, which is included in the FY2021 budget. This subsidy will be paid in a lump sum in December 2020 to eligible retirees. The plan is not guaranteed in future years, nor is it to be considered a continuing agreement. Anyone retiring July 1, 2002, or thereafter is not eligible to participate in this plan. Those retirees must participate in the Retiree Insurance Fund plan, if eligible. The total paid in December 2020 may be reduced if retirees would receive a greater individual benefit than individuals in the Retiree Insurance Fund would. If this happens, a benefit level that equalizes the two plans will be processed.

INSTRUCTIONAL UPDATES

2020-2021 Revised Post-Labor Day School Calendars

Dr. Kim Kalbaugh, ACPS Chief Academic Officer, provided the school board with an update on the revised 2020-2021 Post-Labor Day school calendar. The school board approved a traditional calendar in the spring, but that calendar needed to be revised to reflect a virtual and/or hybrid learning model. Several adjustments were made, including additional time for principal and supervisor meetings as well as teacher work time. All of these additions fall during the afternoon while students are involved in asynchronous learning on Schoology and won't impact any real-time learning. Dr. Kalbaugh stressed that it is critical to allow these groups to have time to meet to problem-solve and discuss any issues related to virtual learning.

Parent conferences were also separated into two afternoons in the fall and spring. The October conference will be virtual, and the format for the spring conferences will be determined at a later date. Parents also always have the opportunity to contact teachers daily during their afternoon office hours.

In the adjusted calendar, the last day of school for students is June 8th, and the last day of school for teachers is June 15th. These end dates do not reflect five built-in days, which are included in the traditional calendar as required by MSDE. Staff is hopeful that inclement weather days will not be required in either calendar this year as student will be able to return to

virtual learning during a school out day.

Detailed Briefing of Reopening Plan and Updates Moving Forward

Dr. Kalbaugh provided the school board with an overview of the ACPS Reopening plan and other updates as the school system moves forward. She opened by commending everyone on a successful first day of virtual learning, and realized and understood that anxiety among students, teachers, and parents was to be expected. While the school system was not without problems on the first day of school, she was extremely proud of the efforts of principals and assistant principals, supervisors, the IT department, and teachers. Dr. Kalbaugh was also proud of the efforts of parents and students to learn and experiment with the new learning management platform, Schoology. A lot of hard work and many, many hours beyond the work days were spent to be ready for the opening of school this year. Staff continues to work hard to improve their skills on Schoology and is working diligently to resolve issues. Dr. Kalbaugh noted that back to school is not ideal for anyone this year, but that we all need grace and to learn to be flexible when things are out of our control in order to make things work well for ACPS students.

Dr. Kalbaugh took a moment to provide some clarifications regarding the ACPS Recovery Plan. The plan was submitted prior to the August 14th due date, contrary to what was

INSTRUCTIONAL UPDATES CONT.

reported in the media. ACPS has worked systematically and diligently to put so many logistical details into operation, despite only receiving general guidance from MSDE that has evolved rapidly during the past month. Additionally, all Maryland school districts were instructed to follow applicable guidelines from the Maryland Department of Health, local health departments, and the CDC for the safe reopening of in-person instruction.

The ACPS Recovery Plan states that considerations will be made to provide in-school learning for small cohorts/groups of students with disabilities, early childhood and elementary students, at-risk students who need additional support, and Career Center students who need hands-on instruction within their skill/technical area, even if ACPS is not able to open via the hybrid model.

Phase I of the plan, which began on September 8th, was fully virtual learning for all ACPS students. ACPS knows that returning to school with in-person options is important for the development and well-being of students, but also recognizes the obligation to pursue reopening in a manner that is safe for students, teachers, and staff.

With the new guidelines provided by MSDE on August 27th, ACPS will continue with preparations in accordance with the submitted plan that allows for small cohorts/groups of student not receive some in-school learning. Phase II of the plan may begin as soon as September 21, 2020, for students with significant disabilities and Career Center students who need hands-on instruction within their skill area through an alternating A-B week for skills only.

ACPS will monitor and assess the needs of students; particularly those without connectivity, to ensure their learning needs are being addressed. Phase III of the plan may begin as soon as September 28, 2020, to offer in-school alternatives to students without connectivity.

Phase IV would phase in elementary students by grade level where feasible and to implement a staggered phased-in approach by grand bands. This phase could potentially begin as soon as October 5, 2020. Finally, Phase V of the ACPS plan is a fully phased-in hybrid model for students to receive in-school instruction as well as distance learning instruction. Students not attending school on specific days will receive synchronous and asynchronous instruction and assignments, which will follow the scope and sequence of the ACPS curriculum that is aligned to the Maryland CCR standards. Grades 6-8 would attend on alternating A-B days, and grades 9-12 would attend on an alternating schedule, as feasible. The date for Phase V will be determined based on key metrics and CDC and health department guidance. Please note that the anticipated timeline is subject to change based on the key health metrics for Allegany County.

The Maryland Department of Health has given key considerations for the reopening of schools, which include the following:

- Maintain six (6) feet of physical distance while in the school building, on school grounds, and on school buses to the greatest extent possible
- Create six (6) feet of distance between desks in the classroom
- Structure teaching so that teachers can maintain a distance of six (6) feet between children
- Create social distancing strategies that include schedules that create and maintain student cohorts and procedures to limit mixing of students, staff, and cohorts to the greatest extent possible
- Enforce that students and staff wear face coverings while on a school bus, in the school building, and on school grounds
- Limit the use of the cafeteria by having meals in the classrooms
- Assign each student cohort to one designated classroom and teachers move between classes
- Follow guidance from the CDC regarding children and adults who have medical conditions that make them at-risk for severe COVID-19 infection

Being in Stage III doesn't guarantee that school life returns to normal. Students and staff will still have to social distance and wear masks at school, and other safety measures will still be required. Being in Stage III also doesn't guarantee that students and staff will not be exposed to COVID-19 at school or that there will not be uninterrupted in-school learning. Finally, being in Stage III doesn't guarantee that classes or schools will not need to return to a fully virtual model if key health metrics change or quarantine is required.

INSTRUCTIONAL UPDATES CONT.

ACPS will need to consider that parents may still opt to keep their child(ren) at home for synchronous and asynchronous learning for the first nine weeks. A parent may then opt-in for in-school learning, if available, during the second nine weeks. Parents will need to plan for interruptions in the in-school learning model and how to handle child care and other family arrangements if in-person learning must cease for several days due to a quarantine that forces a classroom or school to be closed as part of quarantine procedures.

NEW BUSINESS

Vote to Approve Retiree Health Plan Subsidy for 2020-2021

The school board voted unanimously to approve the retiree health plan subsidy for 2020-2021.

Vote to Approve 2020-2021 Revised Post Labor Day School Calendars

The school board voted unanimously to approve the 2020-2021 revised Post-Labor Day school calendars. These calendars are available for viewing on the school system's website here: <https://www.acpsmd.org/domain/350>.

Vote to Appoint New Ethics Panel Members

The school board voted unanimously to table this vote until the next meeting to allow board members the opportunity to review the applicants and the recommendations from the current Ethics Panel.

Vote to Meet in Executive Session October 13, 2020, as Necessary

The school board voted to meet in Executive Session on Tuesday, October 13, 2020, pending any appeals or unfinished business. All meetings will continue to be held virtually until further notice. The public may watch the livestream of the meeting at <http://bit.ly/ACPSMedia>. Community members may submit public comment via email to comments@acpsmd.org. Emails must be received no later than 5 p.m. on Monday, October 12, 2020. During the public comment portion of the meeting, emails will be read in the order in which they were received. Personal information will not be withheld and anonymous submissions will not be considered. The Board President or her designee will read the constituent's name in addition to the public comment.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Dr. David Bohn

Dr. Bohn noted that the school board understands the frustrations and concerns of parents during this difficult time, and he, personally, agrees that students need to be in classrooms. He commended the ACPS administrators and staff for all of the hard work that they have done to prepare both a virtual and hybrid model of learning and stressed that they could not have done anything more, especially considering the multitude of state and federal regulations, rules and procedures the school system is required to adhere to. Regardless of what stage of recovery the Governor says that we're in, ACPS is still required to follow specific rules and guidelines, which leaves the school system with very limited options. In closing, Dr. Bohn asked that parents please be patient as ACPS does its best to get students back in school.

Mrs. Deb Frank

Mrs. Frank echoed Dr. Bohn's sentiments and gave kudos to everyone in ACPS to make virtual learning work the best it can. She was disheartened by all of the negative comments from the community as she's only seen ACPS staff go above and beyond in their efforts to work within the guidelines for distance learning. Additionally, Mrs. Frank asked for patience as this is a learning experience for everyone as they learn to navigate Schoology. She has heard that this learning platform is much more robust than what was utilized in the spring. Mrs. Frank gave a special thank you to school board president, Tammy Fraley, for all her hard work fielding questions and making sure that important information was readily available to parents and students. In closing, Mrs. Frank noted that this was the first time that the school board had the opportunity to hear important guidance directly from Dr. Corder and the health department and ensure the public that they were working collectively as hard as they can to move quickly to return students to their classrooms.

Mrs. Tammy Fraley

Mrs. Fraley reiterated that she knows that the first day of school was a challenge for many parents, as she herself is a parent of two students in ACPS. Many of these challenges revolved around the inability to successfully login to

Schoology. She strongly encouraged students and parents to attempt to login in advance of the students live session to ensure that if they have issues they can be resolved prior to the start of the school day. Mrs. Fraley also noted that the correct web address to login in to Schoology is **acpsmd.schoology.com**. Additionally, login issues may stem from not using Chrome or Firefox as the web browser as they are the two that are compatible with the Schoology platform. While she is aware that the IT Help Desk was inundated with messages for assistance, she assured parents that someone would return their call/email as soon as they can – please be patient. If parents are still experiencing issues, they can also call their child’s school for assistance. In closing, Mrs. Fraley stated that MABE and PSSAM are working collaboratively to make sure that voices are heard at the state level.

CONSTITUENTS COMMENTS

Misti Williams

Ms. Williams asked several questions regarding reopening schools. Those questions are as follows:

1. Why wouldn’t schools reopen when Allegany County only has a .005% rate of infection?
2. Why didn’t ACPS have a hybrid plan for reopening this year? This leads parents to believe that there was no intention to send kids back to school in the foreseeable future.
3. Why was small group conditioning shut down once schools decided to go fully virtually as they had been following the Governor’s guidelines for small groups.
4. Why weren’t parents given a choice to send kids to school or keep them home?
5. What date is in the ACPS reopening plan for schools to start a hybrid model since Maryland is in Stage 3?
6. Why isn’t ACPS following the Governor’s order to reopen?
7. Is it true that ACPS is waiting on the health department to allow in-person learning?
8. I heard that a local physician from the infectious disease department was available for consultation, but was never contacted by ACPS. Is this true?
9. If the school board could not develop a plan to accommodate social distancing guidelines, why didn’t they consult with other school districts to develop a plan?

Ms. Williams closed by noting that numbers do not warrant keeping students home any longer. She said everything is opening throughout the country and schools should be doing the same.

Kelli Kenner

Ms. Kenner is the parent of a senior this year. She addressed the board regarding their reopening plan and how starting virtually has affected her getting to document many “firsts” in her son’s life, and she is hopeful that the elected school board can work to do their best to come up with a better solution. Ms. Kenner would like to know what the school board’s plan is and what specific parameters need to be in place in order to resume in-person learning. In her opinion, this situation is not time to just wait and see, but rather should be a time to put in place specific parameters that need to be met to get children back in classrooms.

Kim Sloane, President ACEA

Mrs. Sloane addressed the school board on behalf of ACEA to thank them for doing their due diligence regarding the manner in which schools reopened. Obtaining input from stakeholders was crucial and served to validate the decision to begin virtually. The delayed start to after Labor Day was also appreciated to give educators more time to work to learn a new learning management system and to prepare for student learning experiences as meaningful and as authentic as possible. Moving forward, ACEA reiterates its support for a safe, methodical phase-in approach to in-person instruction while maintaining choice options for parents, students, and staff. Based on survey results, many ACEA members are willing to return to in-person instruction given that the proper health and safety protocols are established and adhered to. These include, but are not limited to, proper ventilation, smaller class sizes, mandatory masks for everyone, and any other additional CDC guidelines. The smaller portion of members who do have valid health and safety issues are still willing to work in the virtual world, instructing and supporting those students who also cannot put themselves in a potential life threatening situation. Mrs. Sloane invites the school board to collaborate with ACEA to find the best solution for everyone.